Ethics vs. Morals

*The Main Difference, the Roles, &
A Possible Joined Value*

We're here to set the record straight on the difference between ethics and morals

Ethics is the *normative* search for the optimal standards informing "right" and "wrong" behaviors. Note that it is not necessarily the case that a culture is the sole determiner of "right" and "wrong!"

When we use the phrase morals, or, "my morals," on the other hand, we are typically referring to a *descriptive* rendering that sketches our behaviors as a reflection of our understanding of "right" and "wrong."

Ethics

The systematizing, defending, and recommending of concepts of right and wrong behavior, i.e. **how ought we to act**

My Morals

What are my personal opinions concerning right and wrong behavior, i.e. **how do I act**

1 Ethics is based on extensive research, academic discourse, and refinement.

Ethical theory & discourse is long-term and reflects analysis that extends beyond first-person, whereas "my morals" is by definition subjective .

Ethical theories CAN change and evolve, but these changes are typically over decades and the result of meticulous research

It is tempting to view a personal framing of "right" and "wrong" as *the* basis for both ethical theory and morality (many moral philosophers take this position) but it is one of many possible positions!

Ethics & Morality can work together. 2

We need both if we are to not only live but to live well; as Kant noted "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind".

But it is necessary to view and to question the basis of our "morals." What are the guiding principles? What is the source of these influential principles? As the majority of us live within and among people, what are the social consequences of our subjective understandings?

Professor Stuke