UNIT 1: THE CONCEPT OF APPLIED ETHICS

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Concept of Ethics

1.4 Areas of Ethics

- 1.4.1 Meta Ethics
- 1.4.2 Normative Ethics
- 1.4.3 Applied Ethics

1.5 Nature of Applied Ethics

1.6 Applied Ethics and Philosophy

1.7 Applied Ethics and Ethics

1.8 Applied Ethics and Applied Philosophy

1.9 Different fields of Applied Ethics

1.10 Three important theories associated with Applied Ethics

1.11 Some important principles on Applied Ethical discussion

1.12 Let us sum up

1.13 Further readings

1.14 Answers to check your progress

1.15 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- define the concept of Ethics
- discuss different fields of Ethics
- know what applied ethics is
- distinguish between Normative Ethics and Meta Ethics
- distinguish between Applied Ethics and Philosophy
- describe Applied Ethics and Ethics
- explain Applied Ethics and Applied Philosophy
- discuss different fields of Applied Ethics
- analyse three theories associated with Applied Ethics
- evaluate some principles on Applied Ethical discussion

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces to you first of all the concept of ethics, three major areas of Ethics – Normative Ethics, Meta Ethics and Applied Ethics. Thus, it makes an attempt to analyse what is the nature of Applied Ethics and its different fields. We have also tried to examine here the difference between Applied Ethics and Philosophy, Applied Ethics and Ethics, Applied Ethics and Applied Philosophy. Besides, three theories and some important principles associated with Applied Ethics will also be discussed.

1.3 CONCEPT OF ETHICS

Ethics is a special branch of Philosophy. Ethics is related to the Greek word 'Ethos', which means custom, habit. The main task of Ethics is to give an account of the ways in which human beings ought to act. So, Ethics can be called the science of character, habits of activity or conduct of human beings. Ethics is a moral Philosophy or Philosophical study about morality, moral problems and moral judgement. Therefore, we can say that as a science of character, ethics systematizes, defends and recommends concepts of right and wrong behaviour.

1.4 AREAS OF ETHICS

The field of ethics is commonly divided into three parts – Meta Ethics, Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics.

1.4.1 Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics is the study of how to determine ethical values. Normative ethics tries to arrive at a moral standard that regulate right and wrong conduct. Normative ethics always deals with some norms and tries to present the norms according to which they evaluate our actions. It tries to give a theory about the appropriate ethical norms and seeks to influence our actions. The key assumption of Normative ethics is that there is only one ultimate

criterion of moral conduct, and it may be a single rule or set of principles

1.4.2 Meta Ethics

Meta Ethics is a subject concerned with the study of the foundation of ethics. It investigates the sources from where the principles of ethics come and what they mean. Meta Ethics is a kind of philosophical enquiry or theory, which is also called Analytical Ethics. Meta Ethics is distinct from Normative Ethics. The term Meta Ethics was first introduced by logical positivists. Meta-Ethics is concerned primarily with clarification and understanding of the moral concepts. The term Meta Ethics implies that we are not taking part in the practice of ethics itself. But Meta Ethics reflects on that practice. It is not concerned with providing any ethical norms. In Meta Ethics various ethically significant terms are analysed. One of the most popular ethical terms taken up for analysis is 'good'. The problem of universalizability of moral language is also included within the scope of meta ethics. The Question of whether and in what sense morality is subjective or objective, relative or absolute is all included under the heading of Meta- Ethics.

1.4.3 Applied Ethics

Applied Ethics is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical theory to real life situation. Applied Ethics is the study of the use of ethical values. Applied ethics tries to resolve the controversial and moral issues such as animal rights, environmental concerns, Medical ethics, Media ethics, Bioethics etc.

1.5 NATURE OF APPLIED ETHICS

The word 'Applied' means 'to put into practice'. Applied ethics is an area of ethics. It is a discipline of philosophy, which means philosophy of action. It is the method used to identify morally correct course of action in

our life. These ethical principles are applied to solve moral problems in practical life. Thus, Applied ethics denotes the application of principles of ethics in our day to day life.

Applied ethics has its impact in various areas of life such as Journalism, law, medicine, engineering, business etc.

Applied ethics is used to solve various problems in personal and professional lives. It defines, organizes and explains ethical issues which have their application in daily life.

Thus, Applied ethics attempts to study the application of ethics to real life situation.

Brenda Almond is the co-founder of the society for Applied Philosophy stated that "Applied ethics is a philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint of a particular issue in private and public life that are matters of moral judgement".



LET US KNOW

Brenda Almond is Emeritus Prof. of moral and social philosophy at the University of Hull. She studied philosophy under A.J. Ayer at University College and University of London. She is the President of the Philosophical Society of England and Vice President of the society for Applied Philosophy. Her books include –The Fragmenting Family, Exploring Ethics, Moral Concerns, The Philosophical Quest.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: State whether the following statements are true or false:

(a) Ethics is a science of human conduct. (True/ False)

(b) Ethics is divided into two primary areas. (True/False)

(c) Meta ethics tries to resolve the controversial issues like abortion and euthanasia. (True/False)

(d) Applied ethics focuses its attention to actual practical problems related to our lives. (True/False)

Q2: What are Normative ethics and Meta ethics? (Answer in about 20 words)

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Q3: Write on the nature of Applied Ethics. (Answer in about 30 words)

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Q4: State the three areas of Ethics.

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Q 5: Name the moral issues related to environmental ethics and applied ethics

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Q 6: What is the meaning of the Greek word 'Ethics'?

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1.6 APPLIED ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY

The term 'philosophy' literally means 'love of wisdom'. Philosophy is basically an attitude and an activity of human mind. Philosophy may be considered as the sum total of all knowledge. It refers to a way of living and thinking. Philosophy is taken to be a pure disinterested search for knowledge. The activity of philosophizing should lead towards wisdom, virtue or happiness. The history of philosophy is as old as mankind. A philosopher is always interested in grasping the essential nature of things. So, Philosophy is a critical and analytical investigation into the concepts employed in different fields of human thinking.

Applied ethics cannot be separated from philosophy. Because as an important field of ethics, applied ethics is a part of philosophy. Philosophy discusses such problems as the ideal or the purpose of life, the norms of right actions and the theories of good and evil. Applied ethics not only studies ideas and theories from the general studies of goodness and right actions but also finds out the way to solve these problems. On the other hand,

Philosophy can only analyse and clarify moral problems but can not help to solve these problems.

1.7 APPLIED ETHICS AND ETHICS

Literally, Ethics means the science of custom or habits of man. It is the science of the habitual conduct of man. Ethics stresses more on manners, morals as well as character of human beings. Ethics deals with morality of human acts through the medium of natural reasons. Ethics teaches us how to judge accurately the moral goodness or badness of any human action. Ethics is considered to be the study dealing with the philosophical aspect of human action and trying to assess the question of right and wrong and also judge the moral consequences of such human action and inactive.

So, Ethics gives us theoretical direction to lead our lives. But Applied Ethics gives us practical direction of how to apply ethical principles to real life situations. Applied ethics as an area of ethics analyses, clarifies, and also tries to solve moral problems.

1.8 APPLIED ETHICS AND APPLIED PHILOSOPHY

The word 'applied' is a technical term describing a variety of new philosophical enterprises. Applied means "to put into practice". Applied Ethics focuses more closely on ethical discussion. But **Applied Philosophy covers within its scope the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical discussion. Applied Philosophy is the application of philosophy to everyday problems.** Applied Philosophy discusses metaphysical issues like man's place in nature, the nature of personhood, the social implications of scientific and technological change etc.

Applied ethics likes to resolve controversial moral issues.

Both Applied ethics and Applied philosophy are sometimes used as synonymous. But the area of Applied Philosophy is broader than the area of Applied Ethics because Applied Philosophy covers within its discussion metaphysical, epistemological and ethical aspects. But Applied Ethics discusses only the ethical aspects of our lives.



ACTIVITY: 1.1

What do you mean by Applied philosophy? Do you think it is relevant in the present context?

Ans:.....

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q7: State one moral issue related to applied ethics.

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Q8: Can ethics be separated from philosophy? (Answer in about 70 words)

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1.9 DIFFERENT FIELDS OF APPLIED ETHICS

There are various fields of Applied Ethics. Some of these are given below–

- Animal Ethics.
- Bioethics.
- Business Ethics.
- Computer Ethics.
- Educational Ethics.
- Environmental Ethics.
- Hospitality Ethics.
- Human right issues (eg. gender Ethics, sexism, classism, racism, capital punishment)
- International Ethics (eg. world hunger)
- Legal Ethics.
- Marketing Ethics.
- Media Ethics/Journalism
- Medical Ethics.
- Military Ethics
- Neuro Ethics.

- Public Administration.
- Research Ethics.
- Sexual Ethics.
- Ethics in social work.
- Sports Ethics.
- **Animal Ethics**

  The main concept of Animal Ethics is that non-human animals should be treated with the same consideration and similar interest as human beings. Animals are used in laboratory for dissection, in biomedical research. It is the duty of every human being to show kindness towards the animals.



Peter Singer is an Australian Philosopher and Prof. of Bioethics at Princeton University and Laureate Professor at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne.

- **Bioethics**

  Bioethics literally means “life ethics”. It is a very broad term and a very broad field of study. Bioethics is a discipline with ethical issues raised by new developments in the field of medicine and biological science. Bioethics makes us seek after what is good and right and what is pleasant life. This makes life lovable and pleasant to live with people and in harmony with the environment. This is total Bioethics. Bioethics education stresses on improving the quality of human life. Some important issues of Bioethics are Abortion, Euthanasia, Surrogate mother, Cloning, Biotechnology, Birth Control technology, Disability rights, Genetic research, and Mental health etc.

- **Business Ethics**

  Business Ethics examines the moral controversies relating to the social and moral responsibilities in business practices. Business ethics analyses the problems and dilemmas created by business practices. Business ethics focuses its attention mainly on the question of policy. All problems arising in business sector should be managed with appropriate attention to ethical concern.

- **Computer Ethics**

  The field of computer is very broad. In this field computing professionals have to face certain situations where they will have to make ethical decisions. As a field of Applied Ethics computer ethics helps the computing professionals to make decisions regarding professional and social conduct.

- **Educational Ethics**

  The major aim of education should be to harmonize people, to enlighten both mind and hearts of individuals on right living. Educational ethics helps to identify moral dilemma in the field of education and offers alternative solution.

- **Environmental Ethics**

  Environmental ethics studies the moral relationship of human being to the environment. The main objective of Environmental ethics is the conservation of life on earth. Environmental ethics is a new area of philosophy and it emerged as an academic discipline only in 1970. The protection of the natural environment is the practical and moral concern for mankind. The main purpose of Environmental ethics is based on promoting this view. Nature has provided climate, water, soil, air, place etc. in our lives. In today's world we face a range of environmental problems, such as global warming, deforestation, reduction in biodiversity etc. So, it is our duty to preserve our environment. This is the main aim of Environmental ethics.

- **Hospitality Ethics**

  Hospitality is the relation between the guest and the host. Hospitality ethics is a discipline which studies the usage of hospitality and how it is applied to real life situation – That means how the friendly and generous relation between the guest and the host should be maintained.

- **Human Right Issues**

  Human Rights are the basic rights and freedom, to which all human beings are entitled. Human right education helps us to develop a positive self image and for the all round development for human personality. Human right issues include gender ethics, sexism, classism, racism, capital punishment etc. Applied ethics helps us to solve the problems that arise regarding these issues.

- **International Ethics**

  International ethics is concerned with the ethical obligations among the different nations. International ethics provides guidelines to overcome conflicts among them and shows the way as to how moral outcome can be achieved.

- **Legal Ethics**

  Legal ethics provides an ethical code that governs the conduct of persons engaged in the practice of law and in legal sector. Legal ethics deals with the study and application of what is right and wrong, good and bad in the practice of law. Legal ethics assists the law profession and provides practical rules, regulations and guidelines that will protect both the public and the lawyer.

- **Marketing Ethics**

  Marketing ethics is the area of Applied Ethics which deals with the moral principles behind the practices and regulations of marketing.

- **Media Ethics/Journalism**

  Media ethics analyses and examines specific ethical principles in the field of broadcast, media (the main means of mass communication, especially television, radio and newspaper) films, theatre, journalism etc. Media persons and journalists have to face different challenges. Ethics of Media and Journalism comprises the principles of ethical and good practices which help the media persons and journalists to solve different problems faced by them.

- **Medical Ethics**

  Medical Ethics is as old as Hippocratic oath. The Hippocratic Oath dates back to 460 BC where the Greek physician emphasized the moral ethical values and respect for the human person. Medical Ethics is one of the important areas of Applied Ethics. It is mainly concerned with the application of general principles to moral problems of medical profession. Medical Ethics analyses the way how moral decisions are made in the field of medicine. In medical profession knowledge is directed to alleviating human suffering, elevate human well being and prolong human life. Medical ethics deals with such issues and helps the physicians and other health professionals to solve the ethical dilemmas, which arise from the changed scenario of health care and increasing decline of moral values associated with medical fraternity and healthcare delivery.

- **Military Ethics**

  The members of the armed forces should lead a disciplined life. Members will have to act in a manner established by military tradition. Military ethics consists in a set of practices and philosophy which will help the members to act a disciplined life guided by the values and standards of morality.

- **Neuro Ethics**

  Neuro Ethics is the branch of medicine and biology concerned with nervous system. Neuro ethics is the ethics of neuroscience. There are tremendous developments in the field of neuroscience. Neuro ethics deals with the ethical issues related to the development in neuroscience and offers suitable solutions to solve the dilemmas.

- **Public Administration**

  In Public Administration a cordial relationship between administrators and the public should be maintained. During the completion of daily duties a public administrator will have to establish and maintain ethical behaviour with the employees also. Public administrative ethics attempts to give decisions which are based upon ethical principles and what the general public and employees would accept as correct.

- **Research Ethics**

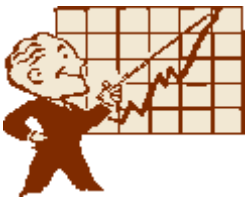
  In research, a systematic investigation should be made in order to establish facts and to reach new conclusion. So, the rights of people as well as their privacy should be protected to carry out the research work. Research ethics deals with the application of moral principles to a variety of topics involved in the field of research work. It also offers guidelines for the protection of the researchers.

- **Sexual Ethics**

  Sexual ethics includes monogamy versus polygamy, sexual relations without love, homosexual relation and extramarital affairs etc. When some conflicting situations arise then sexual ethics provides guidelines to resolve these problems.

- **Sports Ethics**

  Sports ethics deals with the moral issues and dilemma that arise in the field of sports. Ethics in sports is very essential for building a good sports career of a sports person. Sports coaches are expected to conform to ethical standards in a number of areas: humanity, relationship, commitment, co-operation, integrity, advertising, confidentiality, safety and competence. Sports ethics helps sports persons by providing ethical guidelines to resolve difficult issues to them.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q9: What do you mean by bio-ethics? (Answer in about 20 words)

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Q10: Point out three fields of applied ethics.

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Q11: What is environmental ethics? (Answer in about 30 words)

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Q12: Give some examples of environmental problems.

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Q13: State whether the following statements are true or false:

a) Philosophy investigates the concept employed in different fields of human thinking.

b) The area of Applied philosophy is not broader than the area of Applied Ethics.

c) Applied Philosophy is the application of philosophy to everyday problems.

Q14: What is the main difference between Applied Philosophy and Applied Ethics? (Answer in about 30 words)

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Q15: What do you mean by the term “Applied”?

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Q16: State five different fields of Applied Ethics.

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1.10 THREE THEORIES ASSOCIATED WITH APPLIED ETHICS

Applied ethics is an application of normative principles to medical fields. As there are basically three different kinds of Normative Ethics, there are also three basic theories associated with applied ethics.

Utilitarianism, Deontological Ethics and Virtue Ethics are the three theories related with Applied Ethics.

Utilitarianism: Where practical consequences of various policies are evaluated on the assumption that the right policy will be one, which seeks to promote the greatest happiness for the largest number of people. According to Utilitarianism, an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable rather than unfavourable.

Deontological Ethics: It is based on rules. It is an obligation to perform ‘right’ action, regardless of actual consequences. Deontological Ethics is sometimes called duty ethics.

Virtue Ethics: Virtue Ethics is one of the oldest normative traditions of western philosophy. It is derived from Aristotle’s Ethics. Virtue Ethics emphasizes the role of character and virtue in moral philosophy rather than either doing one’s duty or acting in order to bring about good consequence.

1.11 SOME IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES ON APPLIED ETHICAL DISCUSSION

- Personal benefit – Personal benefit is an action which produces benefit to the individual.
- Social Benefit -Social benefit is an action which produces benefit to the society as a whole.
- Principle of benevolence – This principle insists on helping those in need.

- Principle of paternalism – This principle assists others in pursuing their best interest or the interests of their choice.
- Principle of harm – Not to harm others.
- Principle of honesty – Not to deceive others.
- Principle of lawfulness –One is not supposed to violate the law.
- Principle of autonomy – This principle acknowledges a person's right to due process and fair distribution of benefit. Compensation is to be given for any harm done to the person.
- Rights – It acknowledges a person's right to life, right to information, right to privacy, free expression and safety.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q17: State whether the following statements are true or false—

a) Utilitarianism is based mainly on rules. (True/False)

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b) Virtue ethics is a type of normative ethics.(True/False)

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c) Principle of honesty is an important principle of Applied Ethics.(True/False)

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d) Applied ethics do not give importance to social benefit.(True/False)

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Q18: State the three theories associated with Applied Ethics.

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Q19: State five important principles which are commonly applied to Applied Ethics.

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Q 20: What do you mean by 'Duty Ethics'? (Answer in about 20 words)

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1.12 LET US SUM UP

- Ethics is a special area of philosophy and it is a philosophical study about morality.
- Meta Ethics is a subject concerned with the study of the foundation of ethics. It investigates the sources from where the principles of ethics come. And it is a kind of philosophical enquiry or theory, which is also called Analytical Ethics
- Normative Ethics is the study of how to determine ethical values. Normative ethics tries to arrive at the moral standard that regulates right and wrong conduct.
- Applied Ethics is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply ethical theory to real life situations. Applied Ethics is the study of the use of ethical values.
- Applied ethics can't be separated from philosophy. Because as an important field of ethics, applied ethics is a part of philosophy. It not only studies ideas and theories from the general point of view of goodness and right actions but also finds out the way to solve these problems.
- Applied Philosophy covers within its scope the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical discussion. Applied Philosophy is the application of philosophy to everyday problems.
- Bioethics is a discipline with ethical issues raised by new development in the field of medicine and biological science.

- Business Ethics examines moral controversies relating to the social and moral responsibilities in business practices. It analyses problems and dilemmas created by business practices.
- Environmental ethics studies the moral relationship of human beings to the environment. The main objective of Environmental ethics is the conservation of life on earth.
- Medical Ethics is one of the important areas of Applied ethics. It is mainly concerned with the application of general principles to the moral problems of medical profession.
- Neuro Ethics is the branch of medicine and biology concerned with nervous system. Neuro ethics is the ethics of neuroscience.
- Sports ethics deals with the moral issues and dilemma involved in the field of sports. Ethics in sports is very essential for building a good career of an ideal sports person.
- Virtue ethics is derived from Aristotle's Ethics. It emphasizes the role of character and virtue in moral philosophy rather than either doing one's duty or acting in order to bring about good consequence.



1.13 FURTHER READING

1) Rachels, J (ed). 1997, *Moral Problems,* Harper Collins Publishers.
2) Singer, Peter, 2011, *Applied Ethics*, Oxford University Press.
3) Singer, Peter, 1979, *Practical Ethics*, Cambridge University Press.
4) John, H. Piet & Ayodhya Prasad. *An Introduction to Applied Ethics.*



1.14 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: (a) True (b) False (c) False (d) True

Ans to Q No 2: Normative ethics is the study of how to determine ethical values and Meta ethics studies the concepts of ethics.

Ans. to Q No 3: Applied ethics is an area of ethics. Applied ethics tries to resolve some controversial moral issues involved in the field of medicine, law, Journalism, business etc.

Ans to Q No 4: Normative Ethics, Meta Ethics, and Applied Ethics

Ans to Q No 5: Animal rights, Medical ethics, Media ethics

Ans to Q No 6: Greek word 'Ethica'

Ans to Q No 7: Animal ethics

Ans to Q No 8: Applied ethics can't be separated from philosophy. Because as an important field of ethics, applied ethics is a part of philosophy. Philosophy discusses such problems as the ideal or the purpose of life, the norms of right actions and the theories of good and evil. Applied ethics not only studies ideas and theories from the general studies of goodness and right actions but also finds out the way to solve these problems.

Ans to Q No 9: Bioethics is a discipline with ethical issues raised by new development in the field of medicine and biological science.

Ans to Q No 10: abortion, euthanasia, Surrogate mother

Ans to Q No 11: Environmental ethics studies the moral relationship of human being to the environment. The main objectives of Environmental ethics is the conservation of life on earth.

Ans to Q No 12: global warming, deforestation, reduction in biodiversity etc.

Ans to Q No 13: (a) True (b) False (c) True

Ans to Q No 14: Applied philosophy covers within its scope epistemological, metaphysical and ethical discussion. But Applied Ethics discusses ethical issues only and tries to resolve controversies arising from these issues.

Ans to Q No 15: The term Applied means to 'put into practice'.

Ans to Q No 16: Five important fields of Applied Ethics are– Animal Ethics, Bioethics, Environmental Ethics, Medical Ethics, Research Ethics.

Ans to Q No 17: (a) False (b) True (c) True (d) False

Ans to Q No 18: Utilitarianism, Deontological Ethics, Virtue Ethics.

Ans to Q No 19: Personal benefit, social benefit, principle of benevolence, principle of harm, principle of autonomy

Ans to Q No 20: It is based on rules. It is an obligation to perform 'right action' irrespective of actual consequence



1.15 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q1: What is environmental ethics?

Q2: What are the three parts of ethics?

Q3: What do you mean by applied ethics?

Q4: What is sports ethics?

Q5: What do you mean by medical ethics?

B) Short Questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q1: Distinguish between:

a) Applied Ethics and Philosophy.

b) Applied Ethics and Ethics.

c) Applied Ethics and Applied Philosophy

Q2: Do you find any relationship between applied ethics and philosophy? Briefly explain

Q3: Briefly explain the relationship between applied ethics and ethics.

Q4: What do you mean by applied ethics? Explain briefly with reference to applied philosophy.

D) Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Explain briefly the different areas of ethics.

Q2: Name five important principles related with Applied Ethics. Discuss.

Q3: Discuss briefly— Environmental Ethics, Bioethics, Medical Ethics, Animal Ethics, and Research Ethics.

Q4: What are the different fields of Applied Ethics? Explain

Q5: Discuss the nature of Applied Ethics

Q6: Explain the theories associated with applied ethics.

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