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MORALITY: CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT
Classical philosophy and biology regarded homo-sapiens or human beings as superior to all other living and non-living existents in the physical cosmos. The philosophically assumed homocentric view remained un-interrogated in the antiquity, which considered men as the centre of the universe irrespective of whether he existed individually or in a small or large group, societies or social networks. The dominant homocentric orientation pervaded the theoretical and practical aspects, that is, the conceptual and empirical representations of life.

The un-interrogated homocentric view coupled with the concern or pretension to human welfare relegated and regulated human social relations to prescribed quasi-transcendentals - the norms, conventions and rules. This embedded the assertion that all value flowed from or centred on human existence, that is, human purposes, needs and satisfactions, which then became the organising principles of society or groups. Conduct or influence on conduct came to be understood to fall in the domain of ‘morality’. It appears that with the passage of time conventional rules or norms started to gravitate around the term ‘morality’. The gravitation compelled philosophers to construct various definitions of the term. However, the Oxford Dictionary lexically defines the term as the principle of distinction between good and bad, right and wrong, behaviour and a system of values or principles of

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conduct.

However, mere lexical meaning is not sufficient, for the word ‘moral’ does not only mean ‘morally right’ or ‘morally wrong’ but goes beyond the simple demarcation of right and wrong to place it into the complexity of morality that has a paradigmatic configuration. Sometimes the term morality is used simply as a polar concept to immorality, as a tool for correcting behavior, as when we speak of morality of an action. This difference is obliterated because of certain features morality shares with conventions and law. Frankena lays down three expressions of morality in terms of forms of judgment,

“...certain forms of judgment in which particular objects are said to have or not to have a certain moral quality, obligation, or responsibility...some rules, principles, ideals and virtues that can be expressed in more general judgments and that form the background against which particular judgments are made and reasons given for them...certain sanctions, or additional sources of motivation that are also often expressed in verbal judgments, namely, holding responsible, praising, and blaming...”.1

One may tend to agree with Frankena on the specific characteristics attached to morality. There is therefore an
emphasis on the ‘rule-function’ of morality at the cost of ignoring its function of achieving ideals. A distinct analysis of morality may require it to be characterised by its function, the natural preference for it in society and obviously the prevalent moral sentiments. Moral judgments are concerned with reason, in the sense of cause, or aim, that is, motive, not only because it indicates the tendency of an action to promote good or evil, but also because it is here that praise and blame may be effective in altering the course of a person’s actions.

The use of terms ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ usually qualify actions that may or may not be acceptable, depending on the prevalent standards of behavior, which should not be understood to be static. The dynamics of establishing these prevalent standards depend on the need of the day with ever changing conditions. The prevalent standards have impacted and impact the moral discourse of the time. However, it may be clarified that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are not synonyms of ‘good’ and ‘bad’. The term ‘good’ signifies a positive evaluation, whereas ‘right’ indicates a conduct accepted, authorised or sanctioned according to a particular system of morality. But before progressing further it may be useful to draw out a distinction between ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ in order to get a better understanding.
Morality and Ethics

In common parlance the terms morality and ethics are often used interchangeably. This is primarily because the terms morality and ethics while distinct are deeply interrelated. Weiss explains the distinction between ethics and morality in the sense that man is by nature moral if he conforms to the established practices and customs of his group. He is ethical if he voluntarily obligates himself to live in the light of an ideal good.\(^2\) He further explains the distinction or relationship thus:

“Morality and ethics are related as body to mind, fact to theory, instrument to purpose, present to future, the concrete to the abstract, practice to promise, roots to fruit. The former is indispensable but conforming; the latter is desirable for its sake, though impotent unless supported by the other”.\(^3\)

There is confusion in the elaboration of the distinction between morality and ethics elaborated by Weiss. Initially, the distinction he draws is in terms of the kind of action that ensures morality and ethics, whereas later he establishes a relationship between the two in terms of theory and praxis.

Etymologically ‘morality’ is derived from the Latin word ‘mores’. According to Roth morality is especially concerned with
personally held beliefs, obligations, and the social elements that reinforce decisions. ‘Ethics’ comes from Greek word ‘ethos’ which means character and deals with the rightness and wrongness of action.\(^4\)

Philosophers have traditionally defined ethics as the study of moral judgments and choices, and morality as referring to rules by which such choices are made. Duval, for example, defines morality as beliefs and practices related to the notion of right conduct which is accepted or sanctioned according to some particular system. Ethics is the study of problems of right conduct in the light of moral principles, such as, freedom, justice, responsibility, and so on.\(^5\) Morality, as argued above, implies a standard of conduct. The point is made differently by Lee who argues that morality evolves as systems of standardised conduct.\(^6\) However, ethics is an attempt to rationally understand these evolving standards of conduct.

Morality is ethics in action implying the theoretical features of ethics in relation to practice of morality. It is such an equation which led Johnson to assert that ethics is the theoretical examination of morality.\(^7\) Ethics is purely a theoretical project that refers to practice, that is, doing, acting and behaving, only in so far as it is employed to substantiate its arguments.

Duval also holds such a view and goes on to argue that a
person may have a morality but may have little or no interest in ethics. Morality is set of codes, such as, ‘Do not lie’ or ‘Help others whenever possible’ that do not have as pre-requisite an acquaintance or awareness of ethical theories or principles. Ethics, on the other hand, is an inquiry into the validity and structures of moral principles and whether they are intrinsically binding. Morality then refers to conduct, while ethics is a branch of philosophy and as such is related conduct only as a reflection on it. The relation is simple that we may philosophise conduct, and that is exactly what we do in the study of ethics. So, ethics is the philosophical study of morality.

Morality as Skorupski argues is a conceptual framework within the field of normative thinking about action and feeling but the whole domain is the subject of ethics. Morality exists and continues to exist only within the social sphere. In this sense Frankena argues,

“Morality, of course is social...to a considerable extent...it is also largely social in its origins, sanctions and functions. At first encountered by the individual, at any rate, it is an instrument of society as a whole for the guidance of individuals and smaller groups. It makes demands on individuals that are, initially at least, external to them”.

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Morality is used to refer to what we call moral conduct or standards. It is looking at how good or bad our conduct is, evaluating it through socially accepted norms. Ethics is used to refer to the formal study of those standards or conduct and their justification. In this sense, Lee argues that ethics is not an attempt to regulate conduct which falls under moralities.\(^{11}\)

However, Weiss points out that morality is relative. He asserts that we have agreed beyond moralities to a point where multiplicities or diversities can be recognised and the fact acknowledged as desirable and good. Morality being relative implies diversity in codes of conduct. Weiss argues that relativity helps to interrogated moralities to the point of even deciding which would be better to adopt in a given context of dilemma and have the opportunity of approximating more closely to the status of an ideal social whole.\(^{12}\)

The social wholes allude to systems of morality, which constitute forms of life and therefore moral concepts are integrated and embedded in and are partially constitutive of those forms of life. A form of social life may be distinguished from another by identifying the differences in moral concepts involved in code of conduct determined by the social order of the day. Here, MacIntyre argues,
“...the systematic and self-conscious philosophical analysis of moral concepts will be at the heart of moral philosophy, it can nonetheless never be the whole of moral philosophy. For we have to understand not only the logical interrelations of moral concepts, rules...but also...human purposes and motives and in the theory of society, since different kinds of wants and needs are dominant in different social orders”.

According to Spencer, morality is a code of rules for the regulation of human behaviour through recognition of the existing defects of character. Spencer does not advocate a priori status to moral code, which develops out of human practice. Skorupski agrees,

“It is plausible that moral codes have a special function, such as that of maintaining beneficial cooperation; but it does not seem an a priori truth”.

The human practice determines our moral status, the reflection on individual or collective behaviour and thereby to develop rational codes and establish some stability of moral principles. The collective belongs to the domain of the political and will be taken

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up later. However, for the present it needs to be clarified it is not being argued here that morality has a linear progression. Morality, as the Marxist claim, in every period of history reflects social, political and economic patterns, and symbolise the rise and decline of civilization.

Lee argues that morality does not denote conduct but accepted conduct, which is more or less systematically sanctioned conduct. Since morality is human construct it breeds within an accepted standard therefore there is Christian morality, Confucian morality and so on. Conventional morality is that body of conduct sanctioned by the custom or habit of the group to which an individual belongs; Christian morality is conduct sanctioned by the principles of Christianity, Confucian morality is conduct sanctioned by Confucius and so on.\textsuperscript{16}

However, the Marxist thinkers point out that morality evolves, intentionally or unintentionally, from the living relations in the society. Engels points out,

“Men, consciously or unconsciously, derive their moral ideas in the last resort from the practical relations on which their class position is based – from the economic relations in which they carry on production and exchange”.\textsuperscript{17}
The Marxist argument primarily revolves around class antagonism. Nowell-Smith without taking recourse to class antagonism holds that morality is,

“…concerned with relations between men, with how they ought to behave towards each other, with general rules governing relations between man and man a society ought to adopt”.18

Nowell-Smith’s view asserts that morality or moral rules are adoptions by the society and not a characteristic of the society. Morality is relevant only in a society irrespective of whether it is individual morality or group morality. The interrelations within the society set up moral principles and it is only within the social set up there are moralities.

**Concept of Morality**

As we normally understand the concept of morality it may conveniently be divided into descriptive and normative senses. In the first sense, morality is the prevalent code of conduct in a society held to be the guiding principles in differentiating right and wrong. In the second sense, morality has never been claimed by any particular society, group, or an individual. This normative sense of morality refers to a code of conduct as the best of the
alternatives. The two senses have rendered the concept of morality somewhat ambiguous.

The commonality between descriptive and normative senses of ‘morality’ is that in both the senses morality refers to the guiding principles of behaviour that entail the liberal value of avoiding harm to others. Gert defines morality as,

“…a[n] [informal] public system applying to all rational persons governing behaviour which affects others and which has the minimisation of evils [or harm] as its end [or goal], and which includes what are commonly known as moral rules as its core”.¹⁹

Gert is asserting that morality is a ‘public system’ guiding conduct, which is equally applicable to all persons and is part of the judgment of behaviour of others. However, it should not be understood that morality as a public system requires that everyone should agree on all their moral judgments. The disagreements cannot be denied but that disagreements occur within the framework of an agreement present as guiding principles. Gert is better understood by an example, in any game, let us say, ‘football’ there is at work a publicly observable and agreed system. The referees of the game can, within prescribed limits, disagree in their decisions, say, in calling fouls, but the
underlying principle of agreement is that players are to follow the referees’ decision. Gert’s discourse on morality presents an ‘informal’ public system of rules guiding behaviour, which draws its authority from its own intrinsic value. Morality is accepted without any formal decision or procedure while its champions claim it to be rationally acceptable. The claim to rationality can only be based on the assumption that all rational persons would put forward a system of morality.

However, when talking of system of morality the discourse is not only with regard to governing behavior affecting others but also to govern behaviour that affects the agent herself/himself, for example, a supposedly immoral behaviour like taking drugs, not developing ones talent, etc. This view is contrary to the Utilitarian notion that morality is to be a guide to behaviour that directly or indirectly affects others and the individual with respect to himself is free not to accept the prevailing morality.

The Utilitarians claim that morality is to be understood as having the goal of minimising evil or harm and thereby increasing happiness for greater number of people. Utilitarianism basic tenet is that the reduction of harm is essential to producing the greatest amount happiness. All those who use morality in its normative sense agree that the kind of actions that directly or indirectly harm others, and the kind of actions that prevent harms, are the kind of
actions with which morality is concerned. The paradigm of moral principle involves rules that prohibit causing harm directly or indirectly, like as rules prohibiting killing, causing pain, deceiving, and breaking promises. Even those precepts that require or encourage positive action, such as helping the needy, are almost always related to preventing or relieving harms. An examination of the paradigm examples of those moral precepts that are moral rules makes it clear that all of them are prohibitions of those kinds of actions that directly or indirectly cause harm to others; an examination of the paradigm examples of those moral precepts that are moral ideals makes it clear that all of them involve the prevention of harm. It is argued that all rational persons would put forward these paradigm moral precepts, like, do not kill, do not lie, help the needy, and so on, to guide the behavior of all moral agent.

The assumption of rationality in morality can be under challenge in the normative concept of morality. The normative definition, in contrast to the descriptive, allows as meaningful the commonly asked question, ‘why should I be moral?’ The question is also compatible with the view that it is not always irrational to be immoral. However, the normative definition guarantees that it is never irrational to be moral instead of the framework of rationality imposed on morality. The normative definition then
explains why we want others to act morally and why others want us to act morally. The question ‘why I should be moral?’ can be rephrased to the requirement that people in general should think and act morally asserting the general usefulness of morality as a method of resolving social disputes. Again, if one who has adopted the moral viewpoint of impartiality and empathy for others asks why he or she should obey the moral rules, then it is necessary only to point out that impartial persons would choose to do so. But if this question is asked in its deepest sense of why one should adopt the moral point of view in the first place, it is exceedingly difficult to answer. This is especially true whenever acting morally occasions serious loss for the individual agent, like in sacrificing one’s interest to benefit another.20

Although most philosophers do not use morality in the descriptive sense, nevertheless, ethical relativists and postmodernists claim the validity of different described moralities. The ethical relativists deny the possibility of universal normative morality and do not treat morality as being merely linguistic and used merely in the descriptive sense. They assert that the consideration of morality as universal code of conduct as being approved by all rational persons under any reasonable and possible conditions is untenable. This does not in any sense deny that there are relative rules that if adopted bring about and

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maintain harmonious relations between men in a society, which change with time and are ever evolving, however, it is difficult to pinpoint its origin.

**Development of Morality**

Philosophers like Sidgwick find explanations of the origin of morality superfluous, his contention is that,

“...the principle in man that governs or ought to govern is regarded merely as the faculty of knowing our true good, together with its main causes or conditions, it hardly seems important to inquire how this faculty originated, any more than it is important for a geometer to investigate the origin of the spatial faculty...investigating into the moral condition of children and savages, and even animals, and more or less conjectural theories of the soul's growth and development, have been commonly regarded as necessary appendages or introductions to modern – ethical discussion”.

On the contrary, Ferm not only outlines an origin of morality but insists it cannot be equated with the rise in philosophical speculation,
“One should not suppose that philosophic speculation created the moral problem as a historical event…the moral situation is as old as man. Prior to the rise of philosophic reflection morals existed in a natural state and their expression in literature was in some such form as myth, poetry or legal procedure”.22

However, a reading of the above shows a contradiction for it is claimed that the origin of morality is with the creation of moral problems reflected in myths, poetry or legal procedures, which obviously arise out of human realisation. The realisation leading to its expression in whatever form cannot be denied to be philosophic, however rudimentary. But then it is also claimed that morality is as old as man leaving no room for the creation of the moral problem leading to the origin of morality and makes it appear as if morality has descended from the heavens.

The emphasis on the concept of morality and its development has emerged mainly but not exclusively out of the Western Philosophy. Western morality is dominated by individualism and Protestantism. Western philosophers have argued that the original source of morality is the development of moral consciousness, individual or social, which in turn depends on the level of intellectual or cognitive development. This has led

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many philosophers, like Mayers, to argue

“…this mental advance constitutes merely the condition precedent of real civilization, the distinctive characteristic of which must be a true morality”.23

This development finds, according to them, objective expression of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ leading to religious ideas and customs. Mayers argues,

“One of the most important facts of the moral history of the race is the gradual moralisation of man’s at first unethical conceptions of the gods, and the rise out of the unethical religions of primitive times of the great ethical world religions”.24

Hardly anyone will disagree that clearer perception of morality either modified the prevalent religious practices or brought about new religion. Necessarily, the advent of a new religion brings with it a clearer conception of the expected human conduct. Barnes rightly points out that from the twenty-fourth century B.C. onward,

“…most popular impressions of Mesopotamian culture held by western peoples were drawn from their enemies especially the Hebrews, a legend
arose of the shocking immorality and debauchery of these people of ancient Near Orient. Babylon has commonly become a proverb of sexual abandon and degeneracy on a large scale”.

The created moral problem saw ancient religions cluster around the biological necessity of survival and corollary laid stress on fertility and the reproduction rites, to the extent that institution of young women as sacred harlots of gods developed. These institutions naturally lend themselves to sex orgies in the name of gods. However, Barnes points out,

“Family morality seems to have been about as high among the people of ancient Mesopotamia as it was elsewhere in the age. The code of Hammurabi prescribes severe punishment for adultery, especially for the woman. In a patriarchal society, fidelity on the part of the wife was especially demanded so as to insure legitimate off-spring who could carry on the appropriate patriarchal rites”.

This eventually necessitated the development of morality regulating small insular societies, but with the increase in interaction between these insular isolated societies the moral code started to get a more universalised form, increasing the
generality with time and advancement of human society. A discussion of the stages of this development will be a digression for this thesis. However, the earliest attempts to universalise are easily detectible with the Greeks, as Tufts points out,

“…[The Greek] poets, philosophers, and moralists of the fifth century are directed for the most part against the unbridled license of men, their lack of discipline and of obedience to law”.27

The dominant concern was unearthing the origin and regularities of physical world and the place of human soul in it. Tufts has argued,

“Greek ethics began thus with a problem which was completely parallel to the initial problem of physics”.28

The problem of Greek morality arises primarily from the requirements of the maintenance of city-states. The controversy generated from this in turn required examination of, for the Greeks, two self-evident presuppositions, viz., the validity of law and obedience to law. The analogy was with unchanging nature exhibiting universal moral principles for regulating human conduct irrespective of time and place. Tufts points out,

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“[for Protagoras]…the gods gave to all men in equal measure a sense of justice, and of ethical respect or reverence, in order that in the struggle of life they might be able to form permanent unions for mutual preservation. The nature of practical life in primary ethical feelings is which impel man to union in society and in the state”.29

The later sophists too concentrated on moral issues as part of the training they imparted for political and social success. For the Sophists whatever was held good for an individual was regarded as justice or as law and therefore good for the state. Since the state laws are relative, therefore, customs and convention vary from state to state. The sophists argued that even in the same state the laws change in the hands of the ruling elite. The later Greeks, as mentioned above required universalisation of values, took the state to be the measure of morality, which may be conventions but are liable to be changed if so required by the state and not the individual. This view is echoed by Plato when he says,

“…the ethical end of an individual has to be measured by the perfection of the State and the

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perfection of the State determines the moral excellence of each individual”.\textsuperscript{30}

Socrates shifted the focus by maintaining that morality involves ‘knowledge of the good’ and true morality consists in having insight into the good. Plato’s \textit{Republic} contends that morality was invented by the strong, who propagated moral rules for those they governed in order to manipulate them more easily. MacIntyre sums up Plato’s view,

“…moral concepts are only intelligible against the background of a certain sort of social order; he then tries to delineate it, providing or attempting to provide at the same time a justification in terms of the order of the universe”.\textsuperscript{31}

Plato was interested to justify actions as moral or immoral and he thought that moral actions benefit the doer and immoral actions injure the doer. He tried to show that acting morally is in the best interest of all that is for the society as a whole.

For Aristotle, morality consists in doing certain actions not because we see them to be right in themselves but because we see them to be such as will bring us nearer to ‘the good for man’. So, like Aristotle, Democritus also regarded morality to be its own
reward. However, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle argue that morality consists in virtue and that virtue is mainly or completely its own reward. The Greek concept of morality is important for while rejecting the mystic doctrine of good life leading to immortal existence in a world-to-come and to apprehend the real good life as providing surety on the greatest amount of happiness here and now and to show how this happiness could be guaranteed and acquired. Therefore, the Greeks typically conceived of morality in terms of harmonious character.

There is a break after the Greek view and questions of morality resurface in the medieval period when philosophers entered into the theological rather than purely philosophical enterprise. The Judeo-Christian moral tradition casts morality in terms of obedience to the commandments. The religious moralists may concede secular moralities that are logically independent of religion and require an independent understanding of the meaning of moral terms. In this sense, Nielson points out,

“Secular morality starts with the assumption that happiness and self-awareness is fundamental human goods and that pain and suffering are never desirable in themselves...[and] tried to show that a man with secular knowledge alone can bind clear

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and permanent sources of happiness…”.  

In early modern philosophy, Hobbes argued that morality is based on a social contract designed for self-preservation and therefore the natural right to defend oneself is not abandoned in the contract. The concept of morality and religion are socialised and become intertwined singular aspect of life. The intertwining takes place primarily because of the care for societal matters, the basis of secular morality, is also involved in all religions and their practices. However, the two terms refer conceptually to different phenomena and are treated separately. Religion engages and occupies beliefs, attitudes and practices that relate human beings to supernatural agencies or sacred realities, whereas, morality has usually been thought of as a way of regulating the conduct of individuals in communities. Secular morality represents a response to the problem of cooperation among competing persons or groups and aims at settling disputes that may arise in social contexts. The complex inter-relationship between religion and morality is illustrated by the fact that moral legitimating may sometimes involve appeal to shared beliefs involving the supernatural or the sacred. 

Some thinkers and philosophers doubt the usefulness of religion in today’s context. Marx did not present a thesis or justify
his views on religion but understood it to be an effort to maintain dominance of advantaged layer or ruling groups of the society through moral norms and codes. Marx rejects religion characterising it as opposed to development of full human freedom and moral responsibility.\textsuperscript{34} The history of philosophy shows an intertwining between religion and morality, thinkers, however, like Marx, felt the link between religion and morality as an unfortunate continuation having outlived its utility.

Historically morality has been divided into two broad categories, viz., teleological and deontological. Nowell–Smith while arguing for the teleological distinguishes the two schools,

“Teleologists regard moral rules as rules for producing what is good...and avoiding what is bad...They are to be judged empirically on the basis of their tendency to promote what is good and prevent what is bad...[and] deontologists regard rule as fundamental. Moral rules are not rules for achieving ideal ends, dependent for their validity on their success or failure in bringing about these ends, but are worthy of obedience in their own right; and a moral system is a system of rules in which some rules are regarded as depending on others...”\textsuperscript{35}

Roth maintains from the deontological perspective that actions
are intrinsically right or wrong, regardless of the consequences that they produce. However, this theoretical approach to morality lays stress on what is obligatory, what one ought to do, but with no reference at all to value or conception of goodness. On the other hand teleological moral theory is based on the intuition that an action cannot be right if it brings about a bad state of affairs.

Hume, following Protagoras and Hobbes, felt that morality is a system of constraints on conduct with the central purpose to protect the interests of others. The moral system then presents itself to an agent as a check on his natural inclinations or spontaneous tendencies to act. Hume asserts that morality is needed to solve basic problems in life. Mackie, however, feels the issue to rest elsewhere. He feels that limited resources and sympathies together generate both competition leading to conflict and absence of what would be mutual beneficial co-operation.

Kant, a deontologist, viewed morality as that to which everyone wishes to bind everyone alike through rational will. For him, moral philosophy has as its goal, the highest good, that is, human beings follow moral laws out of their free will realising and in fulfillment of their duties or responsibilities. Such actions are the highest good, because they are absolute and without conditions serve only the fulfillment of moral law. For Kant the moral law is:

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“Always act in such a way that the principle of your action can serve as a universal law”.\textsuperscript{39}

Kant asserts that we may act according to maxims that we can universalise. The formulation of these universal laws is logically prior to experience and not impressed by experience. Morality, according to him, is rules ascertained through reason. He stressed the importance of willing what is right, and adopting only a principle that must be a desirable and universal law, which is then a ‘categorical imperative’ and is a measure of all action. Kant maintained that actions are morally defensible to the extent that they respect the freedom, dignity, and autonomy of people.

Fagothey argues that morality is the quality of human acts which helps to identify right or wrong, good or bad. He therefore distinguishes human acts as belonging to subjective and objective morality. Subjective morality looks at the act as conditioned by the individual agents knowledge and consent, by his background, training, emotional stability, and other personal behaviour. It asks whether the act agrees or disagrees with the agents own sense of right and wrong. Objective morality looks at the act simply as a deed done, independently of any modifications or voluntariness on the part of the doer.\textsuperscript{40}

Kantian ethics is subjective morality since it requires that
the moral agent exercises his own sense of right and wrong. However, for Hegel, morality is reversion of the will to itself, which is purely spiritual and is therefore simply objective and assumes no binding duty towards family, society and state. Hegel shifted the focus of morality from subjective to objective morality.\(^41\)

Bentham, the utilitarian, shifts the debate from the subjective/objective dichotomy to utility. He argues that the fundamental principle or criteria of morality is utility. For him utility is the end of moral action and argues,

“…the art of maximizing happiness: it gives the code of laws by which that conduct is suggested whose result will, the whole human existence, being taken into account, leave the greatest quantity of felicity”.\(^42\)

Bentham tries to show that morality consists in producing consequences which contribute towards the general welfare, and that motives do not count at all save as they happen to influence the consequences one way or another. He therefore enumerated the principle of ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ and the action which brings this about considered as moral. Morality as utility has three different sub-approaches, viz. hedonistic, eudemonistic and ideal. The first treats pleasure as the
essentiality; the second argues that value can be consistently understood in terms of pleasure and pain and that the extent of happiness denotes the value of an act; and the third, presumes an altruistic view and talks in terms of the greater good. Bentham's utilitarianism is hedonistic, whereas Mill sticks to the ideal sense to propound that utilitarianism is related to rational choice and purposes of action.

Kant, Mill and Bentham did not formulate a new foundation of morality, in fact, like Hobbes they only provide a justification for accepted or prevalent morality. However, Nietzsche takes up morality differently as Jaspers interprets his views,

“…[Nietzsche's] attack on morality is not an attack on morality in general, but an attack of one morality through another morality where we put an unconditional value on something, there we speak morally and vice versa, where we speak morally; there we are talking something as unconditional...”.

Nietzsche refuted dominant European morality by depicting it as 'slave morality', created by the weak to enhance their ability of bearing the suffering inflicted by their superiors. Nietzsche deviating from the traditional justifications of morality based his concept on freedom or self-creation. However, Nietzsche's
contemporaries the pragmatist philosophers, like Dewey point out,

“All morality is social...our conduct is socially conditioned whether we perceive the fact or not...it is consistent to say that morality ought to be social for...morals are social. The question of ought...is a question of better and worse in social affairs” [Italics in the original].

For the pragmatists morality is not the product as is made out of an inner intuitive faculty, but is the product of the society.

Among the contemporary philosophers, Habermas’s approach is centered on morality and political philosophy. He shifts the focus of the critique of reason from forms of transcendental subjectivity to forms of communication or idea of practical reason in terms of communicative reason. Like Kant, Habermas distinguishes the types of practical reasoning and corresponding types of ‘ought’ proper to questions concerning what is pragmatically expedient, ethically prudent or morally right. The aim of his Discourse Ethics is solely to reconstruct the moral point of view from which questions of right can be firstly and impartially adjudicated. Here, Roth argues,
“The basic principle of his discourse ethics of Jurgen Habermas is a clear modification of the categorical imperative. The principle is that for a norm to be valid it must be accepted in a practical discussion by all those who are affected by the norm. The participants in the practical discourse must then also foresee the consequences of the general observance of the norm for the realization of the particular interests of each of them. This view that moral norms must be constructed by communities engaged in free practical discourse implies that the good society must be fundamentally democratic.”

The American contemporary philosopher, John Rawls contends that the principle of justice as fairness is prior to the conception of goodness and must also limit that conception. For him, a just society is one that requires equality in the duty or obligation of basic rights and duties. It is the fairness of social norms and rules, not their consequences that gives those norms any genuine moral force. Rawls in his *Theory of Justice* argues that a dynamic interaction between moral commonsense and critical thinking results in a state reflective equilibrium. This is a mental and emotional standpoint from which all persons are seen to possess a special dignity and worth. Rawls therefore argues that it is
precisely because of this that we take the position that morality has little or nothing to do with spirituality as such, but has everything to do with human goodness, and nothing which may be understood as mysterious. However, contemporary consequentialist like Peter Singer agree that everyone should know that they are morally required to act so as to bring about the best consequences, even they do not think that judgments of moral blame are appropriate if a person is legitimately ignorant of what action will bring about the best consequences.

So far we have looked at an attempt to assimilate morality into a coherent understanding through its course of development we need to now look at some of what are termed, ‘critiques of morality’.

**Critiques of Morality**

The most popularly held critique of morality is that of the Marxist that employs description of consequences or danger of capitalism and its antagonistic, oppressive and exploitative nature to characterise morality. The Marxists argue through a study of sociology of morality that it is a tool to maintain status quo of the social order advantaging the dominant class. Marxists understand morality as ideological, which is basically an illusion or false consciousness.
Engels points out that all morality has been and must necessarily be class morality. It has either justified the domination and interests of the ruling class, or, as soon as the oppressed class gains sufficient power, it represents the revolt against the earlier domination and the future interests of the oppressed.\textsuperscript{46} Lenin saw morality arising out of class conflict and oppression.\textsuperscript{47}

Trotsky argues that morality is a function of the class struggle and a product of social development and there is nothing unchallengeable about it. For him morality, more than any other form of ideology, has a class character and serves contradictory social interests. Though a few basic moral precepts exist, which have been worked out in the development of mankind and were essential for the existence of collective bodies, however, their influence is extremely limited and unsound. For Trotsky the norms of obligatory morality are in reality filled with class, that is, antagonistic content. For Trotsky, moral evaluations, together with the political, flow from the inner needs of struggle. Trotsky views moral evaluation as the result of internal dynamics of the social relations.\textsuperscript{48} Lukes too argues that morality is a form of ideology, and thus social in origin, misleading in content, and serving class interests. He argues that prevalent morality is dependent on the stage of development of its creative forces and relations, which are opposed to all moralising and rejects as outdated all moral

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Marxists argue that all moral notions and systems have a specific historical origin and are relative to the development stage of the particular society. So, the source of morality is to be derived from the life of man in nature and society. Here Marx and Engels argue,

“The communists do not preach morality at all. They do not put to people the moral demand. Love one another, do not be egoists…”

Therefore, Engels argues that human morality stands above any recollection of class antagonism and becomes possible only at a stage of society which overcomes class antagonism and even forgotten them in practical life. However, Lukes contends that essence of morality can only be identified as an obstacle to emancipation at the universal level. The essence of morality is social and historical, rather than psychological and anthropological, since it is to be found within social and historical structures rather than in the processes of human interaction or the nature of man. Islam argues that ideology, which is shown to include morality,
“…is consistent understanding of...a discourse, be that philosophical (political) or economical, which is historically evolved and serves the purpose of concealing the contradictory social relations, which are the relations of domination”.

The other prominent and more recent critique has come from the postmodernist condemning all effort to absolutise and has in turn created the cult of relativity engulfing all spheres of life, including morality. Therefore any claim to moral certainty turns paradoxical, controversial and even contradictory. In this sense, Taylor and Winquist argue,

“Postmodernism advocates moral relativism...that moral beliefs, values, and practices vary from culture to culture, from time period to time period and perhaps even from situation to situation...There is not a consistent postmodernist prescription for the state of moral relativism; however...postmodernist challenges to philosophical ethics do not stop us from asking...how to live, and why...”

On the contrary Bauman argues that post-modernity is an ‘era of morality’ in the sense that actions appear to the moral-selves as matter of responsible choice, and ultimately moral principles and
Therefore in the postmodern condition our morality is determined by what feels right and works for the individual. There is no central absolute standard in order to judge. The postmodernist thesis is sometimes argued to be an extreme form of individualism arising out of liberal political philosophy.

The Post-Marxist view is that morality includes the basic norms of human conduct which the general masses develop and change in order to fight against the wickedness and social oppression. The fundamental norms of human morality are not conduct of any particular class reflecting the historic conditions of production, but it is human product reflecting the universal aspirations of man from which we together constitute the just and reasonable foundation of human morality.

The development of morality shows a process of concretisation of moral values resulting in less abstract notion of it, since there appears to be some grounding of the perspective moving away from the transcendental, which primarily links it to politics. Therefore we need now to look at the relationship between morality and politics.
Morality and Politics

As argued above ethics is differentiated from morality by its theoretical nature. The difference between ethics and politics is brought out by McIver,

“...there is no theoretical conflict...[between ethics and politics], because politics regards man simply as a member of political society, i.e. in a particular abstract relation, whereas ethics regards man in his concreteness as a human being, one of whose characteristics is to be a 'political animal'.”

The abstract relation is what terms man as a 'political animal'; the social relation and organisation of the group in which man exists. The group may be small or at times very large comprising societies. The study of this group behaviour falls under the purview of political studies. The New Oxford American Dictionary defines politics as activities associated with organising society through regulating the distribution of power. This power interplay comprises certain moral norms as part of social standardisation. Politics is sometimes defined as social ethics as Jaeger points out,

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“The complete science of ‘politics’ falls into two parts which may for convenience be called ethics and politics…in…Ethics…individual is essentially a member of a society…[and]in…Politics…the good life of the state exists only in the lives of its citizens” [Italics in the original].

It is only for convenience that the term ethics is used to depict politics; a more precise identification with morality would be argued to be more relevant as we proceed.

Philosophers, like Plato and Spinoza, argue that the individual’s duty is to suppress his own conviction in favour of the community. We have argued above that morality can be defined as a particular prevalent system of values or principles of conduct, like when the Marxists refer to bourgeoisie morality. On the other hand, politics can be defined as a tool of morality, whatever the form of morality we may take. The principal tools of the state for its striving for power are described as politics. Politics remain subordinate to the state and hence to the moral motive of the state. Morality regulates and directs towards the interpersonal relations and interrelations between persons and groups. Similarly, politics regulates relations between individuals, or socio-political organisations and state, concerned with regulating the functions of state power. An interpersonal relation can be

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regulated by moral mechanisms. Here, Barratt argues,

“…Morality proper begins when a spontaneous action is intentionally repeated by a personal consciousness, so law or politics proper begins with the conscious enforcement of custom by a central authority”. 58

All political issues are moral since there is the question as to what ‘ought’ to be done to ensure proper regulation, i.e. what is good or bad for the society, as Barratt argues,

“Both morality and politics serve to regulate or direct human behaviour. They differ, however, in the strength of their regulation and demand different, though related, personal qualities. Groups, classes and separate persons are interrelated morally. Depending on the concrete historical political peculiarities of this interrelation, some moral qualities of a politician can be easily developed, while others, which concretely and historically conflict with his policy and political goals, could cease to develop and become rudimentary and opposite qualities”. 59

Take for example the utilitarian moral obligation to produce the
greatest good or happiness, whereas in a non-utilitarian view the exceptions allowed to the principle of producing the greatest happiness will only be the cases where a moral obligation of a different sort counteracts what would otherwise be a duty.

However, Prodanov differs and argues there is a contradiction between morality and politics. He asserts that the politicisation of morality and the moralisation of politics consist in disregarding the specific character of the political sphere. For him the politicisation of morality is the introduction of political principles and criteria to regulate the interpersonal morality, which affects the relatively independent role of morality. However, Prodanov goes on to suggest that such a politicisation is typical of periods of crisis when there is either life–and–death struggle for the defense of the global interests of the class and the nation or a revolution. 60 Prodanov goes on to argue,

“When political theory, ideology and practice come into sharp contradiction with the morality of the people, they lose their efficacy and in the end are doomed to failure. Therefore every political theory, ideology and practice seeks moral justification and arguments in order to be accepted by the masses. But when political theory contradicts to some degree the morality of the people or masses, then politicians

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seek to camouflage this contradiction with political
demagogy. The higher the stage at which the politics
of a definite organization, party or state contradicts
the moral values of the people, the stronger the need
for demagogy and the greater the use of different
means of propaganda for this purpose.“  

Prodonov accepts what is being argued here for he admits that
there is a definite link between morality and politics, namely that
politics is the morality of governing groups. It is apparent from his
arguments that the contradiction he is alluding to is some kind of
conflict between ideology and morality, while it is not clear
whether he is suggesting that this is applicable to all ideologies or
not. This becomes more apparent for when Prodanov praises
certain unspecified political systems that take morality into
consideration for in principle these, he says, are constrained by
moral boundaries. Prodanov agrees with us so far as he goes on
to classify morality as private and public, the morality of the
individual and political morality. Prodanov clearly confuses
morality with religion for he argues that the relation between the
public and the private spheres of social life is historical, their
separation and contrast is very clearly outlined in modern times,
whereas this is true of religion. However, he also argues,

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“The flexibility of the boundaries between morality and politics generates the differentiation between public and private morality in social life, between the morality of individuals and the political morality of groups. On one hand, non-democratic centralized political regimes tend to broaden the sphere of action of politics and its related morality...to the life activity and interrelations between separate individuals and between individuals and groups. On the other hand, the relation between the private and public spheres of human life has a historical character...[for Marx] The abstraction of the private life is characterised only of modern times...This abstraction reflects the growing individuality and autonomy of the person and at the same time is an expression of the peculiarities of individualism, with its connection that each individual himself freely pursues specific inalienable rights and freedoms, that he makes decisions which, if they do not interfere with other persons, should not be subject to their control and sanction”.

However, the concept of morality historically speaking, does not trace its existence in isolation but rather as inherent in the Greek philosophy. After enlightened period of Greek philosophy, the very idea of morality is blended with religion for a long period. During the modern period the concept of morality remained
intertwined with religion but then was conceptually differentiated. However, in post-modern era, the concept of morality and religion has become relative which is reversing back to the idea of Heraclitus and Sophists.

On the other hand, the concept of morality and its development are distinctly criticised by the Marxist thinkers and they developed the concept of human morality. Though philosophers try to give a foundational definition of morality yet they have failed to put forward any satisfactory definition. The reason for that change is inherent condition of a social reality which always keeps on changing. When the societal structure changes the concept of anything changes at any time and history shows us how the ideas and the structure of societies have been changing from nomadic to agriculture, from agriculture to feudal and now from the feudal to the capitalist. The capitalist society will have to change and it may fall on socialist concept where human morality will exist, that is equality in all spheres of life and where everybody shares every aspect of social life. Marxists assert that morality is a kind of ideology, illusory in content with class character, holding within it the idea of domination.
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