Ethics

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Module No 4

Welcome to this lecture series on ethics. This is the 18th lecture and this lecture will focus on the

Lecture 18

following topics. . Now what we are going to do here is the previous lectures we have examined

some very important ethical perspectives and frameworks. So here, we will try to see a criticism

of many of these frameworks and also to the very idea of ethics as it is conceived in the

European tradition.

In this lecture, we will focus on the works of Frederick Nietzsche, the famous German

philosopher and in the coming lecture we will have a look on the existentialist ethics which

actually draws a lot from Nietzscheian. But Nietzscheian ethics is quite interesting and also very

important because he is the ultimate critique of moral absolutism. We have already seen people

criticising ethical perspective of absolutism, moral absolutism.

Many, many have done that like right from the Greek tradition itself, we had Sophists and then

many others have criticised it, many others have rejected it, the very idea of moral absolutism but

no one has done it in the way Nietzsche has done it. It was so powerful, Nietzsche's criticism

which is actually a criticism of modernity itself or rather enlightenment philosophy itself. And

again, the moral perspectives of European civilisation which the European civilisation

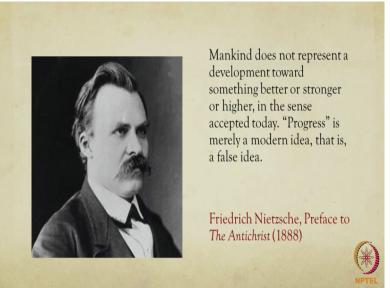
considered or the intellectual tradition considered as very important.

So this lecture is titled as critic of moral absolutism, Nietzsche and his re-evaluation of morals

because he proposes something called re-evaluation of morals. We will also discuss that. So here

I begin with a quote.

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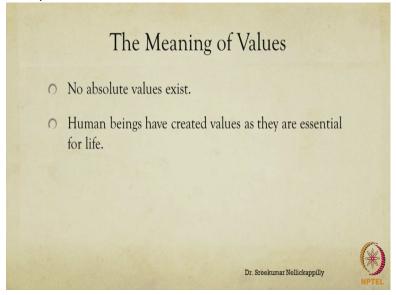


It is from the preface to be anarchist. I quote. Mankind does not represent a development toward something better or stronger or higher in the sense accepted today. Progress is merely a modern idea, that is, a false idea. I have pointed out this because you know according to Nietzsche who came into prominence towards the end of 19th century, the kind of morality which Europe had adopted towards that time, towards the end of 19th century was influenced by an idea of progress which both capitalism and modern science was proposing.

There is this idea that humankind is progressing and a better world is awaiting us, science and technology would definitely lead to better and better world, better and better life for humankind. These are the kinds of things which people believed towards the end of this period and Nietzsche was critical about it.

He questioned the very idea of progress itself and also the moral framework or the moral perspective which is based on this idea. So we will see that. And before that let us begin with the whole idea of values. What do you mean by values?

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According to Nietzsche, there is no absolute values exist and human beings have created values as they are essential for life. So here he sounds like many others whom we have already examined. Like as I have already pointed out, the Sophists, then Thomas Hobbes we have seen quite recently that he is also of the view that we have created values as they are essential for us to overcome the natural state and many others.

But of course, Nietzsche presents his view from a different perspective. He says that such values may become obsolete and then we have to create new values. So he is not a nihilist in the classical sense of the term, nihilism. A nihilist is a person who rejects everything and rejects value. A moral nihilist is a person who questions the very idea of morality but Nietzsche cannot be considered as a moral nihilist in that sense of the term.

He only rejects the kind of morality which we have adopted now and proposes that we should create new values. Philosophers should create new values. That is what he would be saying. And what is wrong with morality?

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What is Wrong with Morality? There are no moral facts whatever. Presupposes the concept of free will: accountability and responsibility. Presupposes universal human nature: so that morals have universal application. Morals assist the weak to suppress the strong: the lower men will win over the higher men.

When he talks about morality, he says that there are no moral facts whatever. So morality is not a science. Morality cannot be understood as a science so that when we try to understand morality, we are not approaching a world of facts but something else. And it presupposes the concept of free will. We have been examining this, we have been saying this repeatedly that you know, free will has been considered, occupying a central place in all modern discourses.

See for example, in Kant we have seen that it has been asserted that an oath implies a can. So freedom of will is so essential, otherwise we will not be able to talk about morality at all. We will not be able to talk about ethics at all. This seems to be the position adopted by many philosophers and many ethicists in the past.

It is in the light of this concept of free will we talk about moral accountability and moral responsibility. And we have seen that morality or ethics is all about responsibility because basically in today's world also when we talk about ethics we basically mean responsibility that every action, the agent of the action is responsible for, we should be able to justify it, why did we perform it? Why did we choose to act in certain way?

So in a sense you know, these terms are very closely interconnected but Nietzsche questions the very assumption behind such ideas and says that they are not interconnected. And says that the

very notion of free will which makes possible such interconnection itself is a false idea. So he presupposes universal human nature so that morals had universal application.

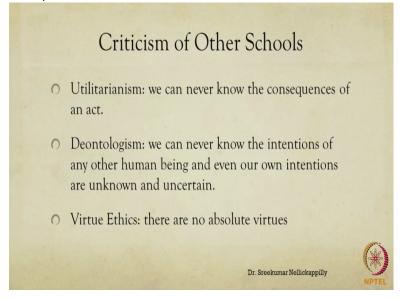
So this is another assumption of almost all moral frameworks because morality as a discipline becomes valid only because it is applicable to everyone. So there is a certain sense of universalism that is associated with the very science of morality which Nietzsche opposes. He says that we cannot talk about any moral values to be universal. So we will come to that.

And again, morals assis the week to suppress the strong: the lower men will win over the higher men. Here you would find the real Nietzsche. This is Nietzsche's view. He says that the very purpose of morality in human history seems to be what? To assist the weak to suppress the strong.

The weak people who are plenty in number and the strong people who were always in minority but whether they are minority or majority, the strong will always rule over the weak. That is the rule of nature, that is the rule of history but this often does not happen because the morals, ever since man has invented morality, morality has been taken up, morality has been projected as a kind of a golden rule which would support the suppression of the strong by the weak.

The weak will always highlight morality or moral values and would say that what they say is right. Their concept of right and wrong would be established, their concept of right and wrong would be forcefully applied upon the entire world. So the strong also will have to obey that. And here when he began his evaluation of different moral perspectives, he comes up with a very strong criticism of different schools of morality that existed prior to him.

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So utilitarianism for example, we can never know the consequences of an act. That is what Nietzsche tells. As we have seen utilitarianism as a moral theory, as an ethical theory assumes that the consequences of an action is more important in determining the moral value of an action. So consequentialism, what follows an action is more important. So we have to know beforehand before we act, whether this action is going to lead to good consequences or not.

If it leads to good consequences it has to be treated as a good action but then what Nietzsche says is that how can we know in advance the consequences of an action. There are many factors that might determine the way in which the consequences might move. So there is no way in which we can ever know all the consequences of our action.

So he rejects utilitarianism and deontologism and more precisely, Kantionism when we talk about Nietzsche. We have already seen that Kantion framework emphasises on duty and intention or motive of an action. The intention of an action is more important for Kant, more than its consequences and also one's duty towards others are important.

So what he says here is that we cannot consider the intention of an action important because we can never know the intentions of any other human being and even never own intentions are unknown and uncertain to us. So there is a certain reference to a kind of unconscious mind which

later on we would see Freud has developed in the European intellectual tradition. Freud was referenced by Nietzsche considerably.

So he refers to that intention, the conscious intentions of man which we are not aware of. So there is no way in which human beings can ever be aware of even his own intentions. Then how can we talk about, how can we consider intentions as a criteria in determining the moral value of an action. Then again, virtue ethics. There are no absolute virtues.

See, virtue ethics we have to mention here an important point because as far as the Greek philosophical frameworks or the Greek philosophers are concerned or the Greek intellectual tradition in general is concerned, Nietzsche evaluates the Greeks as superior to contemporary, to the modern European thinkers. The Greeks, he thought were really superior than the modern 19th-century European thinkers and the Greeks were concerned about virtue.

The kind of ethics which ancient Greek philosophers were developing which was based on the concept of virtue, he was way to accept that to a very great extent but for him, he is not ready to accept virtues. Rather, he redefines the concept of virtue. He would say that virtue is virtue. Any sort of excellence is a virtue. If you understand in that sense, Nietzsche has no problem in accepting the perspective of virtue ethics.

But as we know, some philosophers particularly like Plato and Aristotle, the virtue ethics leads to a kind of Eudaimonism as well so which Nietzsche might find problematic to accept in the sense in which those philosophers have understood it.

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Nietzsche on Virtues Affirms natural virtues Attacks supernatural (Christian) and derived virtues. Against Christianity and Democracy. Against Utilitarianism and Kantianism. Concludes in the "Superman"

But again, Nietzsche when it comes to virtues, he affirms natural virtues. He attacks supernatural virtues which christian and other religious traditions are advocating which he calls derived virtues and again he is against this charity and democracy. He is against utilitarianism and Kantianism and he concludes his moral perspective, concludes in the concept of Superman or power man which we will be discussing here.

Now in this context, Nietzsche proposes an important theory, an important concept, the re-as I mentioned in the beginning of this lecture, evaluation of values. As I mentioned in the beginning of this lecture, Nietzsche is not a complete nihilist. Nietzsche does not reject all value. Rather he only says that we have to find new values. So he proposes a kind of revaluation of values and find their real worth.

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Revaluation of values Not a nihilist: does not reject all values. Revaluation of values: Create new values. Rejection of Christian values, and of unconditional values, and with an affirmation of ancient Greek values. Emphasis of personality and character and not on principles. Hails the Greeks and their morality: Homeric Gods as not divine masters, as creators.

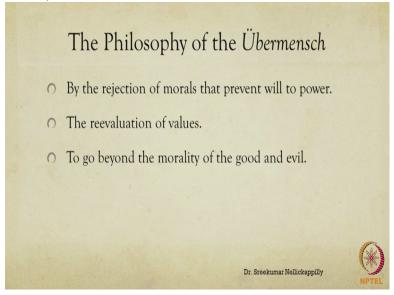
So he is not a nihilist, does not reject all values, he proposes a re-evaluation of values where creation of new values also is included. And then again, the rejection of christian values and the unconditional values and with an affirmation of ancient Greek values is something which Nietzsche was proposing. All values which are unconditional, all values which seem to be claiming that they have an authority, a kind of supernatural authority like Christianity and other major religious traditions, he rejects.

But the kind of values which the Greeks were trying to propose, advocate, he was ready to accept. And here he emphasises on personality and character and not on principle. Here also he comes very close to the Greeks. The Greeks also went emphasised on values, they were emphasising actually on character, the personality and character of people. And Nietzsche is also ready to do that.

And it is in this context, the concept of overman and all other related theories were developed. And again, he is the Greeks and their morality: Homeric Gods are not divine masters as creators as Christianity (())(13:51) God is. See, in Christianity, which is the major European religion, what happens is that the concept of God they have is a concept of Creator God who is the ultimate master and his commands have to be obeyed without any exception, without questioning them.

So all of us are slaves of that god. So Nietzsche complains that Christianity is a religion is propagating a kind of slave morality because it makes all human beings slaves to God. God is the ultimate master but if you compare the ancient Greek religion with Christianity, you would find that the Greek gods, the Homeric gods were not divine masters. They are not just human beings who excel, they are just copies, I mean they represent our own virtues, our own values at a higher level.

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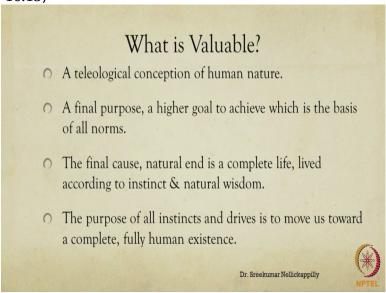


And then he presents his philosophy of the Ubermensh or the Overman where by the rejection of morals that prevent the will to power, he talks about a concept called will to power which we will explain now. He says that all morality, all ethics ultimately prevent the expression of the will to power which is actually the principle of life, the very principle of lifethat guide human beings, the real human progress, the principle that guides real human progress.

And every religious tradition, every ethics, every moral framework prevent this will to power from excelling and the re-evaluation of values is performed in this context where he proposes, one has to go beyond the morality of the good and evil. It is the morality of good and evil. All traditional morality is a morality of good and evil. So this dichotomy is presented in the very beginning itself.

It says that certain things are good and certain things are bad. One should not do certain things. Thy shall not, the classical Biblical commandments. One should not do certain things and one has to do certain things. So between these 2, human morality is locked in. So Nietzsche opposes this very dichotomy and says that one has to reject this morality of good and evil and go beyond the very concepts of good and evil.

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What is valuable according to him? So when we talk about ethics, we have to actually talk about value. So what is valuable? So here, he seems to be proposing a teleological conception of human nature which is very similar to what Aristotle and Plato and many others have proposed. They also had a teleological conception. So Nietzsche also proposes a teleological conception where he says that all human beings have a final purpose, a higher goal to achieve which is the basis of all norms.

So there should be or there is a higher goal and we should lead our lives, we should do all actions in our life which would ultimately lead us to this higher goal. And the final cause or the natural end is a complete life lived according to instinct and natural wisdom. This is the life which is lived according to natural wisdom instead of getting guided by theories of morality and religious ethics.

So this is what he proposes. The purpose of all instincts and drives is to move us towards a complete, fully human existence. This notion of complete fully human existence is this teleology. One has to reach that stage. And what prevents one from reaching that stage and how to reach that stage? The answer is very simple. We can reach that stage only by exercising our will to power.

And what prevents us from reaching that stage? It is the ethics and morality, the moral framework proposed by religious traditions as well as Christianity and other religions. So one has to overcome the temptation of following these religious traditions because most of the religious traditions advocate a kind of morality which he terms as a slave morality.

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The Natural History of Morals

- O Morality is not a science not something given.
- O There are no moral facts whatsoever.
- Morality has been based on obedience: represented by the "herd-instinct of obedience" and the 'Thou shalt'
- Morality in Europe at present is herding-animal morality: a combination of optimistic belief that scientific progress and Christian morality

Then again, morality is not a science. It does not deal with something which is given to us. It does not deal with any facts in the world. There are no moral facts. Morality has been based on obedience. So again he takes us to consider the very nature of morality as it is presented to us by traditional philosophical schools as well as religious traditions.

Morality has been based on the concept of obedience represented by the herd instinct of obedience and the thou shalt, the Biblical commandments, once not do certain things. So there is this herd instinct, he talks a lot about. These herd, the herd behaviour or the common behaviour

is where one become part of the herd, one becomes part of the group. One ceases to be an individual.

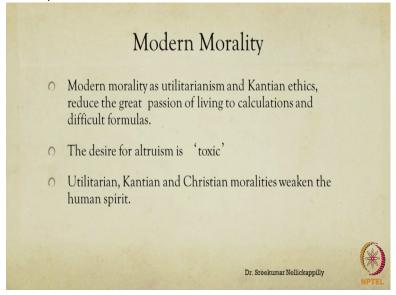
And the moment one ceases to be an individual, there is no possibility of individual development. Then one's story is written by someone else. We have to just leave a story with someone else has written for us. We have to just dance according to the tunes of someone else's music but once we start exercising our will to power, the story is different.

The moment we do that, we start living over own life, we start writing over own stories and we start than Singh according to our own tunes. So this is what Nietzsche was proposing as a higher moral development of humankind. He makes an analysis, an evaluation of the morality in the 19th century Europe during his time.

At present is herd animal morality. The herd animal morality means you know, you become part of a group. You cease to be an individual. You lose your capacity for individual thinking, independent thinking and you just follow what others do, very unreflectively, without any question, you do what others do. You be part of the status quo.

The advantage is that you are safe because society will never troubled you. The moment you go against the status quo, the moment you start questioning what is acceptable and accepted, then you start facing troubles. So the 19th-century European morality is a combination of optimistic belief in scientific progress and christian morality, the christian belief system. So this is dangerous for human excellence according to him.

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And modern morality is again as utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. So these are the 2 dominant ethical traditions of 19th-century Europe. They reduce according to Nietzsche, the great passion of living to calculations and difficult formula which we have seen already because in Kantionism what happens is that one has to see what is the right intention, whether one act on the basis of the right intention, whether one's actions are based on the duty, whether that is the right kind of duty in that context, all these things one has to think before one acts.

And again, in utilitarianism, what happens is there again, one has to see what are the consequences, whether the action one chooses, whether the course of action one choses is going to lead us to the right kind of consequences or not has to be seen. So this according to Nietzsche reduces the passion of living into calculation and difficult formula. The desire for our altruism is toxic according to him.

That is actually not going to help human beings at all. The individual human beings are not going to benefit anything from being altruistic, rather it is toxic which means that kills. And utilitarianism, Kantionism and christian morality is weaken the human spirit. They will not help us, they will not liberate us morally. They are only going to weaken us. They underline its creative and selfish passions.

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Morality itself were to blame if the highest power and splendor [Mächtigkeit und Pracht] possible to the type man was never in fact attained? So that morality itself was the danger of dangers. This morality thwarts the development of human excellence, i.e., "the highest power and splendor possible to the type man" It is "harmful to life" or, more simply, "anti-nature."

If that is the case then again he says, morality itself were to blame if the highest over and splendour possible to write man was never in fact attained so that morality itself was the danger of danger. So he called this modern morality, the danger of dangers because it prevents man from attaining high power and splendour in his life. So in that sense, it is toxic and dangerous. The morality thoughts that development of human excellence, that is the highest power and splendour possible to the type man and it is harmful to life or more simply anti-nature.

So when we talk about morality as harmful to live or anti-nature, what is life? He has a specific concept of life which we have already seen that he proposes teleological conception of life. There is a purpose to attain in life.

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The Nature of Life Life itself, is essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation." The noble type of man regards himself as a determiner of values- "What is injurious to me is injurious in itself" - he is the creator of values' He honors whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality is self-glorification.

And life according to him is again a quote, life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obstrusion of particular forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation. These are all the aspects of life which we try to overcome with the help of morality. That is the irony of life which Nietzsche was trying to highlight.

The normal type of man regards himself as a determiner of values, he is not just a follower of values. Usually you know, the common man is understood to be a follower of values. He is a herd, he is part of the herd, part of the group, never thinks for himself, never acts for himself but the normal men would always regards himself as a determiner of values. What is injurious to him, what is injurious to me, he considers, he thinks is injurious in itself.

He is the creator of new values, he is not just a fall over. He honours whatever he recognises in himself: such morality is self-glorification. So Nietzsche proposes a morality of self-glorification by the right exercise of the will to power. And what is this will to power?

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The Will to Power An ever-dominant proactive force and feature of life and the basic drive of humanity. The primitive form of affect and all other affects are only developments of it. Every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become more. Not power over others, but the feelings of creative energy and control over oneself that are necessary to achieve self-creation, self-direction and to express individual creativity.

It is an ever dominant proactive force in us and feature of life and the basic drive of humanity. Every living creature, every living creature according to Nietzsche has this power in it. The kind of power which enables its to dominate or enables is to overcome itself, the status quo and go further, ever evolve further, develop further. So this is the very principle of life. Otherwise, things will start (())(25:08).

There will not be life but only stagnation. But there is life, there is life because there is a force that present in every creature that enables us to overcome the status quo, overcome the present, what it is now, to become something else, to become more than what it is now and that power is called the will to power. It is present in every creature and also in human beings.

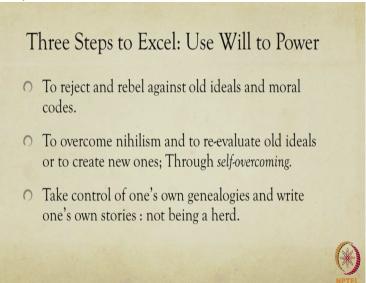
The primitive form of affect and all that affects are only developments of it. So that is the most primitive drive you can see according to Nietzsche, a kind of a bodily drive, a kind of a, a drive which is present in all creatures. Every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become more. It is not preservation that is the major concern of life but to evolve, to go beyond and more and more.

And again, it is not power over others, see this is something which we have to be very careful. When we talk about will to power, there is the possibility that we might confuse will to power with power to overpower others or the power over others. It is not. It is the feelings of creative

energy and control over oneself that are necessary to achieve self-creation, self-direction and to express individual creativity.

It is a power over oneself, it is a power to overcome oneself. It is a power to be more and more than what one is right now. To put it in nutshell, it is the power to excel but whether we are able to exercise this power and able to excel or not, that is the question. And here, he says that there are 3 steps he proposes to excel.

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How to use the will to power? To reject and rebel against old ideals and moral codes. This is the 1st thing we have to do. This is a bit negative. You reject everything. So here it appears to be nihilistic. Again, next one is to overcome nihilism and to re-evaluate old ideals or to create new ones, this is through self overcoming. So that is a positive stage and the 3rd stage is, take control of one's own genealogies and write one's own stories; not being a mere herd but being an over man.

So that is the 3rd stage. So one has to undergo all the 3 stages in order to attain, in order to satisfy or in order to materialise the teleology of life. And who are the higher men he is talking about?

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Who are the Higher Men?

- O Strongest, richest, most independent and most courageous.
- O Have at their disposal "a great quantum of power
- O The sovereign individual, autonomous and supermoral.
- O His "mastery over himself necessarily gives him mastery also over circumstances and nature," and elevates him above "all more short-willed and unreliable creatures.



He says that the higher men are the strongest, richest, most independent and most courageous people. Not everyone, not every human being is potential to become the over man. Not everyone can but have at their disposal a great quantum of power which they can use to overcome themselves. The sovereign individual, the higher men are sovereign individuals, they are autonomous and supermodel. They are not affected by the morality, the ethics of the good and evil.

The morality of good and evil are not something which they accepted. The morality of good and evil will never touch them. And his mastery over himself necessarily gives him mastery also over circumstances and nature, and elevates him above all more short willed and unreliable creatures. To put it in a nutshell, an ability to excel, that is what higher men are. They are people who are who have already excelled.

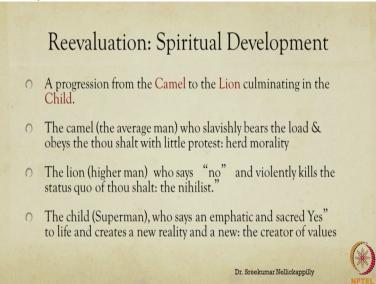
And again, possess strong will to power and its rational utilisation. They are encountered in the most widely different places and cultures. It is not that they are confined to one place or one time, they are everywhere and they are great or higher, not as individuals or as members of certain race or a certain ethnic group but as examples of a different type of life. So this is what, a different type of life.

The way they understand themselves, the way they determine to write their own stories, the way they reject the moral traditions that try to control them, all these aspects make them great and they are nonethnic and non-national. This point has to be underlined because there is a wrong interpretation of Nietzsche that many people have interpreted Nietzsche, Nietzsche's work or the Nazis themselves have interpreted Nietzsche's work in their favour.

But he is not favouring a kind of racism or a racial supremacy, theory of racial supremacy but rather he says that such people are only a type of life, they just lead a different type of life. That is it. Now, in this context we have to actually a concept called the death of god which they will not be doing now, which we will do in the next lecture because when we discuss the concept of existentialist ethics.

So we will directly go to the final slide, what is re-evaluation? What is the spiritual development or the moral development of man consisting so that one can elevate oneself from the stage of the herd to the super man or the over man. So this is what now we are going to see and we will conclude with this slide.

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So here, Nietzsche proposes, it is a progression from the camel to the lion and culminating in the child. So these are representative metaphorically represent the 3 stages of one's moral group. The camel, the camel is an animal which we find in the desert, who goes to the desert, carries a lot of

baggage, a lot of weight for its masters, never complains, never questions, just follow the orders of the master, that is all.

The camel walks, miles and miles it walks without any complaint and the camel is the average man who slavishly bears the load and obeys the thou shalt with little protest. That is representative of the herd morality. That is the 1st stage. And in this stage, one is completely obedient, one follow the dictates of the morality of good and evil and one never exercises one's will to power.

And when you go to the next page, the lion, which is slightly higher, higher man who says no and violently kills the status quo of thou shalt, this is the stage of nihilism. Here what happens is that this here, it is a negative assertion. The lion represents the man who refuses to accept the status quo. He is a nihilist. He goes against the accepted morality.

So he seems to be a nihilist and immoral but the problem with this stage is that one encounters a huge vacuum here because one is familiar with the world of morality and one rejects that world and now faces a vacuum. There is no morality. So one is to replace that vacuum or rather fill that vacuum with another morality. So one has to discover one's own morality.

That is the 3rd stage, the child or the Superman who says an emphatic yes, emphatic and sacred yes to life and creates a new reality and a New World, a New World of values. He is the creator of values. So this is the last stage which one has to reach, the creator of values. So Nietzschean ethics in that way as all of us know Nietzsche adopts a genealogical approach.

He historically analyses ethics. What he says is that the moral traditions of man can be summarised as a morality of good and evil. And this has not taken man to anything higher than what he is. So the inability of man in attaining a higher existence owes primarily because of these moral traditions, because he follows the moral traditions. And morality and religion are responsible for preventing man from attaining the higher possibilities and potentialities of his life and exercising the will to power.

So one has to go beyond that, assert one's own morality, reinvent one's own morality and create one's own morality. So this is what he seems to be proposing. So the next lecture which we are going to discuss will have, will cover the contributions of the existentialists where we will see,

Nietzsche has been a perennial influence. So we will see that in the Lex lecture. For the time being, we will wind up, thank you.

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