

1.1 History in Ethics

Ethics and morality; basic ethical theories and moral dilemmas, solutions and difference of ethics and morality; the scholastic idea of discussing thesis and antithesis with an introduction to synthesis, the value of nature.

1. WHY STUDY ETHICS?

“As long as the university studies are a knowledgeable and skillful Materia, ethics doesn’t matter.”

“Ethics is learned in the family, not in school.”

“Ethics is learned by observing how senior workers act, not from books or lectures.”

“Ethics is important, but our curriculum is already too crowded and there is no room for ethics teaching.”

These are some of the common reasons given for not assigning ethics a major role in the university curriculum. Each of them is partially, but only partially, valid. Increasingly throughout the world **universities** are realizing that they need to provide their students with adequate time and resources for learning ethics.

To summarize, ethics is and always has been an essential component of practice. Ethical principles such as respect for persons, informed consent and confidentiality are basic to any work relationship.

However, the application of these principles in specific situations like medicine is often problematic, since physicians, patients, their family members and other healthcare personnel may disagree about what is the right way to act in a situation.

The study of ethics prepares students to recognize difficult situations and to deal with them in a rational manner. Ethics is also important in interactions with society and cultures.

2. Difference ethics and religious morality

And generally, we must obey two fundamental rules:

- 1) Ethics must be understandable by rationality (SCIENCE)
- 2) Ethics is not only objective knowledge alone; it’s integrating also an empathic (emotional) contact to a situation (especially if a human being is targeted) (HEART)

The third rule is: If you are a religious person = Ethics is driven by faith too. But then we tend to speak more about morality than ethics (FAITH). According to a study of the PEW Research Center worldwide half of all people think that morality needs religion.¹

Ethics	Religious morality
ethos = custom, custom, habit	Moralitas fidei = Dependent on a religion
culture-dependent	religious norms
Made by people	Revelation
convertible	Unavailable, final
Attempts to make ethical standards universally valid	Dangers: Possible slide into fundamentalism
1) Zoon politikon (Aristoteles) 2) Lex naturalis (Thomas Aquinas) 3) UN-Human Rights Charta 1948	Applies only to own (religious) group, all others are excluded (UMMA => terror against others; medieval Jewish pogroms)
Common good and self-interest in harmony	Man as a universal creature

All people equal in value	After Thomas Aquinas an erroneous conscience must also be protected, but duty to form conscience = this is what we are going to do here
Murder is a crime	Quran: whoever takes a life, it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity.
Taking away life chances is wrong	4 assumptions of divine command: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a God. 2. God commands and forbids certain acts. 3. An action is right if God commands it. 4. People ascertain what God commands or forbids. God's will is done in three ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through individual conscience 2. By religious authorities 3. Through holy scripture But always it is an interpretation by men. With all the difficulties. In the Middle Ages Pope Urban II. called to a crusade to liberate Jerusalem from the Muslims. The emotionalized mass listening to him answered: Deus lo vult – God commands this.

3. Basic ethical attitude

A basic ethical attitude forms the basis for human decisions and actions in an ethical context. In the course of history, the basic ethical attitude has constantly evolved and changed. Various philosophical, religious and cultural currents have influenced the ideas of right and wrong action as well as moral values and principles.

Formal considerations of ethics originated in the ancient Chinese Empire and were then further developed in **Greece** via India and later in Rome. The term ethics was introduced as a philosophical discipline by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). The roots of ethics can be traced to the early teachings of Socrates (470-399 B.C.), Plato (428-348 B.C.). These philosophers founded the so-called virtue ethics. For them, the basic ethical attitude was to develop moral virtues and lead a virtuous life. Virtues such as bravery, justice, wisdom and moderation were seen as essential components of a good life.

Aristotle's measures of good thinking are a precursor to critical thinking that has passed the test of time. He along with other philosophical scholars have provided pathways relevant to ethical decision making today. A significant take-away from this section is simply this: A thirst for knowledge is a good basis for ethical thinking. As such, one must practice critical thinking daily, until it is a second nature for him. Critical thinking requires the formation of a hypothesis (Why not this way or that way or specifically this way.) That may be based on experience, skill sets developed to date, and knowledge.

A key ingredient required to test this opinion is intellectual curiosity.

MEMENTO: Be curious in all your studies and your life, that's the fundament for development

The original virtues, Courage, Temperance, Prudence, and Justice (Four Cardinal Virtues) located in Plato's work and later Aristotle have been adopted by Theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in his Summa Theologiae, II.II of 1274.

According to Thomas Aquinas, man grasps as good by virtue of his "inclinationes naturales", a "natural inclination" towards self-preservation and species preservation: a tendency to community life, elementary need for truth, reference to transcendence, and seeks to preserve it as good in general. All these inclinations are exclusively conditional and thus limited goods.

Correspondingly, however, all concrete norms and regulations that apply to the safeguarding of these goods necessarily incorporate so many contingent conditions that they are not simply valid by themselves (absolutely) but must always be regarded as "ut in pluribus", as valid in the majority of cases.

As a conditioned being in a conditioned world, so that "all GOOD" **cannot be realized at the same time**. The **solution** then lies in **giving preference** through our ethical decision under concrete **circumstances**.

Let's have a look to cultural and religious morality and ethics:

4. Religious Morality

4.1. Christianity

Philosophers sought universal principles that could be equally valid for all people. With the rise of Christianity in the Middle Ages, the basic ethical attitude changed considerably. Christian ethics were based on religious teachings and principles that were taught by the church. Love of God and neighbor, love of neighbor and observance of the divine commandments were central elements of the basic ethical attitude. Belief in a higher authority and the pursuit of salvation influenced the moral behavior of believers.

In our times the catholic church searches again for a pathway towards a universal ethics. The INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION of the Vatican published 2009 a discussion paper about: *"In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law"*. In this document, they wanted to invite all, "to consider the resources that a renewed presentation of the doctrine of the natural law contains." They clearly stated, that *"Christianity does not have the monopoly on the natural law. In fact, founded on reason, common to all human beings, the natural law is the basis of collaboration among all persons of good will, whatever their religious convictions."*ⁱⁱ

4.2. Islam

In the oriental approach to Islam, we have seen the same movement: The holy Quran (and the Hadiths, the sayings of Prophet Mohammed) were the only valid source for ethical behavior. And the main target of all ethics is in Muslim theology the community. "You are the best community (Arabic "umma") that has ever been created among mankind." (Qur'an, Sura 3:110). Religion, the state, indeed the whole reality of life is determined by God's decrees. The totality of these regulations for the life of the Ummah is often referred to as "Sharia" (Islamic law). "The believers are brothers. So, make peace between your brothers and fear Allah, so that mercy may be shown to you." (Qur'an, Sura 49:10). Sura 5:32 clearly emphasizes the value of human life: "Whoever kills a human being without committing murder or causing mischief on earth, it is as if he had killed all human beings. And whoever keeps it alive, it is as if he had kept all people alive."

BUT: The full text states: 32. **"For this reason We have decreed to the Children of Israel** that if anyone kills a man, except for the murder of another or for violence in the land, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind". So, it can be understood as a historical commandment to the Jews, not a present command to the Muslims!

Summary: In traditional Islam we have the difficulty, that all Daesh and Fulani cannot be condemned from the Muslim Imams because they act in one of the possible way the Quran speaks about. The main question is, if all peace words of the Quran are only reliable to the UMMA, the Muslim community, or if they are valid for the whole mankind?

Several verses in the Quran speak about the **freedom of faith**. For example: "There is no compulsion in faith. The right path has now become clearly recognizable compared to the wrong one." (Qur'an, Sura 2:256). But this verse: "No compulsion in religion!" is often regarded as **"abrogated"** in Muslim exegesis. This means that it is considered to have been "abrogated" by God through other, later revealed Quranic verses.

5. The modern era

Particularly in the age of enlightenment and scientific progress, new philosophical approaches and ways of thinking emerged. This era started with Thomas Aquinas and Erasmus of Rotterdam in the Middle Ages and had its main expression in the 17th to the 18th century with Voltaire, Kant, the French revolution, mostly in Europe. It was characterized by an increased emphasis on reason, science and individual freedom. During this period, authority and traditional belief systems were called into question. People began to explore the world rationally

and to recognize rational arguments as the basis for knowledge and decision-making. Advances in science and technology led to a growing confidence in the abilities of human reason. This development had a direct impact on basic ethical attitudes, and philosophical approaches to ethics increasingly focused on reason and the universal principles that can be derived from reason.

Today, ethical principles encompass a combination of different approaches and value systems.

It is often based on individual convictions, reason, compassion, freedom and justice.

Modern ethics also increasingly relates to global issues such as

- environmental protection
- social justice
- human rights
- intercultural dialog
- diversity of ethical perspectives
- balance between individual and social needs

This then developed into today's main Fields of Ethic

- ❖ **Social ethics** (racism, sexism, addiction, aggression, genocide, peace policy)
- ❖ **Medical ethics** (birth and death, triad, gene therapy, doctor-patient relationship, access to medicine)
- ❖ **Scientific ethics** (limits, abuse, manipulation, research, consequences)
- ❖ **Environmental ethics** (environmental degradation, nature conservation, access to resources, fair distribution)
- ❖ **Law ethics** (question of law and justice)

6. African Ethics

Ahiau depicts African relationships between persons as familial relationships as opposed to contractual:

*"The relationship is not one based on a conception of fair play as we see with the fairness theory but on a sense of concern for others. It is not borne out of an idea of implicit consent or ahistorical actual consent but on the humanity of persons and the implication of that humanity for normativity."*ⁱⁱⁱ

This conception of human interrelation forms a backdrop for African ethics, *"which often begins with questions related to how to live harmoniously, fulfil social roles honourably, and respect those who came before and will come after. These collectivist values are encapsulated in ubuntu, a Nguni word for which there is no English equivalent, but which is often translated as "humanness" or "human dignity."*^{iv}

Christian Gade of the Aarhus University in Denmark regards ubuntu as a term of humanism and says, its meaning has shifted at different points in history under the influence of changing social and political circumstances. He interprets Ubuntu as an African humanism, integrated in the fact, that *"Africans are religious and spiritual in their daily activities and in their collectivist relationships"*.^v

7. Moral systems are different

The morality of Muslims is different from the morality of Christians or African traditions.

But in general, there are two ways to deal with this difference:

- 1) To neglect all moral systems and to install only a general ethics system. But who will decide which system? May such an attempt end in a unreflect hedonism?
- 2) To cooperate with the moral systems of the religions and cultures. And to find a common denominator and to develop a basic code of ethics that is acceptable to all sides.
That takes time, but it's worthwhile.
If we don't find a general ethical guideline in our world,

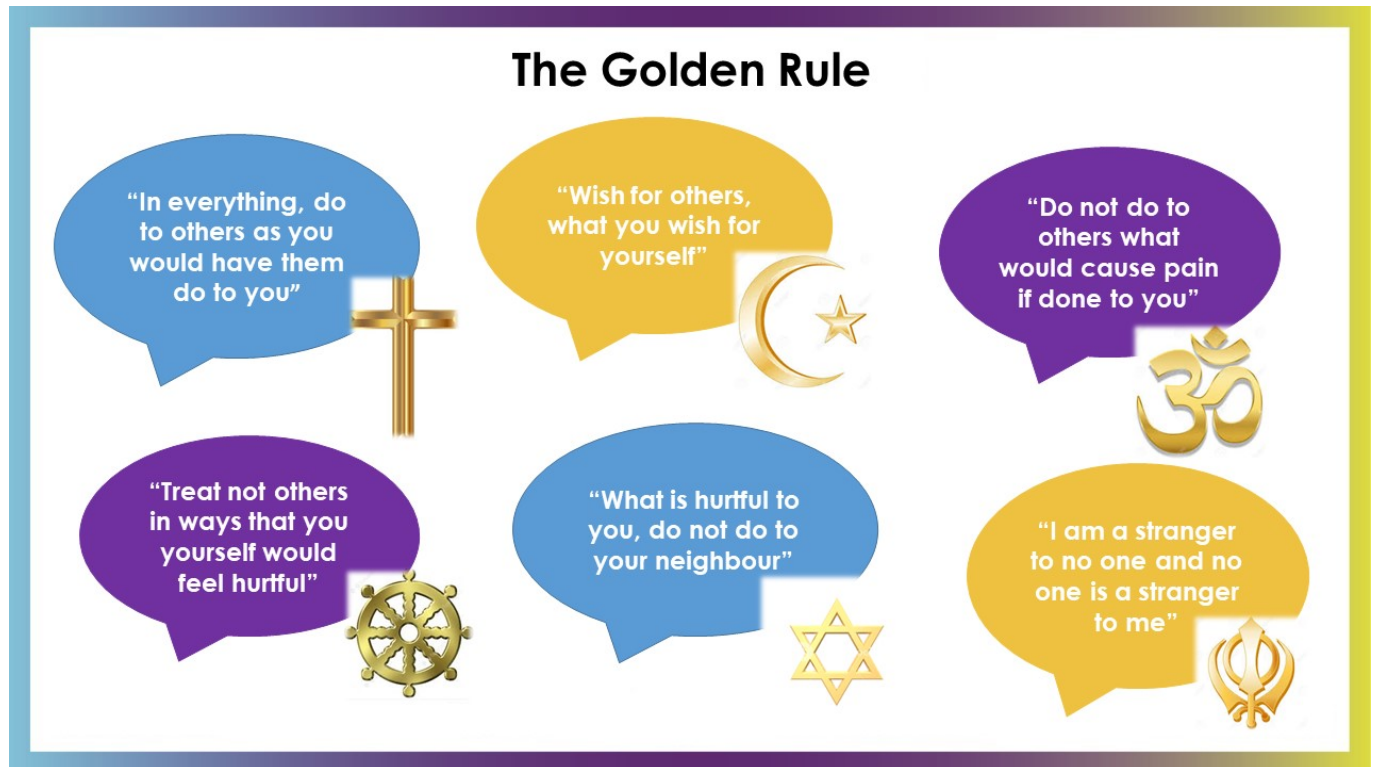
- no peace can be achieved
- no cooperation in a hospital, in business or at school can be achieved

8. The main guidelines

- 1) The Golden rule of nearly all religions: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”
- 2) The teaching of natural law as human base of consideration
- 3) The Human Rights Charta of UN, partially adopted also in the Kairo Human rights declaration of the Muslims

Generally basic Human Rights remain the main question in a globalized world.

And respecting basic Human Rights is a main task for all the business areas for which you are studying for.



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Bukhari, Hadith 13: To like for one's (Muslim's) brother what one likes for himself is a part of faith (Many scholars interpreted "brother" in this and other traditions to mean universal brotherhood that includes all of humanity; <https://www.abuaminaelias.com/golden-rule-in-islam-love-humanity/>)

ⁱ The Global God Divide, PEW Research Center 2020

ⁱⁱ INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law*, Rom 2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Ahiauzu, N. (2006) *Ubuntu and the obligation to obey the law*. *Cambrian Law Review*, 37, 17-36 (Nkiruka Ahiauzu, Port Harcourt, Nigeria; Rivers State University of Science and Technology)

^{iv} Cf. Jecker, N.S. (2022) *African Ethics, Respect for Persons, and Moral Dissent*. *Theoria*, 88(3), 667: <https://doi.org/10.1111/theo.12390>

^v Gade, C.B.N. (2011) *The historical development of the written discourses on Ubuntu*. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 30(3), 303- 329; 317