

Nomenclature of ethics

History

As a permanent debate, ethics has its own tradition, thus also its **nomenclature**. Philosophy is also a permanent, never-ending reflection and debate, and ethics shares with it its methods of conceptualization. This is quite different from the **conceptualization** of empirical (especially natural) sciences. The natural sciences, including biology (which also includes most of the theoretical fields of medicine), rely on sensory experience, e.g. the description of a visible structure or event (experiment, developmental or pathological process). Philosophy including ethics - along with hermeneutic sciences (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutics>) (formerly "spiritual sciences") - can invoke **inner experience** (reflection) if it is reportable (communicable), its **reflection** (speculation) and **interpretation** (interpretation).

The subjective aspect of ethics

Inner experience is necessarily **subjective**, which is why the subjectivity of knowledge is applied in ethics more than in empirical sciences. One of the moments of the subjectivity of our knowledge is the **preliminary understanding** (German: *Vorverstehen*) of some fact that we have at our disposal even before we define it and begin to consciously think about it. We all "somehow know" what *culture* is, for example, but if we were to define it, we would find that it is very difficult. The same goes for us when we try to define *goodness*, *conscience*, etc.

The subjectivity of knowledge is not its handicap. The subjective starting point is the source of **all** knowledge, which even physicists are very clearly aware of today. The handicap is **subjectivism**, i.e. the insistence on subjectivity even where some degree of objective verification is possible, as is the case, for example, with an intuitive natural science hypothesis that could have been verified experimentally, but was not. However, some areas of reality are not accessible in any other way, which does not mean that the approach to them should be arbitrarily disregarding logic.

Terminology in general

That is why terminological inconsistency reigns in philosophy and the humanities. More than once, however, it is just another verbal expression of the same thing.

The frequency of ethical terms in our everyday communication is considerable, but their meaning is mostly unclear and ambiguous, terms with different meanings are used as synonyms, etc. Part of the spiritual devastation of the last fifty years was the neglect of a number of important topics. Among them is ethics. Terms like *ethical*, *moral*, *moral*, *moralize*, they can be an example for us. What do they actually mean? Few people care; most users rely on a preliminary understanding, which is very diverse for these expressions. Conceptual confusion also has unfortunate practical consequences. E.g. in 1993, there was a controversy in some of our media about "does morality belong in politics", and there was no lack of negative opinions, although it is clear (from a preliminary understanding) that politics also has its ethical dimension, although we cannot fully apply the morality of dyadic relationship in it, and although the ethical consideration of politics must take into account other relevant facts than the ethical consideration of the behavior of an individual or a small social group.

That is why it is useful to agree at the very beginning how we will understand some important terms and their corresponding word designations, i.e. agree on the **terminology** we will use. Without such a **convention** (agreement), which we recognize as binding for the consideration in question, understanding is impossible. In case of inconsistency in terminology, we have the option to choose from several possible conventions, or to have a dispute about it. At some point, however, it has to be ended, not because the proposed convention is the best, but in order to continue the debate at all. **So let's create a convention.**

Moral and ethical conduct

Although the Greek *ethos* and the Latin *mos* originally mean the same thing, i.e. custom, manners, *ethical* and *moral* are not the same, although for some the meanings of both merge. Let us consider as **moral** such an action that is **in agreement with our conscience**, as **ethical** (moral) then that which **is directed towards the good**. - This definition will probably raise an objection: aren't they the same thing? It isn't. Actions that "subjectively" agree with conscience may not yet "objectively" lead to good. E.g. in India, the morality of some castes required (and the conscience of their members agreed) that the widow of the deceased be burned alive together with his body during the funeral. The conscience of many Spaniards does not object if a bull is (permissibly) beaten to death during a bullfight. It can be objected again: but those Indians and Spaniards were convinced that they were doing good! Yes, they were convinced, but they did not act... Conscientiousness and the direction of good may or may not be the same thing. Only in simple situations, which fortunately are the majority, are both identical.

An even more striking example of the non-identity of the *ethical* and the *moral* is the existence of **group morality**. Members of the same group (e.g. tribe) respect the obligation to treat each other in a certain way (not to lie, not to steal, to certify mutual solidarity, etc.). However, their morality no longer obliges them to act in this way with

members of other groups (e.g. foreigners), who are often not even included in the tribal dimension of a human being. Such conditions often apply in relations between ethnic groups and their deep unethicity is illustrated by the ethnic conflicts of these years (the Balkans, etc.).

By accepting this terminological convention (thus also the non-identity of *ethical* and *moral*), we also accept the **contradiction** that it reveals to us. Unfortunately, there is no other way, this contradiction does not lie in the terms, but in the matter itself, and we can either accept it or make the situation easier for ourselves by ignoring it. - If I ask myself the question "how should I behave properly", I ask it in **two ways**, - in fact, to **two addressees** - at the same time.

I put it first and foremost in the way I ask myself every time I seek instruction. I automatically assume that the lesson is attainable, that it "is known somehow" and that I can learn it too. More than once I find that I actually know, or at least I suspect. And if not, I ask those whom I consider to be authorities in this regard, I ask for a **social consensus** on this matter, in which I somehow participate (or want to participate). The addressee of my question is **morality** (which is always the morality of a **certain** society or culture).

However, I should not forget that I also asked that question to the other addressee, namely myself, my **conscience**, which is often able to provide me with an answer. More than once it happens that there is no social consensus ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_\(disambiguation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_(disambiguation))) about what is good in a certain situation, and I am then dependent only on my own conscience. It is in such situations that I am clearly aware of the difference between **questioning** and **searching**. I then search and find the answer to the question "how to behave correctly" myself.

They are no exception to the situation when my conscience - if it is properly alert - prevents me from accepting the norms of the prevailing morality, because I have perceived that they are in conflict with what is good. This is the case with bullfights or burning widows alive, but also at other times. E.g. traditional society did not consider women equal to men and its morality denied women freedom in some important life decisions. That it is not good is precisely what the other addressee is signaling to me.

Can I be sure that this new knowledge is "better" than the old one this time? That it is "objective"? No I can not. All I know is that my conscience is not always sure, that it can be fallible, and that I should not create the concept of **good** on the basis of my will. After all, I am always looking for them in some way, even if my side interests intervene in the search (see the *ideological concept of good* in the previous chapter) by looking, but in such a way that I want to find them - consciously or unconsciously - in the form that suits me .

Conscience

Finally, it is appropriate to define **conscience**: it is our ability to recognize good and remember the result of this knowledge. We can therefore compare them to the function of a **sensor** and at the same time a **memory**; if we do not prevent it, it acts autonomously, i.e. it is spontaneously recalled ("remorse of conscience"). However, its autonomy is problematic, as it can also be **programmed far-reaching**, e.g. influenced by upbringing, which is double-edged: we consider the influence of upbringing, oriented towards the philosophical concept of good, to be positive; we consider negative the influence of education charged with the ideological concept of good, even more so the influences that are deliberately and purposefully distorting, such as drill, suggestion, brainwashing, etc. - The function of the conscience can also be affected by illness, as is the case, for example, with self-accusations (self-blame) in neurotic and psychotic depressions, etc.

The preserving conscience ("memory") has at its disposal all the insights **of the seeking conscience** ("sensor"), but not only that, but also what was instilled in us from the outside or what we ourselves "edited" to our liking. The sum of all these findings, beliefs and attitudes, regarding what is right (what should be) and from what the sense of responsibility is derived, constitutes morality, in this case individual morality. However, members of society or a social group have similar knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. The sum of what overlaps with each other constitutes the **morality** of a given society or group, or **consensus about what is good**. Society is interested in the areas of mutual overlap being as wide as possible, i.e. in having as many people as possible respect the same morality. It does so not because it wishes most of all that all should be interested in the knowledge of the good, but that they should follow the same rules as far as possible, so that it can exist and be in operation. It can therefore be said that **morality is the sum of the self-preservation experience of a certain society** (with a smaller amount of certainty it can be said: the self-preservation experience of humanity).

Goodness, manners, conventions

A society that professes and requires a certain morality does so not in the name of good as such, but out of a need for self-preservation. Although he justifies this with this good, it is not entirely sincere. Her "good" is at best her **idea of good**. However, it is influenced by various **interests** and their mutual compromises. The concept of good that morality invokes is therefore an *ideological concept of good*, as discussed above. This form of morality is described by the word **moral** (there are such and other *morals*). However, morals do not have to be moral, however paradoxical it may sound, because **morality is not the same as morality**. Morality is based not on an ideological, but on a philosophical concept of good, the recognition of which is the work not of the preserving but **of the searching conscience**.

We can see a certain analogy of the creation of group morality in various **conventions**, i.e. agreed rules of behavior imposed by certain groups, starting with the adolescent group and ending with the diplomatic corps. Their purpose is the demonstration and defense of group identity (in this sense it is also a self-preservation effort), but also the codification (legislation) of ways to solve problems and conflicts that occur within the group and between it

and the environment. These conventions also contain elements of ritual and play, but they are sometimes taken very seriously and their violation is punished, sometimes even by expulsion from the group (more than once it was paid for by death in a duel). This is the so-called **etiquette** (e.g. court etiquette, social etiquette, etc.).

The term **moralizing** refers to the evaluation of some behavior, individual, group or institutional, from a moral or ethical point of view (common parlance does not distinguish between *moral* and *ethical*). Today, this word usually has a pejorative accent, as it usually evokes a certain dislike, rightly and wrongly.

This dislike is justified if a moral judgment is pronounced where a judgment of another nature should be pronounced. E.g. an adult (parent, teacher, etc.) pronounces a moral judgment, e.g. by reprimanding or even punishing a neurotic child for being "naughty", while he should pronounce a diagnostic judgment e.g. therapeutic, because in the case of the child, it is protesting or appealing behavior conditioned by a disorder, e.g. emotional deprivation (emotional distress). Doctors often condemn (if only in spirit) patients for being simple-minded or for psychological regression in the course of their illness.

Unjustified, albeit understandable dislike for moral or Ethical evaluation may be felt, for example, by a pragmatic politician or a doctor styling himself in the role of a mere expert. He does not like it if political decision-making, or behavior towards the patient, measured by something other than practical success.

Summary

- **Conscience** is my ability to recognize good, and I feel the result of this knowledge to be binding. The degree of certainty with which I recognize is different, because even the recognized reality appears to me with varying degrees of clarity and clarity, which also applies to the recognition of good (that is, about conscience). However, the uncertainty of knowledge does not cancel that obligation, but imposes on me the obligation to obtain a higher degree of certainty.
- The binding nature of the already recognized good creates **the norm** of my **decision-making and actions**. We call the sum of these norms **individual morality**. **The morality of a given society** (culture) consists of a set of norms preserved by the traditions of this society and corresponding to the general idea of goodness; this notion is the result of this society's self-preservation experience.
- **Moral action** coincides with conscience, which preserves the idea of perceived good. Due to the imperfection of knowledge (due to its fallibility, bias, etc.), this idea does not have to correspond to the good about itself. The conscience that has realized this non-identity of the idea of good and the good itself becomes a searching conscience. Actions aimed at the good of oneself are ethical actions.
- **Moralizing** means introducing moral aspects where they don't belong, or where they do belong, but we don't want to see them there. We feel a justified distaste for both moralizing, justified in the first case, not in the second.

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