



## Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the differences between teleological and deontological systems of ethics? (150 words)

07 May, 2020 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

### Approach

- Briefly discuss the teleological and deontological systems of ethics.
- Mention the difference between two systems.
- Use appropriate examples to explain.
- Conclude by stating the application of both systems.

### Introduction

- **Deontology** is referred to as **duty-based ethics**. It is an approach to ethics that addresses whether the **motives behind certain actions** are right or wrong instead of focusing on whether the results of the action are right or wrong.
- **Teleology** is referred to as **results-oriented ethics**. It focuses on the purpose of each action and whether there is an intention or meaning for the action.

### Body

#### Difference between teleological and deontological ethics

- Deontological is based on **natural moral laws**. These are 'absolute'- they hold complete authority and do not change to fit different situations, but rather should be applied all the time.
  - It teaches about always acting in good faith and adheres to the Golden Rule to treat others the way you want to be treated by them.
- Teleology came from the Greek word 'telos' meaning 'ultimate aim'.
  - It deals with the consequences of an action (consequentialism). It involves examining past experiences in order to figure out the results of present actions.
  - It is applied situationally and contextually. It considers whether an action in a given situation will produce a desired outcome or not.
- **Example:** Let's suppose a man kick's a dog sleeping roadside. The dog cries and runs away. Moments later, a car comes speeding along the road so fast that it would certainly have killed the dog if it had still been lying there.
  - Deontological perspective says, the man's action was bad, since it is cruel to kick dogs but according to the teleological perspective, his action was good, since it saved the dog's life.

### Conclusion

Deontological approach is applied in the **criminal justice system**, which ensures that the punishment was proportionate and appropriate to the crime committed. Whereas, the teleological approach is used by the courts for the **interpretation of any legislation**, its purpose, direction or design.

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