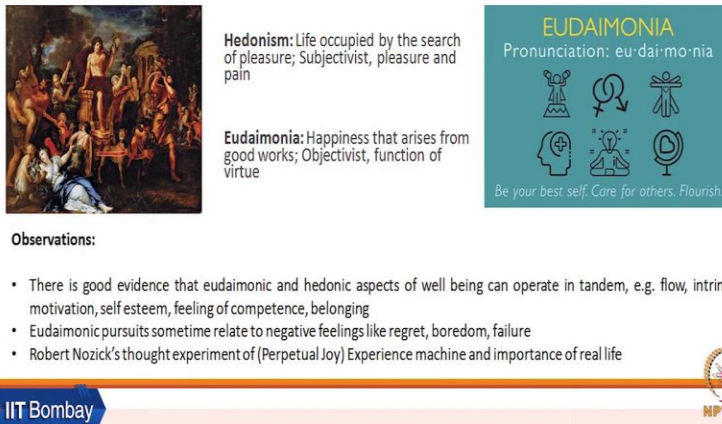


Yoga and Positive Psychology for Managing Career and Life
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Positive Psychology: First and Second Wave
Lecture - 12
What Positive Psychology is Not

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Hedonic and Eudaimonia: The Popular
Categories: Are these Really Distinct?



The slide features a central graphic with two columns. The left column includes a classical painting of a group of people in a dramatic scene, with text defining Hedonism and Eudaimonia. The right column is a teal box titled 'EUDAIMONIA' with a pronunciation guide and several icons representing different aspects of well-being. Below the graphic is a list of observations and a footer with IIT Bombay and NPTEL logos.

Hedonism: Life occupied by the search of pleasure; Subjectivist, pleasure and pain

Eudaimonia: Happiness that arises from good works; Objectivist, function of virtue

EUDAIMONIA
Pronunciation: eu-dai-mo-nia

Be your best self. Care for others. Flourish.

Observations:

- There is good evidence that eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well being can operate in tandem, e.g. flow, intrinsic motivation, self esteem, feeling of competence, belonging
- Eudaimonic pursuits sometime relate to negative feelings like regret, boredom, failure
- Robert Nozick's thought experiment of (Perpetual Joy) Experience machine and importance of real life

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Before we discuss further nuances of positive psychology, it is warranted to distinguish the two very common terms used in the general conversations about positive psychology and conversations about well being. These two terms are hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. These terms were given by Aristotle, very very popular categories.

Hedonism in the general parlance is understood to be pleasure seeking, a life occupied by the search of pleasure. So, there is an inherent subjective satisfaction involved in the pleasure and this is mostly about avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. Another aspect of happiness is eudaimonia, Aristotle explains and it is understood in general parlance as happiness that arises from good work.

It is more objectivist in nature means it is relevant at the social level people can objectively look at the eudaimonia. It is about the objective way of looking happiness and this is the function of

virtues. Eudaimonia and hedonism are the two types of lives or two directions of pursuits of happiness.

And, implicitly and sometime explicitly it is understood that eudaimonia is preferable over hedonism. This distinction is now being questioned and Kashdan and Biswas-Diener and Laura King, they have written extensively about it. There is a special issue and there is a response to the response of their articles as well.

What it summarizes is that there is a good evidence that eudaimonic and hedonic aspect of well-being actually can operate in tandem. So, there is no hard and sharp categorization of the two aspects of happiness. It can be understood by few examples and these examples are given by these authors. Flow, intrinsic motivation, self esteem, belongingness, feeling of competency, qll these experiences are replete with the personal joy.

They are replete with the sense of pleasure. They are replete with urge for people to keep looking at that and people look at these things as the matter of self-satisfaction not societal welfare. Societal welfare for the flow or for the intrinsic motivation is more like an outcome rather than the main objective of pursuit.

So, in this situation we cannot distinguish hedonism and eudaimonia. Secondly, eudaimonic pursuit sometime related to negative feelings as well. They might be result of the negative feelings as well. You take up the social responsibility, you do not get the expected outcome or expected response, you may feel dejected. Then still some people go through this experience and still continue with that.

There is not much happiness per se, but there is a pursuance of these objectives, these pursuits and that happens along with the negative feelings. So, eudaimonic pursuits may not necessarily result into happiness. So, we call eudaimonia as happiness, but there might not be many science of virtues which are associated strongly with eudaimonia. And, there is another objection and another situation which can explain why there cannot be a person who is purely looking at hedonism.

So, as there is no guaranteed happiness and eudaimonia. Hedonism is also not something which people will always pursue and that can be understood with the thought experiment suggested by Robert Nozick. That this is the famous thought experiment where he asked people to imagine you

are in a machine which gives you perpetual joy, experience of joy continuously for the whole life if you just be in that machine just sit there or attach that on your head, this will give you perpetual joy.


Can even with that machine people would like to spend their lifetime? Answer is no, nobody would like to have that kind of machine which can instigate some brain cells, some neurons in the head which can give the sense of perpetual joy. And, people would actually like to live and engage in the real life in the hustle bustle of the real life, struggle of that real life and then seek pleasure.

So, nobody is purely pursuing the hedonistic objectives. Eudaimonia may not necessarily result into happiness, may not result may not be reflected into happiness and in many many situations eudaimonia and hedonism are difficult to distinguish. So, we are also not following this classification in this course.

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What Positive Psychology is not?

- It is not just absence of negative. Rather, in times of adversaries and challenges in life, which we may sometimes term as negative, positive psychology as a discipline leads to self development.
- It is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health. It is also about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best.
- Positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity.
- Positive Psychology aims to expand not replace psychology's understanding of human behavior.

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At this stage it is also important to articulate what positive psychology is not. So, it is not just absence of negative. Rather in time of adversaries and challenges in life which we may sometime term as negative, positive psychology as a discipline leads to self development. So, it is not only about goody – goody things, it is as much about the pleasant experience as it is about adversaries and challenges in life.

It is not just the branch of medicine concerned with illness or health. In the famous paper *American Psychologist* 2001, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi explained that because of certain developments right after World War II psychology became subservient or subfield of the health management and healthcare departments. So, their natural objective was to treat the illness.

But, now things have moved a great deal and positive psychology is not only about health and illness. It is about work, about education, about insights, about love, personal growth, sports play and all walks of life. Positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking. It is neither based on faith or self deception, fads or hand-waving.

It is a scientific process. It is a scientific field. It tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to understand the unique problem that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexities. Positive psychology aims to expand, not replace psychology's understanding of human behavior. So, these are some of the caveats which were important to be articulated at this stage.

Thank you.