



Research Article

Good, Right as Human Value

 Indira Mandal ^{1*},  Dr. Ratan Pramanick ²

¹ Assistant Professor, Bhimpur Mohanananda College of Education, West Bengal, India

² Teacher-In-Charge, Bhimpur Mohanananda College of Education, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author: * Indira Mandal 

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21441441>

Abstract

The ideas of "good" and "right" have occupied a central place in moral philosophy for centuries, yet their relationship continues to invite debate in contemporary ethical discourse. Although these concepts are often discussed together, they reflect different dimensions of moral judgment and, at times, appear to pull ethical reasoning in different directions. This article revisits their philosophical foundations and examines how they continue to shape moral decision-making, legal thought, public policy, and human rights in the modern world. Drawing on classical ethical traditions, including virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism, alongside contemporary scholarship in applied ethics, the study offers a comparative conceptual analysis of the two values. The discussion suggests that the good is primarily concerned with human flourishing and desirable outcomes, whereas the right emphasises duties, justice, and moral obligations. Even so, the distinction is less rigid than it first appears. A close examination of philosophical and applied ethical literature indicates that durable moral judgments rarely emerge from privileging one over the other. Rather, ethical practice is strengthened when concern for beneficial outcomes is guided by principled action. The article, therefore, argues that the good and the right should be understood as complementary, not competing, dimensions of human morality. Recognising their interdependence provides a more coherent ethical framework for addressing contemporary challenges in governance, technology, law, and sustainable development while safeguarding human dignity and social justice.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2583-7397
- Received: 09-06-2026
- Accepted: 11-07-2026
- Published: 19-07-2026
- IJCRM:5(4); 2026: 335-340
- ©2026, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Mandal I, Pramanick R. Good, Right as Human Value. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2026;5(4):335-340.

Access this Article Online



www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: good; right; human values; ethics; morality; philosophy; human rights.

1. INTRODUCTION

Few questions have remained as persistent in moral philosophy as these: *What is genuinely good?* And what *makes an action morally right?* Civilisations have answered them in different ways, yet the questions themselves have endured. Across philosophical traditions, religious thought, and legal systems, the ideas of the good and the right have served as enduring reference points for evaluating human conduct. They are closely related but not synonymous. Treating them as interchangeable risks, overlooking an important distinction that has shaped ethical reflection for centuries.

In broad terms, the good concerns the ends that individuals and societies seek to achieve. It is commonly associated with well-being, human flourishing, happiness, and the conditions that enable people to lead meaningful lives. The right, by contrast, focuses on the standards that govern conduct. It asks not whether an action produces desirable outcomes, but whether it accords with moral duties, principles, and obligations that deserve respect regardless of their consequences. This distinction has long informed debates between teleological and deontological approaches to ethics, yet neither perspective has entirely resolved how these values ought to relate to one another.

The continuing relevance of this debate extends well beyond philosophy. Contemporary societies regularly confront ethical questions in which beneficial outcomes and moral principles do not align neatly. Decisions in public health, emerging technologies, environmental governance, and human rights frequently require balancing collective welfare against individual freedoms. Such dilemmas suggest that relying exclusively on either outcome-oriented reasoning or rule-based ethics may be insufficient. Moral judgment often demands a more careful negotiation between what ought to be achieved and the principles that ought never to be compromised.

Against this background, the present study explores the concepts of good and right as complementary dimensions of human values rather than as opposing ethical ideals. It examines how these concepts have been interpreted within major philosophical traditions and considers their continuing significance for contemporary moral, legal, and social discourse. Particular attention is given to virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and consequentialism, each of which offers a distinctive understanding of moral evaluation while illuminating different aspects of ethical responsibility.

The central problem addressed in this article arises from a longstanding philosophical tension: should moral reasoning primarily be guided by desirable consequences or by universal moral duties? Although this question has generated extensive scholarly debate, the possibility that the good and the right function as mutually reinforcing values has received comparatively less integrated attention. Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research question: How can the concepts of the good and the right be understood as complementary human values, and what implications does such an understanding hold for contemporary moral reasoning, legal frameworks, and social institutions?

Rather than treating these concepts as competing standards of ethical judgment, the article argues that their relationship is best

understood as one of interdependence. Outcomes that promote human flourishing acquire moral legitimacy only when pursued through just and principled means, while moral duties derive much of their practical significance from their capacity to sustain human well-being. Examining the good and the right through this integrated perspective offers a richer account of moral life—one that remains both philosophically grounded and responsive to the ethical challenges of an increasingly interconnected world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is situated within three influential traditions of moral philosophy—virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and consequentialism. Together, these perspectives provide complementary lenses through which the concepts of the good and the right can be examined. Rather than treating these traditions as mutually exclusive, the present framework considers how each contributes to a broader understanding of ethical judgment and human values.

The first perspective, virtue ethics, traces its origins to Aristotle and places the good at the centre of moral life. Within this tradition, ethics is concerned less with isolated actions than with the cultivation of moral character. Human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) is understood as the highest good, achieved through the development and consistent practice of virtues such as justice, courage, and temperance. Moral evaluation, therefore, depends not only on what individuals do but also on the kind of persons they become. From this standpoint, ethical behaviour emerges from practical wisdom and the formation of virtuous habits rather than strict adherence to external rules.

A different emphasis appears in deontological ethics, most closely associated with Immanuel Kant. Here, the central concern is the right rather than the good. Moral actions derive their legitimacy from conformity to universal principles and duties, irrespective of the consequences they produce. Ethical obligations are regarded as binding because they arise from reason itself, not from calculations of personal or collective benefit. This perspective underscores the intrinsic worth of every individual and insists that persons must always be treated as ends in themselves. Consequently, justice, respect, and moral responsibility become indispensable features of ethical decision-making.

The third perspective, consequentialism, evaluates actions according to their outcomes. Utilitarian thinkers, notably Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, argue that the moral value of an action depends largely on its capacity to promote well-being and reduce suffering. Within this framework, the good is measured through the consequences that actions generate for individuals and society. Although this approach offers a practical method for addressing many public and policy-related dilemmas, it has also attracted criticism for the possibility that individual rights may be compromised in the pursuit of broader social benefits.

Viewed together, these traditions illuminate different yet interconnected dimensions of morality. Virtue ethics asks what kind of person one ought to become. Deontological ethics asks what duties one ought to fulfil. Consequentialism, meanwhile, asks what outcomes one ought to pursue. Each addresses a

distinct aspect of moral reasoning, and each capture something essential about ethical life.

Accordingly, this study adopts an integrative theoretical perspective rather than privileging a single philosophical tradition. It proceeds from the assumption that the good and the right are best understood as complementary moral values. Ethical decisions are rarely guided solely by consequences or exclusively by rules; instead, they often involve a careful negotiation between desirable ends and principled action. This framework, therefore, provides the conceptual foundation for examining how these values interact in contemporary discussions of justice, human rights, governance, technology, and sustainable development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between the concepts of the good and the right has remained one of the defining questions in moral philosophy. Although both terms occupy a central place in ethical discourse, they point to different aspects of moral judgment and have often generated competing philosophical traditions. At first glance, the distinction appears straightforward: the *good* concerns the ends that ought to be pursued, whereas the *right* concerns the standards by which actions should be judged. The literature, however, suggests a more intricate relationship. Rather than existing as isolated categories, these ideas have evolved through sustained philosophical dialogue, with each tradition offering a distinctive account of how moral decisions ought to be made (Rawls, 1971).

The classical understanding of the good is most clearly articulated in Aristotle's virtue ethics. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes every human action as directed towards some perceived good, culminating in *eudaimonia*—a condition often interpreted as flourishing or living well (Aristotle, trans. 2009). Yet flourishing, in Aristotle's account, is neither a fleeting emotion nor the simple accumulation of desirable outcomes. It is realised through the gradual formation of a virtuous character. Justice, courage, and practical wisdom become meaningful because they enable individuals to exercise sound moral judgment within the complexities of everyday life. This emphasis on character continues to distinguish virtue ethics from theories that evaluate morality primarily through rules or consequences.

A markedly different perspective emerges in the work of Immanuel Kant. For Kant (1785/1997), morality cannot rest upon changing circumstances or expected outcomes. Instead, it derives its authority from rational duty. The categorical imperative requires individuals to act according to principles that could consistently be universalised while recognising every person as an end in themselves rather than as a means to another objective. Such a position places the right at the heart of ethical reasoning. Although critics have occasionally questioned whether this approach leaves sufficient room for contextual judgment, its enduring influence on modern ideas of justice, rights, and human dignity is difficult to dispute.

Consequentialist thinkers approached the same problem from another direction. Bentham (1789/1988) argued that actions should be assessed according to their consequences, specifically their capacity to maximise happiness for the greatest number.

Mill (1863/2001) later refined this position by distinguishing between higher and lower forms of pleasure, thereby acknowledging that well-being cannot be measured solely in quantitative terms. Even so, consequentialism has remained the subject of continuing debate. Pursuing beneficial outcomes may produce socially desirable results, but the literature repeatedly raises a difficult question: can collective welfare justify actions that compromise individual rights? This unresolved tension continues to shape discussions in both philosophy and public policy.

More recent scholarship has gradually shifted away from treating the good and the right as rival foundations of morality. Rawls (1971), for example, argued that a just society must be organised around principles of fairness before questions of aggregate welfare are considered. His account does not reject human well-being; rather, it insists that welfare should be pursued within institutions that safeguard equal liberty and justice. Sen's (2009) capability approach advances this conversation further by emphasising what individuals are genuinely able to do and become. Human development, in this framework, depends not merely on resources or outcomes but on expanding meaningful freedoms. Together, these perspectives suggest that ethical reasoning becomes more persuasive when concerns about justice and well-being are considered simultaneously rather than separately.

The convergence of these ideas is particularly visible in contemporary applied ethics. Beauchamp and Childress (2019) demonstrate that ethical decision-making in healthcare cannot rely exclusively on either beneficence or respect for autonomy; both must be weighed alongside justice and professional responsibility. A similar pattern appears within international human rights discourse. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948) reflects an ethical commitment to protecting individual dignity while promoting conditions that enable human flourishing. Recent debates surrounding artificial intelligence reveal the same challenge from a different angle. Technological innovation is widely expected to generate social benefit, yet this expectation carries little ethical weight if systems fail to uphold fairness, accountability, or respect for human rights (Floridi & Cowls, 2019).

Taken together, the literature points towards a gradual but significant change in ethical thinking. Earlier philosophical debates frequently framed the good and the right as competing standards of moral evaluation. Contemporary scholarship, by contrast, increasingly views them as interdependent. This shift does not eliminate philosophical disagreement, nor does it resolve every ethical dilemma. It does, however, suggest that moral reasoning becomes more robust when beneficial outcomes are pursued through principled action. Such an integrated perspective provides a stronger foundation for addressing the ethical challenges that increasingly define modern societies, from governance and healthcare to emerging technologies and global justice.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual research design to investigate the ethical meanings and contemporary relevance of the concepts of good and right as fundamental human values.

Given the philosophical nature of the research problem, an empirical design was not considered the most appropriate approach. Instead, the inquiry relies on interpretive analysis to examine how these concepts have been understood, debated, and refined across major traditions of moral philosophy and their application to present-day ethical concerns.

The analysis draws upon a range of primary philosophical texts, particularly the writings of Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, and Mill, which provide the theoretical foundations for discussions of virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and consequentialism. These sources are examined alongside contemporary scholarship in ethics, justice, human rights, biomedical ethics, artificial intelligence, and sustainable development. Bringing these bodies of literature into conversation makes it possible to explore how classical ethical ideas continue to inform modern debates rather than treating them as merely historical perspectives.

The selected literature was examined using thematic content analysis, with particular attention given to recurring concepts such as human flourishing, moral duty, justice, rights, and consequential reasoning. As the analysis progressed, these themes were compared across philosophical traditions to identify areas of convergence, disagreement, and conceptual overlap. This comparative reading also enabled a closer examination of whether the good and the right should be understood as competing moral standards or as values that reinforce one another under different ethical circumstances.

Rather than seeking to establish causal relationships or generate statistical findings, the study aims to develop a coherent conceptual understanding of the relationship between these two ethical principles. By integrating classical philosophical thought with contemporary ethical scholarship, the methodology provides a structured framework for interpreting how the values of the good and the right continue to shape moral reasoning, public policy, governance, and discussions of human dignity in an increasingly complex world.

4. RESULTS

The conceptual analysis indicates that the good and the right represent two distinct, yet closely connected, dimensions of ethical reasoning. Although each philosophical tradition places greater emphasis on one of these concepts, the literature suggests that neither provides a complete account of moral judgment when considered in isolation. Instead, the relationship between them appears more complementary than contradictory. The review of classical philosophical texts demonstrates that virtue ethics, particularly Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia*, understands the good as human flourishing achieved through the cultivation of moral character. Ethical conduct, from this perspective, is rooted in the development of virtues that enable individuals to exercise sound judgment in diverse situations. By contrast, Kantian deontology assigns primary importance to the right, maintaining that moral actions derive their legitimacy from adherence to universal duties rather than from the consequences they produce. Consequentialist thinkers, most notably Bentham and Mill, approach the issue differently by evaluating actions according to their capacity to promote

collective well-being. Here, the good is understood largely in terms of beneficial outcomes.

One notable finding emerging from the literature is the gradual movement away from treating these traditions as mutually exclusive. Contemporary ethical scholarship increasingly suggests that moral reasoning is strengthened when desirable outcomes are pursued within principled ethical boundaries. In other words, concern for human welfare need not conflict with respect for justice, rights, and moral responsibility. Rather, these considerations often operate together in responsible decision-making.

The analysis also highlights the practical relevance of this integrated perspective across a range of contemporary settings. Legal and constitutional frameworks seek to safeguard individual rights while advancing the public interest. Healthcare ethics similarly requires practitioners to balance beneficence with autonomy, justice, and professional responsibility. Comparable tensions are evident in discussions surrounding artificial intelligence, where technological progress is expected to generate social benefit without compromising fairness, accountability, or human dignity. Sustainable development initiatives likewise depend upon balancing collective welfare with universal rights and ethical responsibility.

Taken together, these findings support an interpretive framework in which the good and the right are understood as mutually reinforcing values. Rather than representing competing moral standards, they function as complementary principles that provide a more comprehensive basis for ethical judgment in both philosophical inquiry and practical decision-making.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings invite a reconsideration of a longstanding assumption within moral philosophy—that ethical reasoning must ultimately choose between promoting the good and respecting the right. The literature examined in this study does not fully support such a rigid division. While classical ethical traditions undoubtedly differ in emphasis, the boundaries between them are less absolute than they are sometimes portrayed. A closer reading suggests that meaningful moral judgment often emerges through the interaction of both perspectives rather than through the exclusive adoption of either.

This point becomes particularly evident when ethical questions arise in complex social contexts. Public health policy offers a useful illustration. Measures introduced to protect collective well-being may restrict certain individual freedoms, creating tensions between welfare and rights. Yet these situations rarely demand the complete sacrifice of one value for the other. More often, they require careful ethical deliberation in which beneficial outcomes are pursued without abandoning fundamental principles of justice and respect for persons. Such examples demonstrate that moral reasoning is rarely reducible to a simple calculation of consequences or unquestioning adherence to abstract rules.

The philosophical traditions examined throughout this study reinforce this interpretation. Aristotle reminds us that ethical

action depends upon the cultivation of virtuous character, while Kant insists that respect for persons must remain non-negotiable. Consequentialist theories, meanwhile, emphasise the social importance of promoting well-being. Each perspective captures an important dimension of moral life, yet each also reveals certain limitations when applied in isolation. Virtue ethics may provide insufficient procedural guidance for resolving institutional dilemmas. Strict deontology can appear inflexible when exceptional circumstances arise. Consequentialism, despite its practical appeal, may struggle to protect individual rights where collective benefit dominates ethical reasoning. These observations do not diminish the value of the respective traditions; rather, they underscore the importance of interpreting them in dialogue with one another.

The broader implications extend beyond philosophical debate. Contemporary challenges—including artificial intelligence, public governance, healthcare, environmental policy, and international human rights—require ethical frameworks capable of addressing competing values without reducing complex moral problems to simplistic choices. The evidence considered in this study suggests that integrating the good and the right offers a more balanced and practically useful approach. Beneficial outcomes acquire ethical legitimacy when pursued through just and principled means, while moral duties remain socially meaningful because they contribute to human flourishing.

Accordingly, this study supports an integrated understanding of human values in which the good and the right are viewed as interdependent rather than competing ethical ideals. Such a perspective not only reflects the evolution of contemporary moral philosophy but also provides a stronger conceptual foundation for addressing the ethical complexities that increasingly characterise modern societies.

6. CONCLUSION

The discussion presented in this study reaffirms that the concepts of the good and the right remain indispensable to ethical inquiry. Although philosophical traditions have often treated them as competing foundations of morality, the evidence reviewed here suggests that such a division is ultimately too narrow. The good, with its emphasis on human flourishing and desirable outcomes, and the right, with its concern for justice, duty, and moral obligation, illuminate different but interconnected dimensions of ethical life.

Examining these concepts through virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and consequentialism reveals that each tradition contributes valuable insights while also exposing certain limitations when considered in isolation. Ethical judgement, particularly in contemporary societies, rarely depends exclusively on outcomes or on rigid adherence to moral rules.

Instead, it emerges through a careful balance between promoting human well-being and respecting principles that protect dignity, fairness, and individual rights.

The significance of this integrated perspective extends beyond philosophical debate. Questions surrounding governance, healthcare, artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability, and human rights increasingly demand ethical approaches that acknowledge both practical consequences and enduring moral commitments. Viewing the good and the right as mutually reinforcing values provides a more coherent framework for addressing such challenges. Ultimately, this study argues that ethical decision-making becomes more persuasive and socially meaningful when beneficial outcomes are pursued through principled action. Far from diminishing either concept, recognising their interdependence offers a richer understanding of human values and their continuing relevance in an increasingly complex world.

Future Research

The present study is conceptual in nature, and this inevitably leaves important avenues open for further investigation. Future research could complement these philosophical discussions with empirical evidence by examining how individuals and institutions negotiate the relationship between the good and the right in real-world decision-making. Comparative studies across cultures, educational settings, legal systems, and professional contexts would help determine whether these ethical values are interpreted consistently or shaped by differing social and cultural traditions. Interdisciplinary research that brings together philosophy, psychology, public policy, and emerging fields such as artificial intelligence could also deepen our understanding of how ethical principles are translated into practice. Such work would not only extend the theoretical framework developed here but also strengthen its relevance to the complex moral challenges confronting contemporary societies.

REFERENCES

1. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ross WD, translator. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2009. (Original work published c. 350 BCE).
2. Beauchamp TL, Childress JF. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 8th ed. New York: Oxford University Press; 2019.
3. Bentham J. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Amherst (NY): Prometheus Books; 1988. (Original work published 1789).
4. Floridi L, Cowls J. A unified framework of five principles for AI in society. *Harv Data Sci Rev*. 2019;1(1). doi:10.1162/99608f92.8cd550d1.

5. Kant I. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Gregor M, translator. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1997. (Original work published 1785).
6. Mill JS. *Utilitarianism*. Kitchener (ON): Batoche Books; 2001. (Original work published 1863).
7. Rawls J. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press; 1971.
8. Sen A. *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press; 2009.
9. United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: United Nations; 1948.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–Non-Commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license. This license permits sharing and redistribution of the article in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and source. No modifications, adaptations, or derivative works are permitted under this license.

About the Corresponding Author



Indira Mandal is an Assistant Professor at Bhimpur Mohanananda College of Education, West Bengal, India. Her academic interests include teacher education, educational psychology, curriculum development, pedagogy, and educational research. She is actively involved in teaching, research, and academic development, contributing to quality teacher education and scholarly publications.