

Ethics and Morals

Morals:

Morals are about right and wrong. The idea of morality is hard to define because it is a very basic idea. Even saying “morality is about right and wrong” is misleading because it isn’t about getting the answer to $2+3$ right or wrong. In fact we mean “morally right” and “morally wrong”. We might say that it is really about Good versus Evil, but good and evil are hard to define. Good can seem to be about things other than morals, for example “chocolate tastes good” does not mean that the taste of chocolate is similar to giving money to charity. When we say “good” in this other sense we mean “Morally good”.

As soon as we step back from doing what is right or wrong and consider what we mean by that and how we might make such decisions we are into the world of ethics.

Ethics

Ethics is about morality. A code of ethics, for example, is a set of rules to help a person (or an organisation) what the morally right thing to do is. Ethics is a bigger subject than morality because it has to consider more issues not just what is right and wrong but what those words mean and what factor need to be considered in deciding what is right or wrong.

Because of the close relation between morality and ethics we can sometimes use the two words interchangeable, for example “murder is unethical” means much the same thing as “murder is morally wrong”.