

The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing
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Lecture No # 12
Happiness and Morality

Welcome to this talk on science of happiness and well-being and today's talk centers around the concept of morality. The fundamental question that we would like to discuss today here is whether happy people are more moral or it is the morality which drives us to be happy that is a question we have and at the end we will try to find an answer for that.

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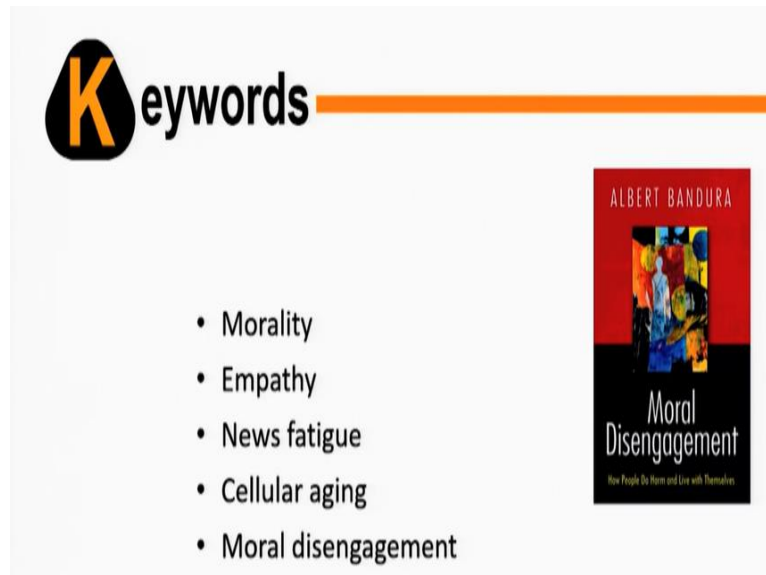


But before that we would, like to also try to understand that whether our sense of morality is changing or not? That is the topic therefore is the changing colors of human happiness. Is it so that our morality is changing therefore our state of happiness is also getting affected. This is the question we would be trying to raise an answer thereafter and the fundamental questions that I have kept for you to answer is what, causes us to be unmindful of human miseries?

In fact we will get an inventory of such kind of human miseries which we are getting day in day out. But we become unmindful to that it does not affect us much therefore is it so we have lost empathy? The other day we talked about empathy and how it is different from sympathy we discussed about it. It is a unique human trait are we losing it? And then we will try, to answer are we suffering from moral disengagement the term is a relatively old but we will try to clarify what do we mean by moral disengagement.

So before we actually discuss all these concepts it is important that we understand the key concepts behind it.

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As I said in the beginning we will discuss about morality how we define our morality is it a trait whether governed by our biology that is our, brain or is it a trait which is governed by our cultural issues or cultural aspects? Then we will discuss about empathy we already know what empathy is all about and is different definitely from sympathy where you feel for someone but do not try to put yourself on their shoes.

But empathy is something where you try to not only understand somebody's pain and you take yourself to their position and, situation in order to feel their pain. And we also discussed about compassion not only you feel about their pain and if you try to help them out then you develop compassion as well. So empathy is a concept related to that but then we raised a question are we losing empathy?

If we are losing empathy what could be the possible reason so we will discuss about the concept of news fatigue that is we are, bombarded with lot of negative news does that affect our empathy in some way. And if it affects our system that is if we believe that morality empathy also has got a biological concomitant then it will affect our biological system as well. Therefore there would be cellular aging that is the cells in the brain on those respective areas which actually govern morality and empathy will lose their, capacity which we call as cellular regime.

And finally we talk about moral disengagement this is a concept by Albert Bandura but as I told you at the very outset that the class on science of happiness and well-being is not content driven it is context driven. Therefore we would not make much attempt to talk about the theories behind it but that does not mean whatever is being told does not have a, theoretical backdrop or a scientific notion behind.

We will talk all about those things which are scientifically tested and also theoretically proven but will not make much mention about it therefore moral disengagement is a concept which Albert Bandura has actually extended and the meaning of it is that if you do some unethical job out of your sense of duty for the state then you have, to disengage yourself from your sense of guilt or morality.

Because morality is something if you follow the principles of morality then you develop conscience if you do not follow then you develop guilt. Now there are situations where you have to disengage yourself from the sense of ethicality. So Albert Bandura gave the examples of a hangman whose job is to hang those prisoners supposed to be executed by the state's order.

They do it and Albert Bandura interviewed many such people who does this thing and they said that they have to morally disengage themselves from there he developed the theory of moral disengagement.

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Some clarifications about morality...

- Happiness brings good moral judgments
- Happiness results from morality

- Biology & morality are mutually exclusive
- Biology & morality are mutually inclusive; The frontal lobe is the locus for moral judgment

So we would like to get some clarifications about morality first. The first is whether happiness brings good moral judgment or not that is whether happiness is the root, behind moral judgment or not. I think happiness has an outcome and the outcome is driven by our lack of guilt sense of

morality that is one clarification I would like to give in the beginning. But then we will discuss this matter slightly later by that time we would also like to clarify some other misconceptions about morality.

Because we constantly think about whether we are doing certain, things which are morally correct or incorrect and that evaluation we keep on doing on everyday life at every moment. The moment we take a decision we try to think about it whether it is good or bad whether it should be done or should not be done and accordingly we try to evaluate ourselves.

So if we are morally incorrect then we develop guilt as I said and if we are morally correct then we develop concerns. So with this notion let us also try to understand whether morality is just a psychological construct or it has got certain biological underpinning around. Most people have found that morality and biology they are not biologically exclusive they are not independent constructs.

In fact our brain also has got a locus for morality the prefrontal lobe which we often say in the frontal side of our brain is actually the locus of our moral judgment lot of studies have been done based on functional MRI which is functional magnetic resonance imaging. In order to understand; whether our moral judgment suffers due to some kind of stroke due to some kind of lesion in the brain.

Or in normal brain whether there is an activation when you do something which is in line with your conscience. It has been found the frontal lobe of the brain the prefrontal cortex of the brain this particular area is responsible for our moral judgment.

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Some clarifications about morality...

- A person with positive traits in personality will be morally grounded always
- Negative traits may co-exist with positive traits
- Once a moral standard is set, does not change
- Change in moral standard is possible, if not a cardinal trait

Then we asked this question whether somebody who has got a positive trait. That is somebody who is found to be loyal somebody who is found to be having a fair judgment in most of the cases are they always morally grounded? The question is whether, somebody who has got positive traits are always morally grounded or not? The right idea behind this notion is that nobody can have positive traits in all their behavioral domains.

Its quite possible that there are negative traits also coexist with the positive traits therefore let us not presume that somebody who has got certain moral threat or certain positive trait will always be moral. It is, possible that on some occasions we prove to be moral or many occasions we prove to be moral but in some occasions we prove to be moral as well. Likewise we believe that once a moral standard is set it does not change like in childhood we have all been told that telling lies is not good.

So if the standard is set it will never change actually the standard can change if it is not a cardinal trait. In, some people we found that the moral trait never change in some people we find that the moral trait changes only in rare occasions. And in some people we find that the morality changes as the situation changes. So we believe that there are 3 kinds of personality traits one is called cardinal trait one is called primary trait and one is called secondary trait.

So if it is part of a cardinal trait, then it never changes but if it is part of a primary trait then there are chances that it can still change on certain situations which is not under your control. But if it is a secondary trait in your personality then in such case it will continue to change as the situation changes.

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Some clarifications about morality...

- **Morally grounded individuals are well-adjusted**
- These people find adjustment a difficult process
- **Moral standards are universal**
- These are also culturally constructed
- **Morality develops as we grow old**
- Morality is expressed better as we grow old

We will have 2, 3 more clarifications then we will enter into why we are becoming unmindful to human miseries. So, we also believe that somebody who is morally grounded are always well adjusted they do not find adjustment is ever a problem. The problem is that moral people are rarely loyal and loyal people are rarely moral. So if someone has to work somewhere and show their loyalty and if he is strongly grounded morally they will find it a difficult process for having them adjusted within this situation.

So, therefore it is a misconception that moral people do not find adjustment problem because they have got one clear way of taking decisions. That is true but since moral people has to follow certain procedure based on their ethics and principles they find it very difficult to adjust with most of the situations. Likewise we believe that moral standards universal I mean everywhere telling lies is wrong.

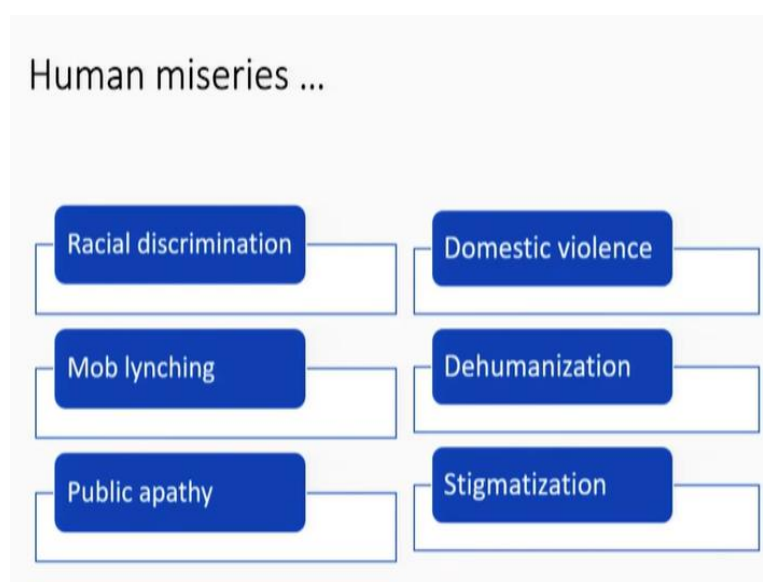
But it has been found that whatever is morally accurate or is called a standard in one culture is not the practice in other cultures. Therefore and we have numerous examples in different countries where it has been found that the moral standards that is dictated by the culture changes from place to place. So it is culturally constructed and construed as well in the beginning when we were discussing, about the key concepts at that point we made mention about it.

And finally the misconception is that morality develops as we grow old like somebody is old will always be moral but that is not the correct thing. Correct thing is about that morality finds better expression as you grow old. Because morality requires certain sense of wisdom and what really happens? When we derive knowledge, process information in order to get knowledge and then utilize knowledge in order to derive experience.

And then when knowledge and experience come together we understand truth and when truth is exercised in your daily life you develop wisdom and when you get wisdom you ultimately reach up to the level of bliss. So what really happens with experience we get to understand what is truth and what is wisdom and, the difference between these 2. Therefore with experience it only finds expression rather than that the old people are moral always.

With these notions now we will concentrate on to understanding are we losing morality? Are we becoming unmindful of human miseries my first question?

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That question we will try to answer and what could be the possible reason but let us first try to understand what are the, types of human miseries I am trying to talk to you. One is we see a racial discrimination black lives matter lot of turbulence took place throughout the world based on such kind of racial discriminations. Mob lynching mob hysteria it does take place in various parts of the world including in India.

Question is we become unmindful and keep on hitting the person who is being lynched instead of, going to the policeman. Public apathy somebody is I mean having agonizing pain following an accident and sitting by the side of the road nobody takes care of it. And we find that some people even take photograph of such accidents without trying to help them out. Domestic violence during covid period we have seen there is a high preponderance of domestic violence.

It is not limited to husband and wife it is limited to everywhere, wherever there is proximity stress there is a belongingness barrier and wherever there is a belongingness barrier there is a

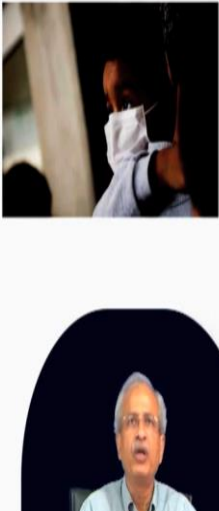
compassion fatigue. Therefore domestic violence has become a principle way of venting our frustration during the covid period so we saw that human measure is. Dehumanization where we find that children who are supposed to go to school are supposed, to take milk are actually eating rubbish and are doing a adult man's job dehumanization stigmatization.

We try to believe that some people are different from others someone is of higher caste someone is of lower caste. So stigmatization we have been doing lot of human miseries are taking place throughout the world.

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Why are we losing empathy...?

- The rise of 'News Fatigue': lost in tragedies
- Worrying more often causes 'cellular aging'
- Selective apathy allows us to avoid secondary trauma
- Few people help to 'tune' empathy away from distress
- Online interaction reduces empathy; causing apathy
- Empathy is a social glue... loss of it makes us 'moral moron'



My question is therefore are we losing empathy? Now empathy this question needs to be, answered from certain points of view first is as I said in the key concept news fatigue may be one of the reason that why we are lost in tragedies. Every time we listen to somebody's news everybody we discuss with someone we talk about something which is negative in nature. In fact during pandemic also we have seen collective whispering has become a major problem everybody starts talking about, certain negative experience related to covid ailments.

And that actually become contagious amongst the people so whenever we get news either through media or through our daily interaction if we follow certain forms of negative news all the time we will develop news fatigue. And as a result of which if you are worried always if you never try to activate your centers of happiness within, the structure of the brain.

You will develop certain forms of aging some kind of degeneration in the brain takes place because of negative charge of the human brain cells. Therefore in order to avoid all kinds of negativities which as a human being we may not be able to tolerate over the period of time. So

we try to develop a carefully careless kind of attitude which we call apathy. Now empathy we, have learned about it sympathy we know about it apathy is something where you do not have any emotion for any tragedy.

People develop it because by doing that they can avoid some form of secondary trauma now if you always get certain negative news you would continue to be affected even if it is not related to you which we call it as secondary trauma. So in order to avoid secondary trauma people, develop some kind of apathy and also in the society we do not find many people during pandemic we have not seen many people who can tune back our empathy sense of empathy.

That who can tune us towards the kind of happiness we are looking for out of empathy very few people can actually do that and most of our interactions were online and as a result of which actually results in some form of apathy. So empathy is a social glue it actually creates bonding and if we lose it we will become morally moron and that is probably one of the reason why we are losing empathy.

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Why are we losing morality...?

- Social anchor of 'right' or 'wrong' is diffused
- Media is shaping our minimal moral standard
- Moral justification for 'doing wrong but feeling moral'
- Moral disengagement due to hypercompetitive grooming
- Our misconceptions about morality



Then the question comes are we losing morality too that is right and wrong I mean losing empathy of course has got a more pervasive impact. But are we losing morality too the reason is that the morality today is being defined, in 3 different ways some people define morality as a universal concept and as a value which can never change. But some people define morality in terms of the social aspirations the cultural I mean predispositions or cultural mellow.

But some people believe that morality needs to be defined based on reality that if you are not surviving effectively in the reality then probability the probability is that the morality cannot be exercised to bring our happiness back. So social anchor for right and wrong has been diffused

has been has been I mean in a state of flux. And as a result of which we are probably not taking any decision which is morally strictly correct or morally strictly incorrect.

And at the same time social media and television media is also shaping our minimal moral, standard that what we should do under a reality oriented hearts condition where morality cannot be given due importance. So moral justification is also being defended by people through several justification so some people are doing wrong but feeling moral still they believe that I have to do it due to certain compulsions.

So whenever we face a conflicting situation either we try to attack the, problem or we try to defend the problem or we try to avoid the problem or we try to compromise the problem for a solution of course. Now if people are always trying to defend themselves in order to feel moral but at the same time doing something immoral wrong then we need to give justifications. So people have been giving a lot of moral justifications and because of this and because of hyper, competitive grooming not only in the sector of academia in all aspects of our life we have started becoming morally disengaged.

Because we find that well everybody else is taking immoral avenues so why not I also take it? So this is morally disengaged people who believe that ethically something is to be done but under certain condition I have been compelled to take certain actions which is ethically, not correct. But I feel it is perfectly moral because everybody else is doing it so moral disengagement has become a rule and as at the same time our misconceptions of morality has not never been taken give due importance to be clarified.

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Changing morals... [Ketchell, 2019]

- People change the way they think about good or bad
- We are more moral than 100 years ago, but more judgmental too
- Fairness or compassion-based morality gained more prominence than authority or purity-based morality
- The challenge is how we think about morality itself

So the changing moral has become a important issue Ketchell, 2019 has written a book on morality. And he found that people change the way they feel I mean they, think about good or bad. In some situation you follow certain moral standards because you feel good about it and in some situation you do not take that moral stand because you feel bad about it. So good and badness our feeling component has become more important than moral standards.

So over the years probably we have changed our way of thinking what is to be called good and what is to be called as, bad. He also cited examples of 100 years back where people were considered to be strictly very moral. But at that point of time people never consider reality as something which is biting the sense of morality as well. So they were very judgmental some 10 or 12 decades back probably they were more moral than what we are today.

But they were judgmental too and that judgmentality never took consideration, for the reality for which we have been actually suffering. Therefore the fairness or compassion based morality gained more prominence than authority or purity based morality. So when we talk about purity based morality it means what is to be done which is sacrosanct which is considered never to change.

At any point of time under any condition that is probably getting I mean avoided and compassion, based morality is considered to be much more important that is under a condition where people are suffering. There if you can show your compassion or fairness probably that will gain much more prominence. So it is the challenge how we think about morality instead of having one sacrosanct rule of what morality is all about is more important that how we define morality. So in order to define it we also, need to understand why such kind of changes are taking place.

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The paradoxes...

- **The paradox of change:** Major changes are occurring within the life-span of a single generation
- **The paradox of value:** Change involves pervasive reorientation about basic values
- **The paradox of equality:** Change creates new form of ambiguities, inequalities
- **The paradox of motive:** Change brings expectation that are prone to frustration



Because of several paradoxes and those paradoxes there are 4 major paradoxes we will talk about finally one is about the paradox of change. That is major changes are taking place 100 years back of course what was called as morality and that perception of morality has changed over a period of time. Because we find that the, generations have been changing too fast like the millennials then consumers.

And then the next generation is also coming up and the generation which used to span over a period of 3 to 4 decade is now changing within 1 decade. So if the generational mindset is changing so fast we have to also take care of the changes as well. So paradox of change is one of the reasons why it is changing. Then the paradox of value because the value system is also changing because change involves pervasive reorientation about your values if there is a change the value orientation will also change.

And if there is a value orientation change there is a perception of the paradox of equality will also change that is your perception of ambiguities your perception of equality who; is equal to whom? The, ambiguity inequality are coming up in a in a turbulent manner so people try to define it how to resort how to get rid of this inequalities and ambiguities. Because there is a generation change there is a change in the value system so how do we get rid of it?

So if we have a turbulence into our moral system our motives are also changing because our expectations are also changing and they are more, prone to frustration. So if our expectations and achievements are changing if our expectations and achievements are getting a distance it will lead to frustration. And if there is a frustration if it goes to outside it will become aggression

if it goes to inside it will become depression. So because of this several paradoxes we are actually making our changes in our moral system.

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Happiness & Morality

Is being happy a moral?

- 'Our happiness affects others -- profoundly. That's why happiness is a moral obligation'

Do we need morals to be happy?

- 'Moral excellence can contribute to a happy life. Being a moral person is essential to living a life of happiness'

Therefore my final, view is that how do we get happiness and morality to be answered how they are related? Honestly the question is, is being happy a moral? I mean if you are happy then you influence morality. The answer is our happiness affects others therefore it becomes our moral obligation to make other people happy because creating happiness is much more important than you to be happy.

So I think is being happier moral, is a answer and at the same time and the reverse gear do we need morals to be happy that is if we have morals then only you become happy. Moral excellence actually contribute to happy life as well if you are morally correct as I said you develop conscience and if there is a conscience you become internally happy. So if you are internally happy then it becomes follows a circuitous route that, you become happy and moral at the same time.

So instead of trying to create a conflict between is being happy a moral or do we need morals to be happy is actually a fallacy in that way. If we are happy we would continue to become moral if we are moral will continue to become happy.

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CONCLUSION

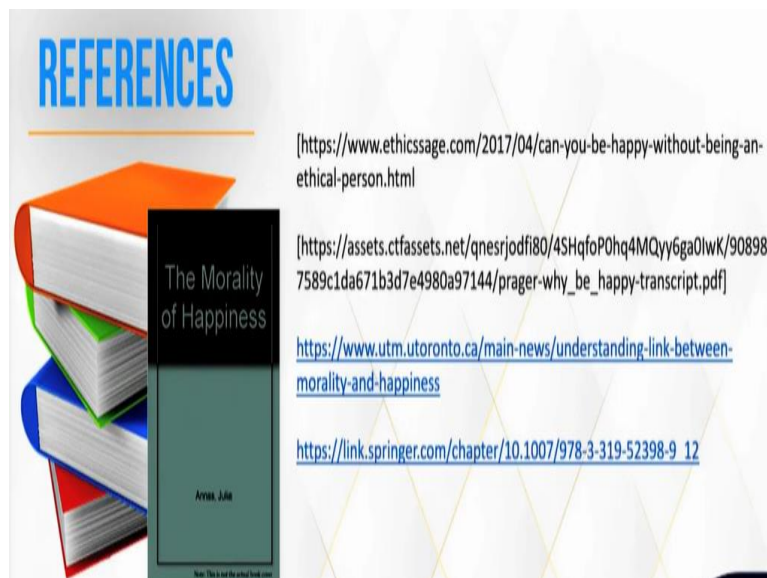
- Moral standards have not gone down; benchmarks are being redefined
- Morality is now more often reality-based rather than theoretical-best-practice



So the conclusion is that moral standards probably has not changed much it has not gone down only, benchmarks are redefined. And morality is now more often reality based rather than theoretically best practice because if you talk about theoretically best practice then you have to go back to 200 years back. But if it is a reality based morality then probably we would be able to explain morality today what we are getting in terms of our understanding of morality would be better explained.

So all, these explanations are not theory based these are experience based and our context driven based understanding of morality.

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So we have certain references and there is a book on morality of happiness these links can be followed in order to understand it better the way we try to understand it thank you so much.