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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITY

COURSE HANDOUTS

Ethics (for Non-Muslims)

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Lesson 1

Defining Ethics; and its relation to Philosophy:

Ethics is one of the major disciplines of Philosophy. Philosophy literally means love of wisdom, the Greek word *Philia* meaning love or friendship and *Sophia* meaning wisdom.

Philosophy is an enterprise that begins with wonder at the marvels and mysteries of the world, that pursues a rational investigation of those marvels and mysteries, seeking wisdom and truth, and that result in passionate moral and intellectual integrity.

Believing that “the unexamined life is not worth living,” philosophy leaves no facet of life untouched by its inquiry. It aims at clear, critical, comprehensive conception of reality.

Philosophy is the discipline concerned with the following questions:

1. What counts as genuine knowledge? (Epistemology)
2. What sorts of things and what are their essential natures? (Metaphysics)
3. How one should live? (Ethics)

So Philosophy is concerned with three areas of studies:

1. Epistemology-----the study of knowledge, belief, truth, falsity, certainty, and perception.
2. Metaphysics-----the study of what exists, the nature of what exists, the cause and effect, freedom, and determination.
3. Ethics-----the study of morality, good, bad, right, wrong, human conduct and behavior in a moral sense.

Ethics and Morality:

The word ‘ethics’ is derived from the Greek word ‘*ethos*’, that means character i.e., individual character of a person.

The word ‘morality’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*moralis*’ that means custom or manner, or relationship between human beings.

Although there is no difference in ordinary language between what is ethical and moral ----- unethical or immoral, in Philosophy, however, the term ‘ethics’ is also used to refer to specific area of study --- the area of morality, which concentrate on human conduct and human values.

Following are the characteristics of those human activities that are regarded as good/bad and right/wrong morally:

1. **Happiness or Pleasure:** It is an empirical fact that whatever human beings consider good involves happiness and pleasure in a way, and whatever they consider bad involves unhappiness and pain in some way.
2. **Excellence or Perfection:** Whatever is good will also involves some kind or degree of excellence/perfection. And some kind of defect or lack of excellence counts as bad.
3. **Harmony and Creativity:** If an action is creative or can aid human beings in becoming creative and, at the same time, helps to bring about harmonious integration of as many human beings as possible, then we can say it is a right action. If an action has the opposite effect, then we can say that it is wrong action.

Defining Ethics:

Ethics is the study of moral/ethical values and customs of a person or group. It covers the analysis and employment of concepts such as right and wrong, good and evil, and responsibility.

