The Essence And Meaning Of Ethics

What is ethics? Ethics is a complex word to be define. Nonetheless, this is the meaning that I understood the best. “Ethics are a system of moral principles and a branch of philosophy which defines what is good for individuals and society” ((Ethics Guide, n.d.)). Personally, I think ethics is a set of guidelines that an individual use to decide what is good and what is bad and at the same time is accepted by society without criticism. It is a field in philosophy with many branches and all this branch disagree with each other causing confusion. Due to so many branches it is hard to understand what really ethics is. Philosophers nowadays tend to divide ethical theories into three areas: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics to make it easier to define. If ethical theories are to be useful in practice, they need to affect the way human beings behave. They argue that if a person realises that it would be morally good to do something then it would be irrational for that person not to do it ((Ethics Guide, n.d.)). During my research I came upon different places where ethics is implemented like conduct in workplaces or principles in religions and home values just to specify a couple. Therefore , in this paper I will critically discuss why ethical and moral create conflicts in an individual or society, in what capacity should we live as indicated by an individual ethic using Aristotle point of view, what is right and wrong from a moral perspective through Kant ethical believe.

To begin with, ethics and morality can be confused as being the same thing although, each one has its own origin and meaning. “They are sometimes used interchangeably, but they are different: ethics refers to rules provided by external sources such as workplace behavioural norms and religious principles. Morality is the principle of right and wrong of an individual” (citation). Ethics comes from the Greek word “ethos” which means character and it is what society consider to be the right thing to do. For example, lawyers, policemen, and doctors all have to follow an ethical code laid down by their profession, regardless of their own feelings or preferences. Ethics vary from individual to individual resulting in confrontations with their morality. Morality comes from the Latin word “mos” meaning customs. It is a person personal principle of what is right and wrong, and it can change if a person belief changes. The way somebody was raised or the encounters they have confronted could be what has formed their ethical and moral beliefs. The contrasts among good and bad are not generally the same in every individual's head and this is where individual face debates. They have an internal conflict on what should they follow, their ethics or morals belief. One example of ethics conflicting with morals is the work of a defence attorney. A lawyer’s morality may tell him/she that his/her client is guilty and should be punished for his or her crime, but her ethics as a professional lawyer, require her to defend her client to the best of her abilities, even if she knows that the client is guilty (Ethics vs Morales, n.d.) . The conflict is so that they lawyer might find it hard to decide on what to choose without ignoring the other one. His debate will be what to choose, to make himself happy by choosing to follow his moral or make society happy by follow the ethics set by his profession.

Secondly, how should we live? This is a question that many individuals asked themselves and the answer varies from person to person. Ethics, as viewed by Aristotle, “is an attempt to find out our chief end or highest good: an end which he maintains is really final” (citation). Humans choose how to live, what is their aims and goals in life and what makes them happy. They use their ethical believe to choose between right and wrong and what is morally correct to achieve

their objectives. For example, abortion is a widely debatable topic of is it right or wrong to kill a baby or foetus. There are two activist group that have a long debate on this topic. One is Prochoice who argues that its right for a woman to choose to terminate her pregnancy especially, if it affects her health and no body should have a say in it because it her body, her choice and her life and it is based on her freedom of choice that will make her happy. The other group, prolife argues that it is wrong to abort because a foetus has life, and nobody has a right to terminate or kill it. They argued that the baby or foetus has rights because it a human being. Hence who is right in this issue? Both groups fight for what they believe to be right according to their ethical views. I personally believe that both are right and wrong. Right because everyone has a right to live and make their own choice because a person chooses how to live, and what makes them happy. The world is not black and white there are shades of grey in between which is the result of both colour mixing. The same goes with this issue, a person doesn't know what are the circumstances that a woman is going through for her to choose to abort. Then, who are we to tell her what to do and how to live. It's her life and her choice to choose it she wants to terminate the pregnancy or not. I personally am against abortion, but my belief doesn't close my eyes to see why some women choose to abort. This is where conflict arise between ethics and moral because ethically, I am against it, but morally I can't demand that a woman have a baby if it will cost her life. It's like me telling her to die, which is morally wrong. Hence the reason why, Aristotle believe that "ethical knowledge is not only a theoretical knowledge, but rather that a person must have 'experience of the actions in life' and have been 'brought up in fine habits' to become good" (citation paraphrasing)

Another philosopher who has a similar opinion on ethics as Aristotle is Kant. He believed that "certain types of actions (including murder, theft, and lying) were absolutely prohibited, even in cases where the action would bring about more happiness than the alternative" ((Kantian Ethics, n.d.)). Take for example the case of euthanise which some people called "merciful killing". This is mostly done on animal to "alleviate their suffering" which some humans believe to be the right thing to do, since there is no remedy for them. However, think about human who are medical sentenced to die a painful death. Should they be euthanise to alleviate their suffering. The idea of euthanasia is something that elderly people today face almost every day. I believe that it should be up to the human being suffering, whether or not they want to suffer any longer. To add to my belief, I think that it is wrong for a human to endure pain and agony just because their love ones can't let them go. We do not let an animal suffer to any extent, as soon as things seem hopeless, we put them to sleep. Hence, why should we let our love ones suffer. I am not saying that we should kill anyone at the first sign of illness because that will be wrong, but to take into consideration their wishes since as individual they believe that dying will make them happy. Most human are against this idea because they believe that it is morally wrong to kill a human being even if they want it. Then, the question is "should I let them suffer knowing that they want to die". To this many people will be answered based on the ethical or moral belief, so who will be right and who will be wrong?

To conclude, ethics is a branch of philosophy that has its own subbranches and one of them is morals. The two terms can be used interchangeably since the have similarities, and many people confused them. This has been happening since their beginning. Ethics are standards set by society while moral are standard set by an individual. Ethics and moral vary from person to person depending on their character, customs and believes. There is conflict between each other an even philosopher like Aristotle and Kant tried to explain their view and beliefs on each one. We see examples every day on how the conflict that is created when they clash and how hard is to choose only one. Due to this, it hard to define what or who is right and wrong creating

internal and external debates on topics such as abortion, euthanise and lawyer honesty just to mention a few. Hence the reason, that as human we should critically think before we make a decision or say something without knowing the full details and taking in consideration our ethics and morals. Like Aristotle said “Be a free thinker and don’t accept everything you hear as truth. Be critical and evaluate what u believe in.”