

# Is premarital sex ethical or unethical



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Even as the civilization has advanced to the era of nanotechnology, certain behavioral pattern in humans continue to evoke debate on the basis of the guidelines of social governance, which stem from various philosophical theories mooted by the thinkers of various timeline. This is another quest for the development of the civilization from social perspective – and hence equally important as the researches for technological development, because philosophical clarity in all actions enhances any process of development.

That is why there exists many schools of thought, who provide their own lists of ‘do-s and don’t-s’ regarding the best possible social behavior and actions. Accordingly, any human act is weighed in one or the scale of established values to determine its effect on the society, before prescribing or proscribing it. These values are universally accepted set of beliefs, which are notionally aimed at finding and distributing equality in all direction to all of the society – in which ethics (which is also known as the philosophy of morality) form the integral parameter of any judgment.

Thus, the question that comes first in the mind about this process is, “What does it mean to be ethical?” This paper probes on that with the aid of a proven school of thought like Deontology and a burning social question like “whether premarital sex ethical or unethical” before coming to the conclusion. Ethics The first step towards determining ‘ethical act’ calls for an understanding of ethics itself. At its shortest level, ethics is a ‘motivation based on ideas of right and wrong’, the simplification of which could generate a sea of ideas, involving each of the words in that phrase.

However, in an attempt to comprehend the nature of ethics, one can count on the definition of Winter Gibson, who opines that “ ethics seek to clarify the logic and adequacy of the values that shape the world”, along with the task of “ assessing the moral possibilities, which are projected and betrayed in the social give-and-take, and thus, it is a science of human intentionality” (Winter, 1996). The idea of ethics is a big world and hence it is better to narrow down its implication on the chosen topic.

Two schools of thought still dominate the proceedings in this regard, one is deontological and the other is teleological. While the former centers its attention on one’s total submission to certain ethical principles (like justice, freedom or truthfulness) irrespective of the consequence, the later starts its assessment with the possible consequence and checks whether it vitiates its premise- ‘ greater good for the greatest number’.

Both have their positive and negative sides; like when deontology refuses to envision the good outcome out of someone’s wrong behavior (which might have served as an eye opener to the others) and aborts the act in the first place, or when a teleologists allow an action with the idea that it would do maximum good for greater number of people with a territorial vision (e. g. Jews were less in number than Germans in the time of holocaust; and thus the holocaust could get away with the phrase that Jews were murdered for the sake of maximum good for the greatest number).

However, this loopholes in one theory in fact balances the other, and these two models of thought prove instrumental towards decision-making according to the circumstances and thus together they cover many possible

decisions under certain situations. What does it mean to be Ethical? In a broad based view actions in conformation of ethics constitute ethical actions. But then, it cannot always satisfy the two polarity of schools of thought; and hence, the guideline of ethical behavior follows a somewhat middle-of-the road stance, from where it can reach to any pole for necessary endorsement.

Because, it needs support from Deontology when emphasizing on actions, and it needs support from teleology when focusing on the outcome of the actions. Thus, It is ethical when one sets aside own ambition for the sake of the greater good for the greater number; It is ethical even when one loses his life by being truthful; It is ethical to respect the informed personal choice(s) of all individuals, even if they are misaligned with one's own choice(s); It is ethical to value nature as not merely a resource which sustains life, but as a life unto itself.

It is ethical when one commits not only to “ right action,” but also decides to behold a “ good character. ” It is ethical when one keeps the trust of others or maintains the mutual respect, shows responsibility, fairness or caring attitude. In all, to be ethical is to be a person of integrity, who would exhibit an intrinsic wholesomeness and would be consistent in being good and doing good under any circumstance. S/he would be someone free from arrogance or pride in any form. Since the society is always on the move and in the process it evolves to a newer state after a certain period.

That new period does not always conform to all of the practiced guidelines, and hence, what was found aligned with a principle based on certain premise, seems inadequate in the newer concept. Accordingly, what was

established as an ethical act loses its steam, while what was earlier established as an unethical act, gains momentum with the favorable conditions in the contemporary society. A classic example of this lies in the debate on accommodating premarital sex in the societal process as nothing unethical, or rejecting it on the ground of ethics.

**The Issue of Premarital Sex** The lawful binding on sexual activities has been an ancient practice in the society, but such regulations cannot be identified as a common decision under common circumstances – like anywhere in the world premarital sex was reported to be a bane to the social harmony or creating a law and order problem and hence it was common to declare it an unethical act. Instead, such decisions were influenced by the then prevailing social circumstances, where it was felt to stress on marital sex only for the maximum good for the greatest number of the society.

To get that desired result, the governors of the society then went on to put this issue on the wrong side of ethics – thereby creating a notion that premarital sex is ‘ unethical’. This notion was found to be somewhat guarded by the doctrine of deontology, which is based on total submission towards idealistic living, where the ideals are like fixed edifices and where all are advised to surrender unconditionally and irrespective of the nature of the outcome.

**Deontological Argument Against Premarital Sex** The first point that is considered potent in deontology towards labeling premarital sex as ‘ unethical’, lies in the commandment of forming and beholding a ‘ good character’, which would act on its free will and help to develop the individual

to become a person of integrity. Since Premarital sex affects the morality of an individual, it is a distraction in the path of forming and beholding a 'good character' and thus, unethical.

The second argument from deontology rank points at the nature of the act – i. e. , premarital sex vitiates the precondition of act from the sense of the duty and service to the greater interest of the society, by committing an act towards self-pleasure- and hence, it is unethical. It can be surmised that there was not much collective opposition to such ideas, as deontology has always been too individualistic and the beliefs backing it were acceptable as universal truth.

While such beliefs are still being accepted as an universal truth, it's prescriptions are not, primarily because of the reason that the present society itself has evolved to such a point, from where it cannot afford to neglect the ground reality for the sake of philosophical ideal and succumb to ashtray. Therefore, the present rise in premarital sex points to the fact that it is the inherent urge for survival in the humans have been culminated into a collective reflection of rejecting such governance of philosophy through their acts.

Life today is not what it was yesterday, and the society has to be with 'today', even if that costs it the 'yesterday'. However, what was not done in the yesteryears is now being done – i. e. , putting up intense opposition to the 'unethical' tag on premarital sex by refuting the deontological argument. Argument 1: Respect and Social Service Suppose two unmarried persons get sexually attracted to each other and get into the act. Now,

according to the ethical standard of deontology, if both respect each other's desire and thus engage themselves in sex, doesn't that act fall within the framework of ethics?

Or for that matter, if someone finds another in dire need to satiate his/her sexual urge and thus responds to the situation by engaging in the act, wouldn't that be aligned with the ethical standard of deontology, which asks to serve from the sense of duty? In both the cases, deontology has no answer and thus this is an insufficient argument to prove premarital sex is unethical. Argument 2: Sense of Duty In a situation, two consenting, unmarried adults sense their urge of sexual act. What could be yardstick to determine that a biological urge is wrong to attend as a duty?

Or, if it is omitted from the list of duties that are considered as usually done from the sense of duty, then what is the point in disrespecting an urge that stems out of the basic sense of a human? Especially when there is a scope to fulfill the duty to one's own body? Here again deontology is caught on the wrong foot, as there cannot be any definitive, comprehensive and time-winning explanation of ideal 'duty'. Thus, it fails again to establish its claim. Argument 3: Free Will Does the concept of 'free will' exclude the fulfillment of biological urge from its fold?

What if the free wills of two unmarried persons arrive at a common decision to stay together, without having any ritualistic bondage or the recognized seal of marriage? What if some unmarried, consenting adults, who are financially independent, decide to have different sexual partners at intervals? Deontology again fails to answer, because, there will always be

the scope for ' free will' enhancing its multitude and dimension. Here again it is nowhere near to prove its point. Argument 4: Marriage as an Institution

The connotation of marriage has also evolved with the evolution of the society.

Gone are the days when men were held responsible to earn and the women were assigned to maintain the household. Now in this age of globalization, there are increasing numbers of people who don't even have any permanent home and also choose to stay single. Would they be forced to refrain from satiating their urge of sex only to keep her/his moral flag up in the mind? Sex is a primary need and marriage is a part of the social system, evolved out of social mechanism. The second one exists because of the first, and hence it cannot have the power to rule over the first. This is amply proved through never ending instances of promiscuity since ages.

Now if someone cites established proof of instances of promiscuity even after marriage and then refuses to believe on its efficacy as a system, deontology would have no answer to it. Neither can it condemn those instances of promiscuity wholeheartedly, because, it cannot ascertain the guiding motives behind those acts – whether they were done for the interest of the society, or from the call of the free will, or respect to personal choice, or simply by being truthful to respond to a biological urge. This too clears the fact that deontology doesn't qualify at all to label premarital sex as ' unethical'.