

# Ethics

## Ethics

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Ethics is the philosophical study of moral phenomena. Also called moral philosophy, it investigates normative questions about what people ought to do or which behavior is morally right. Its main branches include normative ethics, applied ethics, and metaethics.

Normative ethics aims to find general principles that govern how people should act. Applied ethics examines concrete ethical problems in real-life situations, such as abortion, treatment of animals, and business practices. Metaethics explores the underlying assumptions and concepts of ethics. It asks whether there are objective moral facts, how moral knowledge is possible, and how moral judgments motivate people. Influential normative theories are consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. According to consequentialists, an act is right if it leads to the best consequences. Deontologists focus on acts themselves, saying that they must adhere to duties, like telling the truth and keeping promises. Virtue ethics sees the manifestation of virtues, like courage and compassion, as the fundamental principle of morality.

Ethics is closely connected to value theory, which studies the nature and types of value, like the contrast between intrinsic and instrumental value. Moral psychology is a related empirical field and investigates psychological processes involved in morality, such as reasoning and the formation of character. Descriptive ethics describes the dominant moral codes and beliefs in different societies and considers their historical dimension.

The history of ethics started in the ancient period with the development of ethical principles and theories in ancient Egypt, India, China, and Greece. This period saw the emergence of ethical teachings associated with Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and contributions of philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle. During the medieval period, ethical thought was strongly influenced by religious teachings. In the modern period, this focus shifted to a more secular approach concerned with moral experience, reasons for acting, and the consequences of actions. An influential development in the 20th century was the emergence of metaethics.

## Ethics (disambiguation)

*concepts of right and wrong conduct. Ethics may also refer to: Ethics, a text on ethics by Peter Abelard Ethics (Bonhoeffer book), an unfinished book*

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.

Ethics may also refer to:

Ethics, a text on ethics by Peter Abelard

Ethics (Bonhoeffer book), an unfinished book by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, published in 1949

Ethics (journal), a quarterly philosophical journal

Ethics (Spinoza book), a 17th-century book by Baruch Spinoza

"Ethics" (Star Trek: The Next Generation), a 1992 episode of Star Trek: The Next Generation

Ethics (Watsuji book), a 1937 book by Tetsuro Watsuji

Ethics: Origin and Development, a 1921 book by Peter Kropotkin

Nicomachean Ethics or The Ethics, a work by Aristotle

Ethics, a 1912 book by G. E. Moore

ETHICS a methodology for the design and implementation of computer-based information systems devised by Enid Mumford

Descriptive ethics

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Descriptive ethics, also known as comparative ethics, is the study of people's beliefs about morality. It contrasts with prescriptive or normative ethics, which is the study of ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act, and with meta-ethics, which is the study of what ethical terms and theories actually refer to. The following examples of questions that might be considered in each field illustrate the differences between the fields:

Descriptive ethics: What do people think is right?

Meta-ethics: What does "right" even mean?

Normative (prescriptive) ethics: How should people act?

Applied ethics: How do we take moral knowledge and put it into practice?

Nicomachean Ethics

*Nicomachean Ethics (/ˈnaɪkəˈmækiːn, ˈnɪ-/; Ancient Greek: ????? ?????????, ?thika Nikomacheia) is Aristotle's best-known work on ethics: the science*

The Nicomachean Ethics (; Ancient Greek: ????? ?????????, ?thika Nikomacheia) is Aristotle's best-known work on ethics: the science of the good for human life, that which is the goal or end at which all our actions aim. It consists of ten sections, referred to as books, and is closely related to Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics. The work is essential for the interpretation of Aristotelian ethics.

The text centers upon the question of how to best live, a theme previously explored in the works of Plato, Aristotle's friend and teacher. In Aristotle's Metaphysics, he describes how Socrates, the friend and teacher of Plato, turned philosophy to human questions, whereas pre-Socratic philosophy had only been theoretical, and concerned with natural science. Ethics, Aristotle claimed, is practical rather than theoretical, in the Aristotelian senses of these terms. It is not merely an investigation about what good consists of, but it aims to be of practical help in achieving the good.

It is connected to another of Aristotle's practical works, Politics, which reflects a similar goal: for people to become good, through the creation and maintenance of social institutions. Ethics is about how individuals should best live, while politics adopts the perspective of a law-giver, looking at the good of a whole community.

The Nicomachean Ethics had an important influence on the European Middle Ages, and was one of the core works of medieval philosophy. As such, it was of great significance in the development of all modern philosophy as well as European law and theology. Aristotle became known as "the Philosopher" (for example, this is how he is referred to in the works of Thomas Aquinas). In the Middle Ages, a synthesis between Aristotelian ethics and Christian theology became widespread, as introduced by Albertus Magnus. The most important version of this synthesis was that of Thomas Aquinas. Other more "Averroist" Aristotelians such as Marsilius of Padua were also influential.

Until well into the seventeenth century, the Nicomachean Ethics was still widely regarded as the main authority for the discipline of ethics at Protestant universities, with over fifty Protestant commentaries published before 1682. During the seventeenth century, however, authors such as Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes argued that the medieval and Renaissance Aristotelian tradition in practical thinking was impeding philosophy.

Interest in Aristotle's ethics has been renewed by the virtue ethics revival. Recent philosophers in this field include Alasdair MacIntyre, G. E. M. Anscombe, Mortimer Adler, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Martha Nussbaum.

### Eudemian Ethics

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The Eudemian Ethics (Greek: ????? ??????; Latin: Ethica Eudemia or De moribus ad Eudemum) is a work of philosophy by Aristotle. Its primary focus is on ethics, making it one of the primary sources available for study of Aristotelian ethics. It is named for Eudemus of Rhodes, a pupil of Aristotle who may also have had a hand in editing the final work. It is commonly believed to have been written before the Nicomachean Ethics, although this is controversial.

### Political ethics

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Political ethics (also known as political morality or public ethics) is the practice of making moral judgments about political action and political agents. It covers two areas: the ethics of process (or the ethics of office), which covers public officials and their methods, and the ethics of policy (or ethics and public policy), which concerns judgments surrounding policies and laws.

The core values and expectations of political morality have historically derived from the principles of justice. However, John Rawls defends the theory that the political concept of justice is ultimately based on the common good of the individual rather than on the values one is expected to follow.

While trying to make moral judgments about political issues, people tend to leverage their own perceived definition of morality. The concept of morality itself derives from several moral foundations. Morality, seen through the lens of these foundations, shapes peoples' judgments about political actions and agents.

### Formal ethics

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Formal ethics is a formal logical system for describing and evaluating the "form" as opposed to the "content" of ethical principles. Formal ethics was introduced by Harry J. Gensler, in part in his 1990 logic textbook

Symbolic Logic: Classical and Advanced Systems, but was more fully developed and justified in his 1996 book *Formal Ethics*.

Formal ethics is related to ethical formalism in that its focus is the forms of moral judgments, but the exposition in *Formal Ethics* makes it clear that Gensler, unlike previous ethical formalists, does not consider formal ethics to be a complete ethical theory (such that the correct form would be necessary and sufficient for an ethical principle to be "correct"). In fact, the theorems of formal ethics could be seen as a largest common subset of most widely recognized ethical theories, in that none of its axioms (with the possible exception of rationality) is controversial among philosophers of ethics.

## Machine ethics

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Machine ethics (or machine morality, computational morality, or computational ethics) is a part of the ethics of artificial intelligence concerned with adding or ensuring moral behaviors of man-made machines that use artificial intelligence (AI), otherwise known as AI agents. Machine ethics differs from other ethical fields related to engineering and technology. It should not be confused with computer ethics, which focuses on human use of computers. It should also be distinguished from the philosophy of technology, which concerns itself with technology's grander social effects.

## Applied ethics

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Applied ethics is the practical aspect of moral considerations. It is ethics with respect to real-world actions and their moral considerations in private and public life, the professions, health, technology, law, and leadership. For example, bioethics is concerned with identifying the best approach to moral issues in the life sciences, such as euthanasia, the allocation of scarce health resources, or the use of human embryos in research. Environmental ethics is concerned with ecological issues such as the responsibility of government and corporations to clean up pollution. Business ethics includes the duties of whistleblowers to the public and to their employers.

## Stoicism

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Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy that flourished in ancient Greece and Rome. The Stoics believed that the universe operated according to reason, i.e. by a God which is immersed in nature itself. Of all the schools of ancient philosophy, Stoicism made the greatest claim to being utterly systematic. The Stoics provided a unified account of the world, constructed from ideals of logic, monistic physics, and naturalistic ethics. These three ideals constitute virtue, which is necessary for 'living a well-reasoned life', seeing as they are all parts of a logos, or philosophical discourse, which includes the mind's rational dialogue with itself.

Stoicism was founded in the ancient Agora of Athens by Zeno of Citium around 300 BC, and flourished throughout the Greco-Roman world until the 3rd century AD. Among its adherents was Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Along with Aristotelian term logic, the system of propositional logic developed by the Stoics was one of the two great systems of logic in the classical world. It was largely built and shaped by Chrysippus, the third head of the Stoic school in the 3rd century BCE. Chrysippus's logic differed from term logic because it was based on the analysis of propositions rather than terms.

Stoicism experienced a decline after Christianity became the state religion in the 4th century AD. Since then, it has seen revivals, notably in the Renaissance (Neostoicism) and in the contemporary era.

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