



Mains Practice Question

Q. What do you understand by ethics and what are its determinants? How is ethics different from values? (250 words)

02 Feb, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

- Introduce by defining ethics and values.
- Write what you understand by the term ethics and elaborate its determinants in human action.
- List down the difference between the two terms.

Introduction

- At its simplest, ethics is a system of moral principles. They affect how people make decisions and lead their lives.
- Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy. The term is derived from the Greek word ethos which can mean custom, habit, character or disposition.

Body

Ethics covers the following dilemmas:

- how to live a good life
- our rights and responsibilities
- the language of right and wrong
- Moral decisions - what is good and bad?

Its Determinants: As the word suggests, means the factors which decide whether the action being judged is ethical or not. Most of the moralists agree that to judge the goodness or badness of any particular human act, three elements must be weighed from which every act derives its morality. They are:

- **The Object of the Human Act:** The object is usually regarded as the primary factor for moral judgement of a human act. From the viewpoint of object an act is generally classified as morally good, bad or indifferent. For a morally good act, the object of it must be good.
- **The Circumstances contextualising the Human Act:** Circumstances can make an otherwise good action better for e.g. giving food to a person who is almost dying of starvation. They can make good an act which is otherwise indifferent, for e.g. sitting with a person who is feeling lonely. But they can also make worse an act which is evil in its object for e.g. robbing a beggar from his/her only meal of the day.
- **The End or the Intention of the Agent in performing a Human Act:** A good intention can make better an act which is good in its object, for e.g. helping a poor person to start a small business with the intention of making him independent.

Values: Values refer to the important and enduring beliefs or principles, based on which an individual

makes judgements in life.

The fundamental differences between ethics and value are described in the given below points:

BASIS FOR COMPARISON	ETHICS	VALUES
What it does?	Constrains	Motivates
Meaning	Ethics refers to the guidelines for conduct, that address question about morality.	Value is defined as the principles and ideas that help them in making judgement of what is important.
What are they?	System of moral principles, that guides our action.	Stimuli for thinking
Consistency	Uniform	Differs from person to person
Tells	What is morally correct or incorrect, in the given situation.	What we want to do or achieve.

Conclusion

- Ethics and Values together lay the foundation for sustainability.
- While ethics are consistently applied over the period, and remains same for all the human beings. Values have an individualistic approach, i.e. it varies from person to person but remains stable, relatively unchanging, but they can be changed over time due to a significant emotional event.

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