

Towards an Ethical Digital Society: From Theory to Practice
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Lecture 01
Ethics What, Why and Why not

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Agenda

- Interdisciplinary Study of Technology: MSc. Digital Society Programme at IIITB
- An Interdisciplinary Approach to Ethics



International
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We do not have a departmental structure, we have domain structures. So I am part of a domain called IT and society. We also have a virtual centre called the Centre for IT and Public Policy. Some of us are part of that centre and we do mostly work in the intersection of information technology or digital technologies and social sciences. The Winter School has been designed for last four years to give you a snippet of what we do as part of the two-year course (MSc Digital Society).

So every year we choose a specific theme, some of these things come from our teaching as part of the digital society programme and other research programme. And we try to put them together to give you an overview of what kind of work and what kind of teaching that takes place under the program. And as you can see from the name of the program and the name of the domain that we all belong to, it is a very interdisciplinary program.

So we try to bring in different kind of you know technology and science disciplines and try to combine them with social science understanding of science and technology as well. And then there are thematic uh you know orders in which we try to bring this approach. So even for

ethics course we are going to take a very interdisciplinary approach. So ethics is mostly taught or thought about from a very philosophical point of view.

But we will also try and see what does ethics mean from different other social science backgrounds and also for people who develop and think about designing technology.

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Guiding Questions

- Can humans and technologies share the same moral codes?
- How do humans delegate responsibilities to technologies?
- How do we create technologies that accounts for diverse moral codes?
- How do we balance between human subjectivities and technological rationality?

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The guiding questions: These are questions that you might have already seen before applying so we want to see... I will not repeat what is on the PPT but... what we want to essentially see here that can we think about what is the relationship between technology and society? Which means that when we think that we call technology and human beings and our context. A s professor Sadagopan rightly said that time space and context are extremely important when you thinking about any technology and how we use them.

So the question that we are asking or most of our talks will cover is that can we even think about a machine code. So do machines need to be ethical or can they be ethical like us and if we want to build an ethical society or an ethical digital society as we are calling it can we think about how we as human beings share responsibilities with the technologies that we are building. So if we delegate some of our responsibilities to the machines or to these technologies will they be able to carry our ethical codes? That is the critical questions that we are trying to look at.

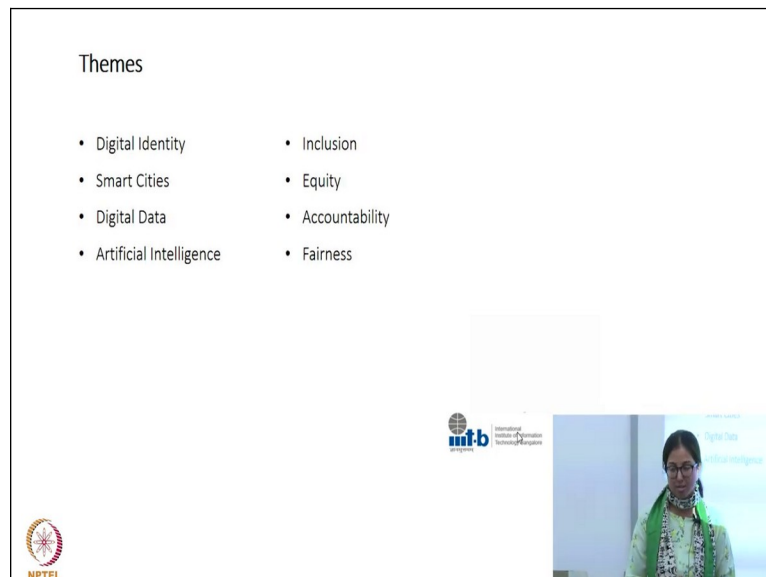
And also then if that is what we want we want our society or our technologies to be ethically responsible how do we go about making them in that way? And it is very easier said than

done because as professor already mentioned that ethics is a very slippery thing. It is very difficult to reach a framework of ethics where everybody would agree on and even not just in a very abstract framework manner but in even in our everyday actions how do we take ethical decisions?

Do we think about ethics in a very conscious way? How do we make decisions which we think are ethical? Do we all take decisions at any point in our life which we also know that they are not ethical? Also the relationship between ethics and morality that are they the same thing or they are different or can be thought about differently and also then what kind of relationships that we want to perceive our societies with.

Here, by relationship I mean uh the technological side and the different other social actors mostly human beings, our institutions, our cultures. How technology will shape these and how these other factors will check technology. And what do we want that is the point and uh I will hand over to professor Chetan but at all the conversations that we are going to have uh we have thematically organized them.

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So we cannot talk about all the technologies, we have only three days so we have picked up a few that most of us work on their digital identity, smart cities, digital data and artificial intelligence. These are the four technologies that you will be hearing about. And the themes about or things that are connected to ethical questions that we are going to touch upon are inclusion equity, accountability and sameness.

This is not an exhaustive list of themes. There will be more that each of the speakers will bring depending on their work and research. But these are some of the themes that I know that they will definitely touch upon. And uh we all try to do many of these questions, we will try to bring it through our empirical experiences. So for example when we are building a digital ID system, how do we bring in the question of inclusion?

How do a ethical digital identity system should look like? Or do we have ethical digital identity system already in place or what are the places where there is room for improvement? These are the kind of questions that each of the speakers would look at and just a little bit.... before I finish a little bit organizational detail. There will be series of lectures and do not be scared, we will not talk non-stop.

We will try and make it more interactive. So please feel free. We are all approachable people, I would like to believe that. So you feel free to ask questions if you do not understand, if you even want to question us, if you do not agree please feel free to ask questions. Last day. we have kept mostly for interactions among groups. So you will be designated to a particular group. We will assign you some of our researchers who would help you if you have any questions.

I will definitely be around, so you can always reach out to me and what we intend to do that we give you specific, domain-specific problems and try and see if you can apply some of the things that all the talks would be throwing at you. Can you apply some of those concerns into those domain specific problems? And to what... I am not saying that you will you now have all... absolute enlightenment after doing these three days of winter school as I said ethics itself is a very complex issue.

But our hope is to give you some sort of practical toolkit or at least some pragmatic questions that you should ask at the end of the three days when you think about technologies in general or also specific technologies that we are working on specific technology that you are working on. So feel free to bring those... many of you are actually students many of you are working so feel free to bring your individual experiences, your ethical dilemmas that you face in your workplace, together.

So this becomes a more enriching environment. It is not like a, we do not want it to be a one-way street that we are giving you... we have figured it out and we just want to tell you how to do things. We have not, these are more questions, we have more questions than answers.

I am a professor of electrical engineering. I have been all my life. But the last five years I have also been teaching a course on ethics, here as well as at the university I was at before.

I say this to just let you know that I am not an expert the way I am on electronic circuits. I mean I shamelessly claim that I am an expert but I cannot claim that I am an expert on ethics because I have just been teaching it and I do not have a Ph.D in ethics. What this presentation or this session is about is uh a very, very short and basic introduction to what ethics is and the rest of the talks and sessions will be more on applying principles of ethics to various situations.

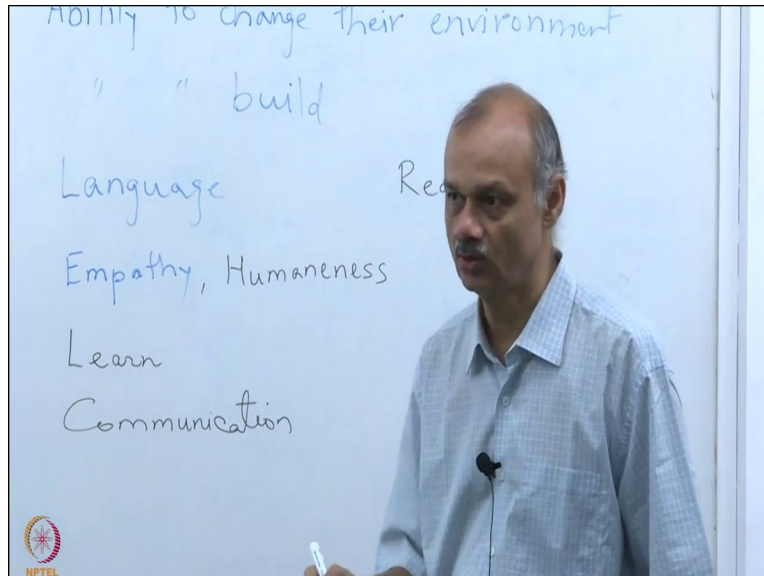
So it made sense that there should be at least one session to talk about ethics itself. So that is what we do. We will do quickly one and a half hours as I said I teach a 45 hour course on and as Bidisha said this is an endless topic. So just cover bits and pieces of ethics here and presumably a lot of you are already familiar with it but this is a revision, if you are familiar and if you are familiar you can help us have a nice interesting discussion.

So we begin by, I begin by asking a question. Oh, these are the sources that I have referred to while teaching and that have gone into the presentation that we go through today. So, these are the contents so we will start with asking ourselves how humans are different from other animals. Then we will go look very quickly at human psyche, very quickly at free will and then we will spend a majority of the time on talking about what philosophers have said about what is moral or ethical.

By the way, for this session and Bidisha being an expert may distinguished later on for this session we will use ethical and moral interchangeably. For us today right now they are the same then she will do the final differentiations later on. So let us ask ourselves this question to begin this session. In what ways are humans different from other animals what are the qualities and characteristics humans have that other animals or other animals do not have? And we will discuss so I need I need answers from you about what you think.

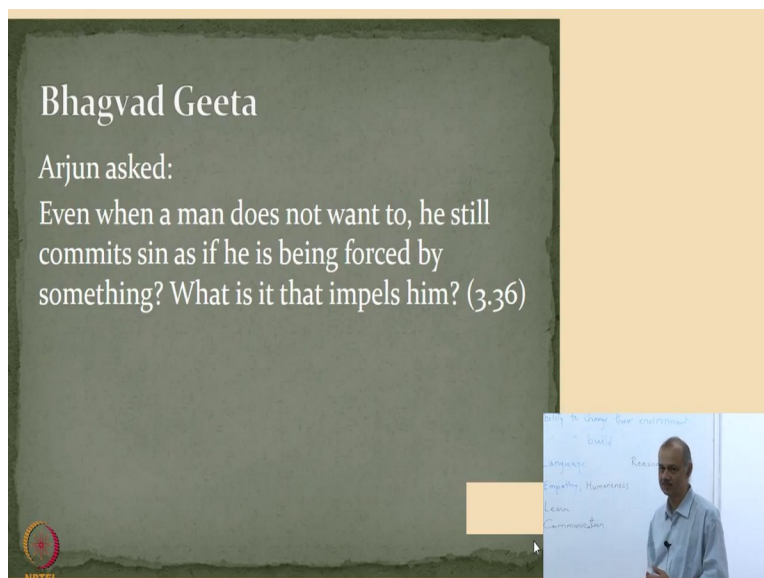
In fact let us do this you all have a notepad or notebook or something right? So could you write down at least one, you can write 10 but could you just take two three minutes write down at least one characteristic or quality that humans have that other animals do not have.

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Ability to change their surroundings or their environment the earth also, yes they can build ability to change, ability to build language, empathy all right yes let me write this as the ability to learn although it is now I mean even animals learn but for the sake of gravity, over long distance communication, capacity to reason, yes related to empathy all right this is good. So I wrote some things this is not an exhaustive list but it complements or some of the things we have are already here.

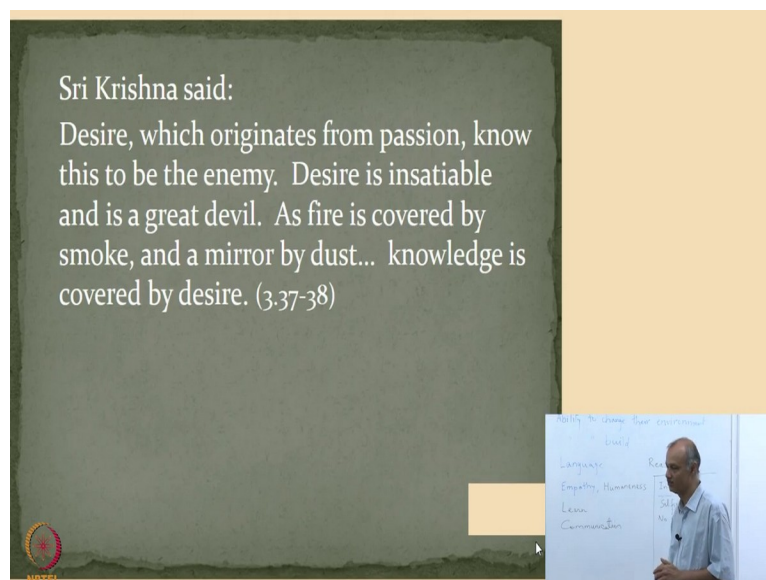
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Here are some more intelligence which is the same as reason. Large-scale cooperation humans can cooperate today over the entire world. Societies countries civilizations cooperate with each other. Imagination: Imagination is critical if a differentiator between humans and animals and here are some examples I earn money so that I have enough food to eat every day but I imagine that tomorrow I may not have and it worries me, animals do not worry.

They get what they get tomorrow they will do what they will do. We worry imagine we worry we imagine we can imagine 8 headed and 10 headed humans and entities with 25 eyes we can imagine. Emotions we have covered unique to humans evil. Humans have the capacity to do evil as they have the capacity to do good. Animals do what they do they do not consciously do evil or good they just do what they do all right.

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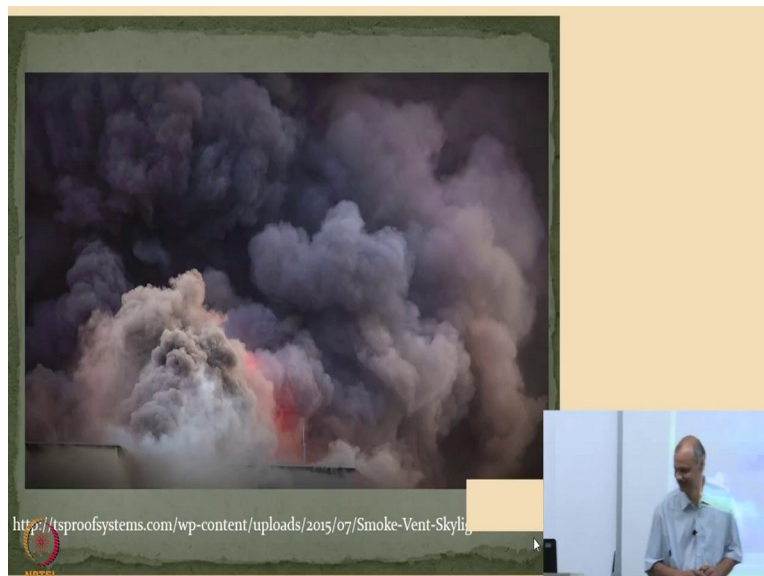
Okay. Any comments? All right. Let us quickly uh three slides of human psyche. Psyche is basically everything that makes up the internal uh human self as opposed to the physical self the mental self. The mind, the heart, the emotions everything combined together psychologists call it, in fact psychology is the study of the human psyche. So Bhagavad-Gita is one of my favourite books of all time.

Arjuna asked somewhere third chapter even when a man does not want to he still commits sin as if the, as if he is being forced by something. What is it that impels him? We all humans do things often as if we are being forced by something within us not outside but within us. Even if we do not want to we do it what is it that impels us. It is a question. Sorry? Intuition. All

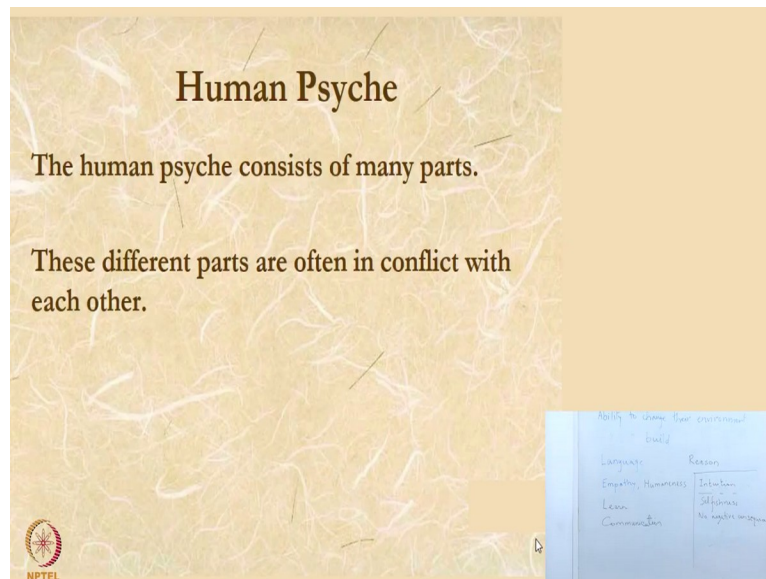
right let us this is all right I think the intent here is he still means sin all right something bad I am not sure if intuition fits into that category maybe it impels us to do things.

But I am not sure intuition impels us to do evil or sin. So what is it that impels us to do something that we know is not right but we still do it. He might see his own profit in it. Selfishness all right? So there are two different things right one is no one notices one does it because I know nobody will see it. So I will do it the other is it I will do it because I feel that it does not have any consequence negative consequences all right.

Perception that there are no negative consequences. Anybody else? Does anybody know what uh the reply is in the Bhagavad-Gita. Now there are a lot of ethics one can learn from I assume you I do not know if you know or do not know. Sri Krishna said desire which originates from passion, know this to be the enemy. Desire is insatiable and is a great evil devil. As fire is covered by smoke and a mirror by dust knowledge is covered by desire. **(Refer Slide Time: 18:47)**



Another nice picture. I like this picture as fire is covered by smoke you can see only smoke fire is there somewhere inside. But all we see is smoke knowledge is the fire, smoke is the desire. All right. So here is the combined, the collected wisdom of ancient spirituality, ancient literature and modern psychology in one sentence all right. **(Refer Slide Time: 19:31)**





This one. This is a core of all ethics as far as I am concerned. The human psyche consists of many parts these different parts are often in conflict with each other. So the Bhagavad-Gita says we have knowledge and we have ignorance, desire, good all right. All of us within ourselves carry many parts and you look at different theories. So the Upanishad will talk about like seven or eight different parts inside a human being.

Freud talked about three. Do you know the ones that Freud talked about the ID the I and the super I, I mean he called the English it is called the ID and the ego and the super ego. I prefer the it and the I and the super I. So the Freud said there are three parts of a human psyche Upanishads say there are many more. You look at different literature will give you a different number but everybody agrees that we all have multiple parts within ourselves and they are in conflict with each other.

Animals do not have multiple parts they are one they do what they do and that is what they do. Humans have multiple parts. This is the basis of all what is good and what is not good what is right and what is not right and so on. **(Refer Slide Time: 21:13)**

Examples

- Hunger & stealing
- Lust & rape
- Depression & suicide
- Material riches & bribes/exploitation



Okay, so here are some examples. I am very hungry I have not eaten for three days and I do not have money to buy food but I am very hungry. And there is food just I can see the food but I do not have access to it. I would steal to satisfy my hunger. Is this right? Is it right to steal to satisfy hunger that is killing me or maybe my child for example, I am very extremely poor and I am hungry my two-year-old child is hungry. is it okay to steal food to satisfy my hunger what do you say?

It is right because there are no negative consequences all right. Yes right so it is ok to steal when the person who has an abundance is not significantly affected all right. One shop of food, rest I do not know shop is easier to steal from our restaurants are not easier to steal from that has this abundance of food and it can supply food for 100 people. For example that that the amount of food that is lying there.

And there is this one extremely hungry mother or father with her child and the parent steals and runs away all right and he says what is your name Prakash. Prakash says that that is because it is a small amount it does not. I imagine that there are 60 hungry families. Is it ok? Not stealing from the same place what about 10 from the same place, when does it become not ok? We will come back to these.

So these are examples and we look at theories that answer these questions all right and these are questions. I have uncontrollable lust I want to satisfy I do rape is this right or wrong. First of all there is a conflict here the different parts of my psyche. One part says hunger, lust,

another part of myself says no not right not right what Freud calls the superego or the super I. But is it ok? Why is it not ok to commit rape.

What is wrong? Please write why is it or maybe you can say why it is ok I do not know why is it ok or not ok to satisfy my lust by forcing myself on another human being. Can you write your answer? Not ok, we have got three very fundamental reasons it is not ok because we are treating another human being as an object and that uh contradicts the very principle of what human or human being is number one.

Number 2 uh one is not being empathetic uh and what is the third one we have to abide by norms and laws and rules of society. uh Can I ask you a further question why is it not being empathetic can you elaborate on that? So let me add a word that is critical word. One is hurting another human being and that is the lack of empathy is not recognizing that by one's act one is hurting another human being.

Rape is wrong because one is hurting another human being. Depression and suicide. I am very, very depressed I have no will to live nothing nobody loves me I do not see why I am here, I might as well die. So I commit suicide. Although I know it is at some ethical level it is wrong but I do not care I want to commit suicide. I take bribes to become rich. India is well known for this phenomenon or I exploit other human beings to become rich.

Why is it wrong? Why is it wrong to give bribes and take bribes? So I go in a train and the train is there is no place and I am on some waiting list and I slip some a few hundred rupees to the ticket collector and he gives me a seat which is when it is empty. Although the person who should have got the seat was I mean there is there are people ahead of me in that line queue of RAC and etc.

But I slip some money so I get a seat. What is that somebody was going to get it I have money I gave it. The TC get some money where is the wrong in it? Unjust use of power okay. What can you...so the person who should have got it, did not get it. So there was some injustice there he had trust right. So some some principle of justice was violated. What about exploitation? I give very little wage to labourers, labourers in farming or labourers in an industry and as a result I make a lot of money as an industrialist or a landowner and they do not get their due.

Why is that wrong or is it wrong? It is okay. that's how the world works know. The world works like that today. We are not treating them as human's, right. But so you have said this before also so let me broaden you a little but why is that wrong? It is okay what is that... hmm.. they are being pursued.. yes correct. But why do I care? Yeah, yeah. So if I am worried about treating other people ethically then I should care. Okay.

Yes, so there may be some consequences which will be even to my selfish aims not be fulfilled. Consider that, that is not the case, there is no possibility over the next 60 years that I will suffer because of the injustices that I am committing. So then the only reason I would be I would want to treat them well is because I want to be ethical, is that correct? Yes so Nimisha has brought out a very important point right. That people commit wrongs and the only reason people would not want to commit wrongs, when specifically in this case (we will have to look at each one individually), in this case is because we want to be ethical.

The only reason that we not commit wrongs is that we do not want to commit them. Is that correct? Do you agree with that statement? Yes on the social? Okay. Yes, yes right. So there are two aspects to this, one is that to live in a society there are a set of norms and rules that the society makes and one must follow them if the society has to continue to exist in a state of non-chaos perhaps.

And that is why being ethical is important because people are not ethical then that would lead to a society that is chaotic that is one. The other you are saying is that there is the individual notion of integrity that a human has for whatever reasons his upbringing or his rationality or his religion has decided that I will be ethical because that is what I believe to be the right thing to do and that is what integrity is.

Independent of what the society does. All right. Good. Yes I am sorry I did not get it. The first part is something which we have brought into our environment, first part meaning hunger, loss, depression, material which is that we have brought. I am not sure hunger is hunger I mean how does society bring it in, it is my physical makeup that I in fact share with animals also. So I am not I am not sure it is part of part of our nature it is there all right yes correct.

I think if I understood you right I think what you are saying is that there is a conflict between that which is good for myself versus that which is good for the collective uh and that is where the conflict arises. If I were to only worry about myself then this conflict does not arise and I think again you are right that is a crux of ethics. Ethics is the questions or ethics arise when we live in a society. And therefore there is a conflict between what we want for ourselves versus what we need to live in our society.

There are times when we need to sacrifice our own needs so as to live in a society because otherwise we will all be individuals living by ourselves and fighting with each other and there will be no cooperation absolutely right. Yes four points are actually quite disturbing for me because from the development studies perspective that I come up. So the important questions that I would be asking is why are 60 people hungry while there is one shop with abundant food or why one sex getting raped while the other is more or less safe or depression or suicide is more in certain groups and not in others.

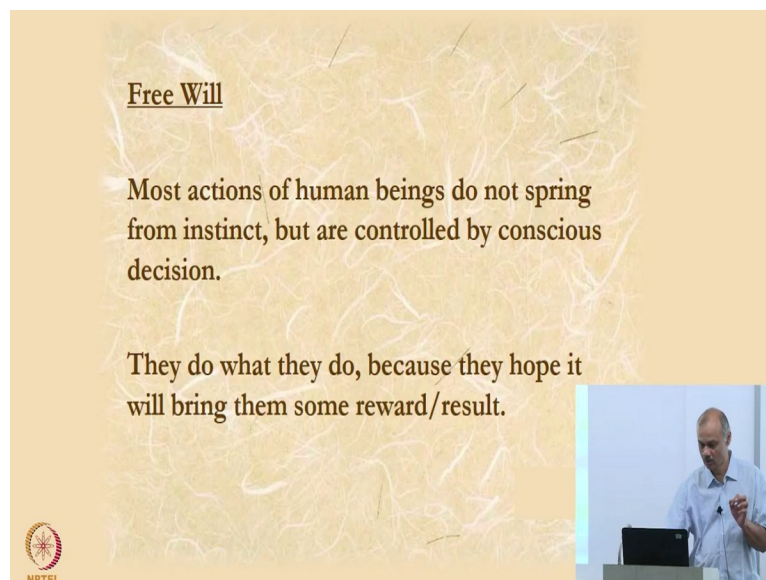
Or why some people can afford to bribe while others cannot. So if this kind of a organized systematic difference exist in our society should we base our ethics on such a non-just society? should not that society like instead of preserving that structure of society should not we try to improve it or change it. So for me if ethics is based on society itself at least in these examples it is very problematic.

But I see it as very problematic. So the fact that these dichotomies exist implies a deeper problem in society is what you are saying. If there is hunger in society that means there is a problem that needs to be solved. If there are people who bribe and therefore deprive others of their natural rights there is a problem in society that is what you are saying. Yes, deciding what is ethical or not, yes we cannot say take the current unequal structure of the society as sacrosanct.

Because inherently there is inequality and if we use that context some people will always be at a disadvantage in determining the role. None of these should be taken as a given. If one says that these are given then that itself is wrong that is what you are saying. Agree, I have say, no. So I do not think there was an implication here that these are given. In fact I would

uh this is a personal opinion I think hunger will always exist and lust will always exist in whatever society one lives. uh

At a personal level these things will always exist therefore these are independent of any assumptions made about societies all right. I think we have discussed enough. So let us go ahead. **(Refer Slide Time: 37:43)**



So, one slide about free will: That is the other thing that we actually missed when we are discussing the characteristics of humans versus animals. The one characteristic that humans have that animals do not have is the capacity to choose actions. Human beings decide that every moment in time we decide what we will do. From the moment we get up in the morning to the moment we fall asleep at night there are many many actions uh that humans do.

Most of them are by conscious decision they are not by instinct. And how these decisions are made is a very complex thing I mean they are made by habits they are made by social rules etc but nonetheless they are conscious decisions. We have the power to choose what we do and therefore the question of what is right and wrong becomes fundamental to human existence. I put this here but then I had two three slides on this but I decided to remove them so I am not going to discuss this.

But ah do you agree? Any comments on this? and it is because we have the power to choose that the questions of right and wrong become relevant to human beings as individuals as well as societies. And therefore we keep discussing what is right and wrong. So this is a statement,

a broad statement as I said how we make these decisions? Under different contexts and situations is a very, very complex process that has to do with our personalities.

The societies we live in the norms of society, our upbringing, our genetic makeup all kinds of things that is a whole field of like about five different courses or worth of stuff there right. But yes the underlying thing is we decide. We have the ability to decide we have free will and of course that that itself is a discussion right. There there is a branch of philosophy that will argue whether humans have free will or not.

For now we will assume that we have without going into the intricacies of whether we do or we do not. Because it is only when we have freewill that the question of doing right or doing wrong becomes relevant. If we do not have then if we are driven entirely by external forces then that becomes a more complicated subject which we will not handle here. Given therefore that humans have 2 facts 2 notions or concepts one that we have within ourselves multiple parts which are in conflict with each other.

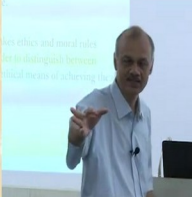

And often the parts are in conflict because of selfish versus societal aims, sometimes actually it is more deep than that, again for example all a lot of psychology and all of spirituality would say that ultimately everything that we do wrong in any sense of the word that is that is selfish actually in the long run harms ourselves also so it is not merely as for the sake of society that one does right.

But also in the long run for our own selves. So the theory of karma for example is a theory about that if I do wrong it is going to come back to me, independent of what it does to society. But the point being everything that we do is a result of something that we have internally decided after some internal conflict. And the fact that we have the ability to choose means that we need to know, think about what is right and wrong and that is what ethics is.

Ethics asks, one of the questions the field of ethics asks is what is right and what is wrong. And so what we are going to do rest of the session is look at various philosophies uh quickly about how they answered the question what is right or what is moral? Use the word moral but the word moral right ethics I am using interchangeably here all right. So that is what we will do. **(Refer Slide Time: 43:13)**

In other words, humans have the ability to choose to act in a certain way to achieve a desired purpose.



This ability makes ethics and moral rules essential, in order to distinguish between ethical and unethical means of achieving these purposes.



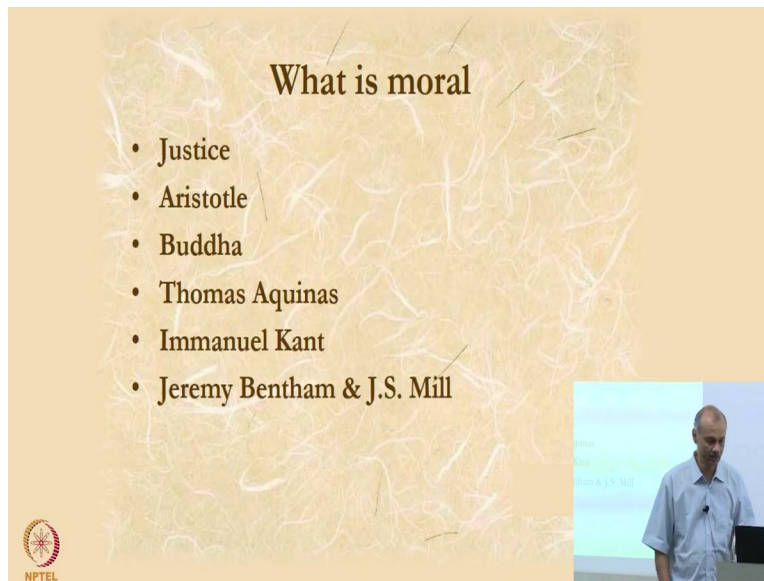
Given that we say yes we need to make a choice how do we decide what is right or wrong. So like he said well it is to steal if it is only one person one hungry person and a shop has enough food for 100. How do we decide what is right and wrong? So let us look at some philosophies. **(Refer Slide Time: 43:33)**

Normative Ethics

- Given that we agree that there is a need for determining what is ethical and unethical, how do we determine it?
- The branch of Ethics that addresses this question (“What is moral?”) is called Normative Ethics.



So this this branch or ethics which addresses the question what is moral or what is ethical is called normative ethics. Ethics has two three branches the this is called normative and basically addressing the question what is moral or what is ethical? Whatever. So you look at theories. **(Refer Slide Time: 43:55)**



So these are the broad kind of ...we look at these different what different people have said about what is moral? And the first one I have put is justice which no particular person has said but that the notion of justice basically pervades what is ethical? In fact some philosophers will say that what is ethical is the same as what is just. The ethics is the same as justice anything that is just is ethical all right. uh

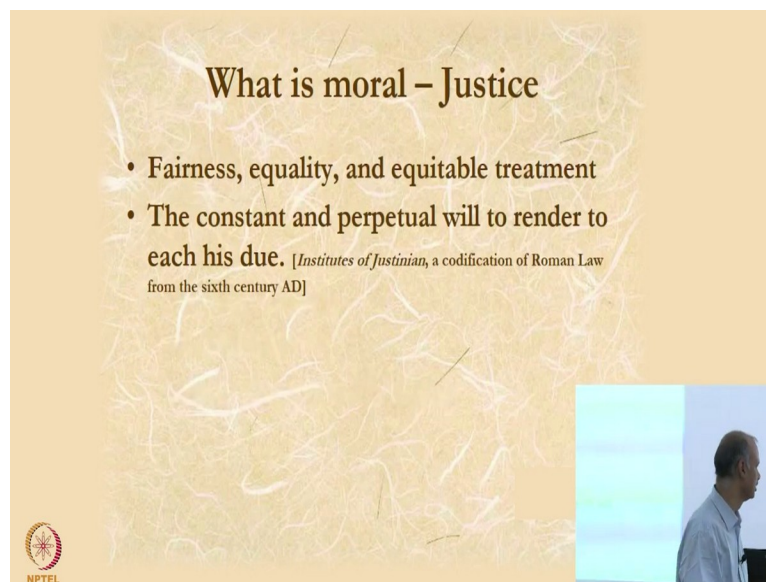
So we begin with that and then we look at various theories. So what is just by the way; what is when do we say something is just for justice what is justice? Someone has crossed a threshold and they need to be set back that is justice all right. Somebody has done something wrong and they need to be punished right, although you are not using those words I am putting words into your mouth uh but that are what you are saying.

Somebody has some done something unethical and they need to have consequences imposed by society that is justice all right. But let me give you an example another example I am a teacher in high school and I give a test and I collect the papers and there is this one my very favourite student I like him very much. And he is not done very well but I like him so much that I tweak and I give him more marks than he deserves.

One says that that is unjust. Does it not? The word one uses, this is not just. So in that sense this is not legal uh there is an underlying notion of something that goes beyond legality. So, the, getting one's due; either reward or punishment for one's action that is justice. I think that is one broadest definitions of justice is getting one's that which is due to one either reward or punishment.

Should reward be part of justice that is a very profound question. I will not go there it is a very, very important question and you ask people who study justice all their life will give you an answer. I am not one of those but it is a very important question. uh As for now let us leave it at that that it is. Well there are simple examples all right. I am a professor I work here I teach at the end of the month I expect a salary that is a reward. It is what that which is due to me that which is due because of the work I did.

If I do not get it that is injustice, so if I get it that is justice in that sense the reward is in the sense of getting or that which is due to me all right. So it is not reward in the sense of addition it is not a gift. Gift is different, reward is that which is due right. So, in fact that is not that difficult. **(Refer Slide Time: 47:25)**



So here is a couple of...by the way justice is uh I in my limited reading of ethics I found that justice is the most difficult concept I have encountered. And nobody has a nice clear simple way of describing. In fact even dictionaries stumble and struggle trying to define justice. It is a very difficult and many faceted concept, legal is only one small aspect of what we understand by the term justice.

So these are two definitions I found somewhere. I do not know where I got this from uh I am sorry I do not know where I got this from. I should have written it maybe some from some online dictionary. So fairness, equality, equitable treatment constant and perpetual will to render each his due. So this is justice, so ultimately so you know recall what we are discussing is how do we define what is ethical and what is not ethical.

And here are ways of deciding defining deciding what is ethical and what is not to ask is this fair does it lead to equal and equitable treatment. So any question that is given to us one way to ask is this ethical is to ask these questions. Is it fair to everyone concerned? Is it, does it lead to equal and equitable treatment to everyone. So that is that will come up in the uh you know the digital identity and privacy and all kinds of things. The notion of justice is fundamental to all these questions. **(Refer Slide Time: 49:21)**



Justice – Different meanings

- Social justice: everyone deserves equal economic, political, and social opportunities irrespective of race, gender, religion, etc.
- Distributive justice: equitable allocation of assets in society.
- Corrective justice: make whole those who have suffered unfairly.
- Retributive justice: punish wrongdoers.
- Procedural justice: Implementing legal decisions in accordance with fair and just processes

<https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/justice>

NPTTEL

Inset image: A man in a light blue shirt standing in profile, looking towards the right.

Here is a longer definition but I do not think we will go through this. So there is social justice, there is distributive justice, there is corrective justice which is more the legal aspect, the punishment aspect. Retributive justice, procedural justice so this is from some website. uh So there are lots and lots of different aspects of what justice means to us as social beings. Now, I think perhaps uh can I ask you to read that first one social justice just read it out.

So I think the first two is what you were talking about when you brought the issue of putting in the right perspective the issues of hunger and lust and etcetera. So these are the social aspects of that is here. Any system, any norms, any laws, any technologies must ultimately fulfill these specifically the first two because the last three are more about what happens when somebody did something wrong.

The first two are how to not do wrong and I think this this will perhaps this is sufficient for your rest of the three days but we will go through the other, the other definitions of what is moral also.

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What is moral – Indian Philosophies

**Non-violence: That which does not cause hurt
– of body, thoughts or feelings**

Give one example of:

(i) a just action
(ii) a non-violent action

(Also: truth, non-stealing, non-greediness, chastity)



What do Indian philosophies say uh again Indian philosophy's treatment of ethics is very difficult because Indian philosophies talk more about renunciation and leaving this world and detachment from this world and ethics as a means to that. And so the treatment on ethics is always subsidiary to the primary goal which is moksha or you know the liberation from this world. But some fundamental concepts of Indian philosophies.

The one is uh non-violence that which does not cause hurt or body of thoughts or feelings to cause hurt to another human being or to oneself bodily hurt, hurt of thoughts, hurt of feelings and that covers a large range of notions of right and wrong. There are others truths so in fact there are five that are mentioned often in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist philosophy: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, non-greediness and chastity.

So these define what is right and the opposite of these define what is not right. So lying is wrong being truthful is right, stealing is wrong being greedy is wrong it is very difficult. These are easy, stealing is the easy one I do not know it is easy anymore nothing maybe. And when Professor Sadagopan talked about uh that postcard right. So, an email , some data, a lot of discussion about data that will come, servers store data but if the data is used for purposes that are detrimental to me then suddenly that data that becomes stealing: privacy, identity is stealing.

So, even now these are kind of coming back in the technology era and coming to haunt us about not being so obvious ways of being unethical. In some sense this is; if only the whole world was not greedy. a lot of the unethical problems will go away. But that is not to be you

know. Why is that? Why so imagine a world as I said human beings have the capacity to imagine. Imagine a world when human beings are not greedy in the world.

I am saying what would that world look like? Yes. There will be no innovations? I do not think so I think I mean people have innovated throughout history not because of greed is that true? Newton that is a thirst for knowledge not thirst for material riches. Let me constrain the definition of greediness to material. One looks at history and scientific and technological advances have occurred most often not because of greed for money but because of thirst for knowledge.

There is a desire to know how the world works? How the universe works? I am specifically talking about greed I am not talking about wrongdoing. Because these are two different discussions and see imagine a society where there is no greed for money for more material riches. Everybody is satisfied with little and not wanting more and more. If I have a one bedroom house I want a two bedroom house and if I have a small car I want a bigger car.

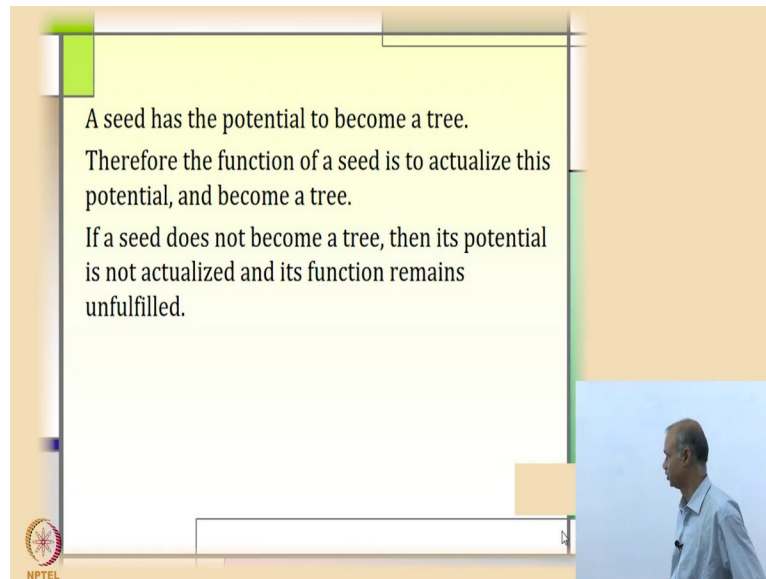
And you know if I am travelling in third AC I want to travel in a plane. These are material riches if you, can we imagine first of all, can we imagine a world where this greed is not there. In fact, can we imagine. So then what will happen after that sorry economy will fall and then what will happen right and then correct correct and then what will happen correct and then what will happen? You will be bored of yourselves. Yes progress material progresses material progress will stop. is correct.

So all right material progress will stop and economy will look very different what will that look like I am saying can you imagine that. This is what I am asking? Yes, right right right right and then so what will that look like that society? Right, industrialization less inequality you think? Because nobody is rich right nobody cares about being rich, yes. There will be hierarchies always but knowledge's are not talking about knowledge I am talking specifically about material riches.

So something to think about please think about this, imagine this society what would it look like if people did not have greed for material riches. I am not saying greed for knowledge for knowledge thirst for knowledge. Let us differentiate thirst for knowledge is there, empathy is

there but greed for more material riches is not there. It is hard to imagine but that is why we are human we have the capacity to imagine. It will be very interesting.

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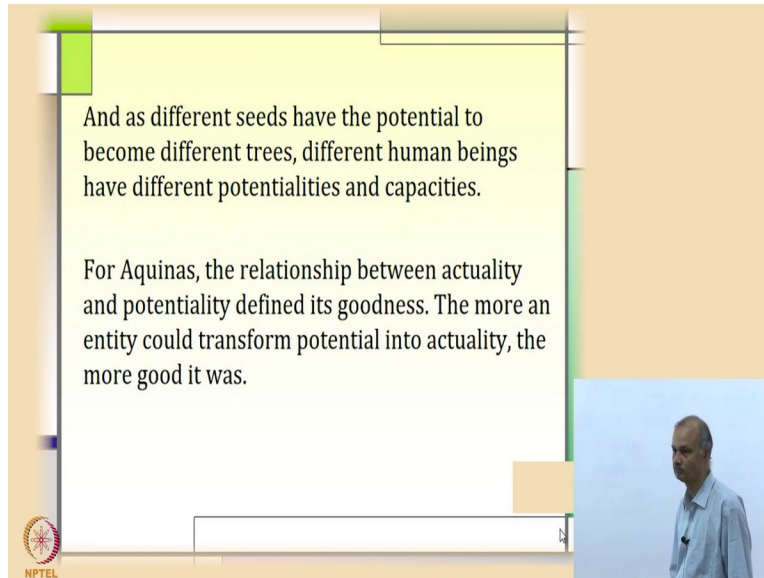


Okay. Aquinas, Thomas Aquinas was a great Christian philosopher of the middle I forget the yes but somewhere 600 or 880 thereabouts. He said moral is that which actualizes human potential do not let me see if I have stuff. huh We have time so why do not we just read all right there are 3, 4, 5 slides of what a Aquinas says, they are very interesting. So I put them here maybe only tangentially relevant but they are interesting.

So then start, can you just read loudly. All right. potential is the capacity, something is potential then it is actualized and it becomes actual all right. A seed has the potential therefore the function of the seed is all right. So the notion of the concept of potentiality is very nicely illustrated here. Seed can become a tree therefore it has a potential when it does become a tree it has actualized its potential.

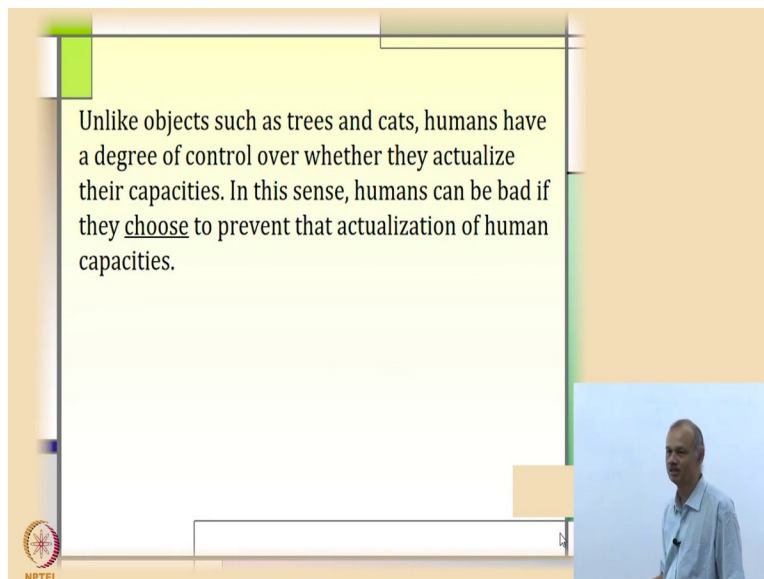
And the function of a seed is to become a tree it is not only an actuality, I mean potentiality it is also therefore a function.

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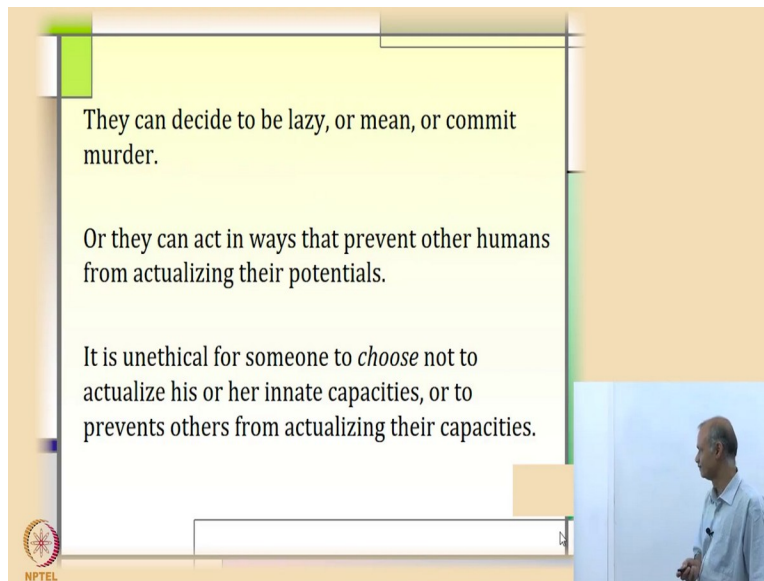
There are two very important concepts, different human beings have different potentialities and capacity. We all have different capacities and potentialities and Aquinas says that the more that potentiality is converted to actuality the more good. So the more a human being actualizes his or her potential the more good your seed is all right very fascinating, is it not? I think it is very fascinating all right.

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So this is a difference between humans and seeds. Seeds just do what they do they will the countries given a certain set of external circumstances. Humans can choose not to actualize. So, Aquinas says if they choose not to actualize then that is bad unethical to not actualize.

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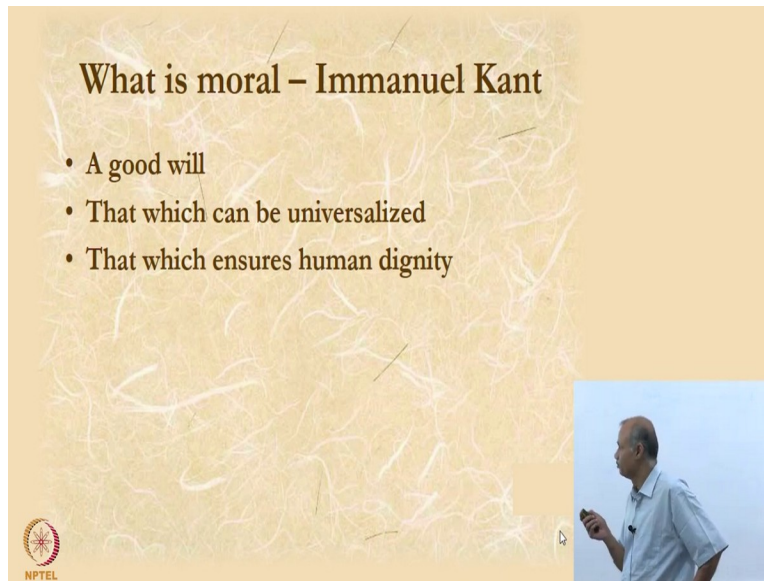
So, this is the definition of ethical or unethical. Ethical is to actualize human capacities one's own and others. So in a social context to enable or allow others and oneself to actualize potential this is good to prevent others or oneself from actualizing their capacity is unethical. Of course in some sense this is related to justice ultimately perhaps everything is related to justice. But this is a very beautiful definition you know that relates to rich and poor who are possessed and dispossessed exploitation everything that prevents others from actualizing their potentialities is unethical.

And then of course you know I do not have engineering background people here now here very few. So I mean we are an engineering institution so I mean you know today's culture so a lot of students come here who come; I do not know why they come but they are not interested in engineering you know and they are being forced by parents, society this that and the other and their interest is somewhere else.

They have no interest in engineering they have no potentiality in engineering they want to do I have had students who wanted to make movies wanted to become photographers who wanted to write poetry at some level there is a lack of ethics in not actualizing those inner potentials when there are external forces or internal forces whatever that curve that force human beings to do things that is not their potential all right.

This is there because this is one of my favourites. So and it is not often whatever the other reason go through kind of books on ethics, Aquinas is not given a lot of importance. Aristotle and then people jump to Kant.

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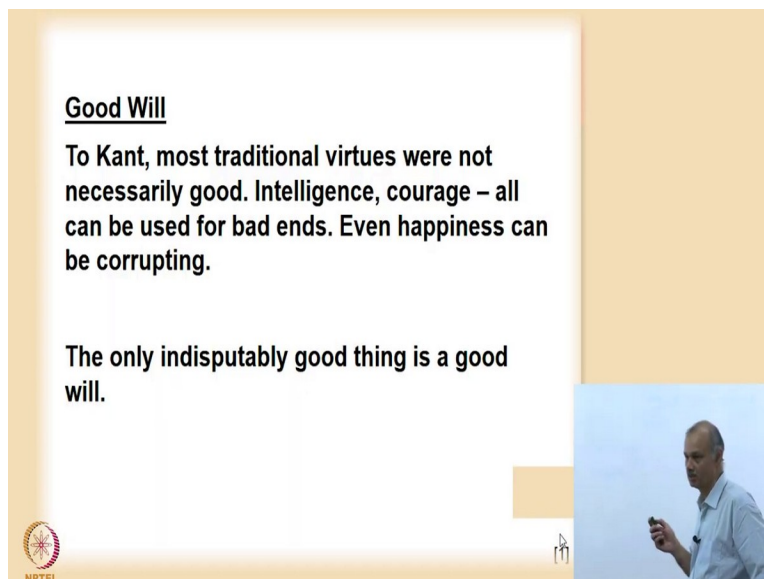


What is moral – Immanuel Kant

- A good will
- That which can be universalized
- That which ensures human dignity

NPTEL

And of course Kant is a giant. So let us talk about Kant, Immanuel Kant. uh So he said many things about ethics uh these are three important ones and let us see I think there are some slides on this. (Refer Slide Time: 1:05:20)



Good Will

To Kant, most traditional virtues were not necessarily good. Intelligence, courage – all can be used for bad ends. Even happiness can be corrupting.

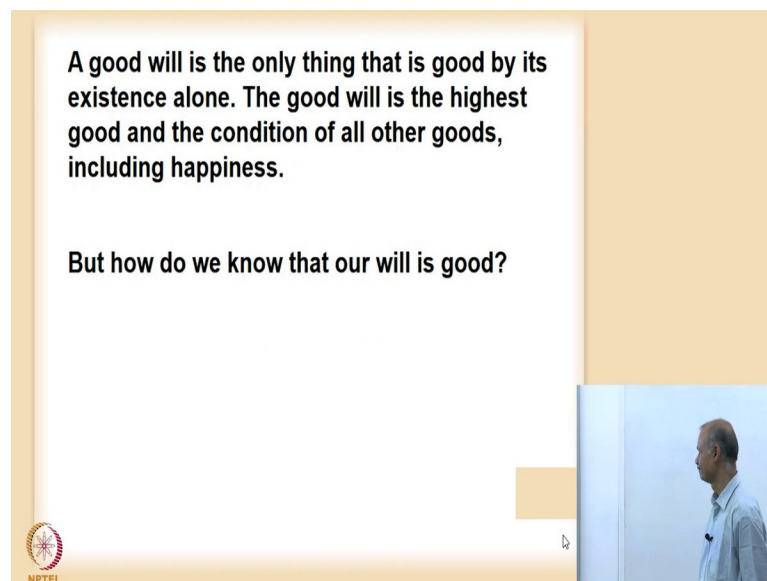
The only indisputably good thing is a good will.

NPTEL

So let us continue reading. The only indisputably good thing according to Kant is a good will. Ultimately a good will is the ultimate good Kant says and all other human virtues they can be used for good or bad purposes a good will is a good will. It is like again what Professor Sadagopan mentioned. He said you know that postman who carried thousands of postcards every day he did not read them, by the way I do not know if he did not read them. But we will not go there.

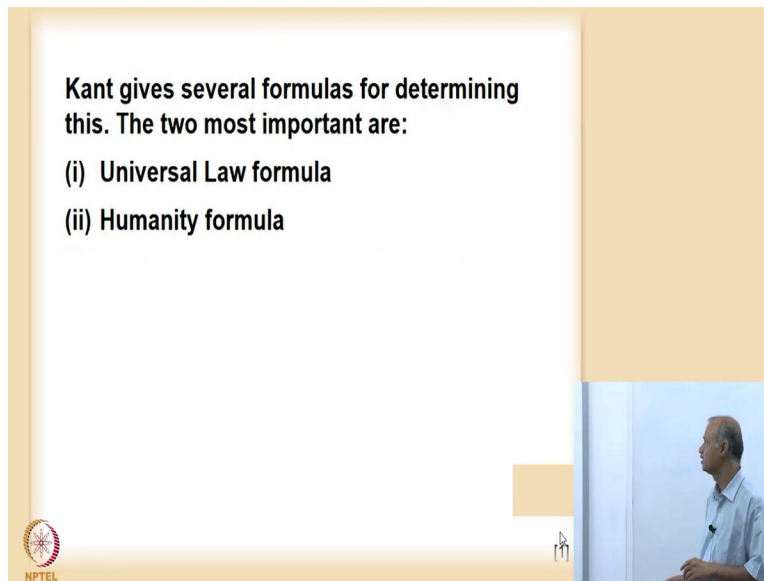
But there was the notion of respecting other people's privacy and one respected because the in the there was no will there was trust. And when there is trust there is no violation and that trust comes from a good will. I do not I do not have an intention of violating another person's privacy and as long as that intention is there society is good. But when their intention is not there then people start abusing their, whatever the data, information etc.

Intent will, Kant said that many centuries ago. If the intent is good there is trust and there is goodness in society. As long as, as soon as the intent becomes not good we have trouble. So that is one of the things he said right. **(Refer Slide Time: 1:07:18)**



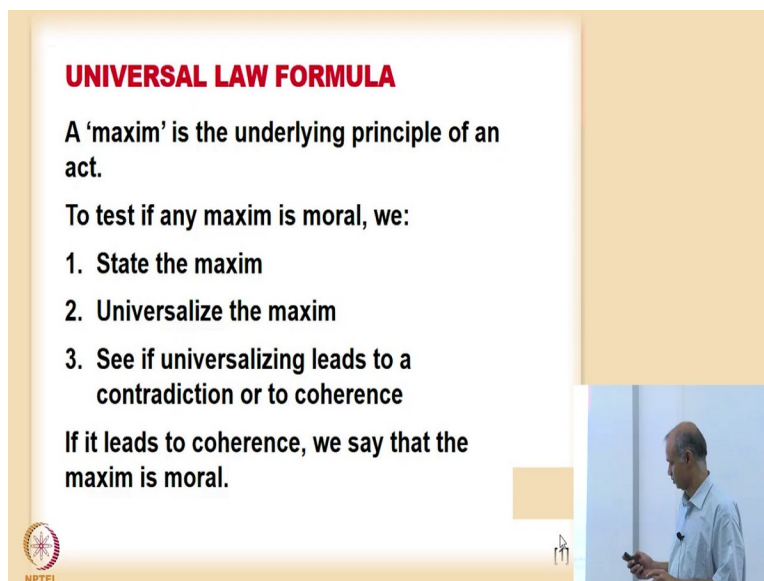
A fundamental question right it is nice to say a good will, good will but how do we know I have a will to do something how do I know it is good? Sometimes I am confused I am very hungry, I want to eat, I want to steal food is that a good will question still remains. So Kant have many criteria and we look at two briefly till 11, 15 more minutes.

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Kant give several formulas we look at two very briefly. The universal law formula and the humanity formula. The humanity formula we kind of discussed already but the universal law again one of the most beautiful conceptions of uh morality definitions of morality, simple but very beautiful.

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Let me read this. So underlying a principle is a maxim to test if any maxim is moral. So the maxim could be it is to steal when I am hungry all right. So how do we test if this is moral or not so he says, Kant says state the maxim universalize the maxim. See if universalizing leads to a contradiction or to coherence. If it leads to coherence we say that the maxim is moral. So universalizing any maxim is a test for determining if it is moral or not.

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Example:

Suppose I cannot pay my rent and am about to be evicted. I borrow money from a friend, promising to pay her back, but knowing that I will not be able to. I reason, however, that it is not immoral to do this because otherwise I will be homeless.




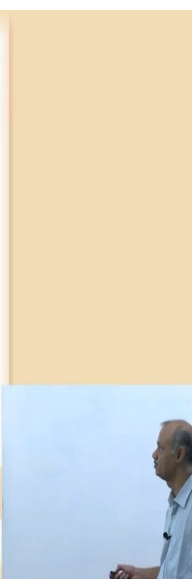
So look at an example suppose I cannot pay my rent and I am about to be evicted. I borrow money from a friend promising to pay her back but knowing that I will not be able to. I know I do not have money but I still borrow. Telling her that I will pay her back. I reason however that it is not immoral to do this because otherwise I will be homeless. So I reason that well either I am homeless or I lie to her about I make a promise that I am not going to keep. **(Refer Slide Time: 1:09:32)**

In the above example, 1. The maxim is 'It is okay to make a promise that I know I will not keep.'

2. If we universalize this maxim, we say: 'It is okay for everyone to make a promise they know they will not keep.'

3. If everyone makes promises they do not keep, then no one will believe promises, and then no one will make promises, which contradicts the original maxim.

Thus this maxim fails the Universalizability test.



So Kant says here is the maxim. What is the maxim here? The maxim is it is okay to make a promise that I know I will not keep that is a maxim. So first of all it is very important to define a maxim out of a situation. It is ok to make a promise that I know I will not keep. When we universalize this principle, so what is universalizing? We say it is okay for everyone to make a promise they know they will not keep. What happens if everyone makes promises they do not keep no one will believe promises and no one will make promises.

And the whole notion of promise will go away which contradicts the original concept of making promises. Therefore this is a contradiction and therefore this is not right, all right. So let us take the example of hunger and food it is okay to steal food when I am dying of hunger all right. It is okay for everyone to steal food when they are very hungry. What happens everybody steals nobody will keep food and the whole notion of food being kept itself will go away and therefore that maxim is wrong.

It is a very... so I do not know how many of you drive but driving is a beautiful everyday example so and the way I mean people drive in India right. Like this way that way you are driving very nicely and slowly suddenly some super bike will come like that and you just it makes you mad because he is going to hit you he is expecting you to slow down etcetera, etcetera is very aggravating right.

So I have wished that I had this horn you know that somebody does that I will have this horn extremely loud horn you know I will do and that guy so startling never do it again in his life right that is the kind of horn I want in my car so that I teach him a lesson sitting in my car without physically harming him. Then I say what would Kant say no. So Kant say it is ok to sound a very loud horn to a person who drives badly.

Everybody will have that horn and everybody will sound that horn now then imagine the noise that would one make one would make on a road it does not work. Therefore that is not a good idea although I wish I had that one I know it does not work I actually applied this and I concluded that no this is not a good idea all right.

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HUMANITY FORMULA

Humans possess an intrinsic worth, or dignity, by virtue of being human.

Every human must be treated as an end and never merely as means.

“To use someone as a mere means is to involve them in a scheme of action to which they would not consent.”

[<http://people.morrisville.edu/~galuskwj/oneill.html>]

In the borrowing money example: I am *using* my friend to get money from her.

NPTTEL

Humanity formula: So we discussed this uh Nimisha right so she had mentioned this so human possess an intrinsic worth or dignity by virtue of being human. Every human must be treated as an end and never merely as a means. To use someone so what does that mean right. So here is a nice definition of what does it mean to use somebody as a means and not an end. To use someone as a mere means is to involve them in a scheme of action to which they themselves would not consent.

So when I am when I do an action if I want to know well am I using somebody as a means or an end the question I must ask is would they are they consenting to what I am going to do. If they are consenting that means its okay but if they are not consenting that means that I am using them as a means and then it is wrong. So in borrowing the money example I am using my friend to get money from her.

She would not consent to it if she knew my intent obviously and therefore it is wrong. By the way so this uh human possess an intrinsic worth by virtue of being human. I think this is a very fundamental and important statement because uh there is this great debate about and I kind of realized this when I was reading Bertrand Russell’s ethics that statements we make about ethics are different from statements we make about in science.

So we say each every human being has an intrinsic worth as a statement of statement of ethics. The statements of statement of science would be that this desk this is blue in colour and that I have two legs so that if I jump from here to the concrete floor then I will break

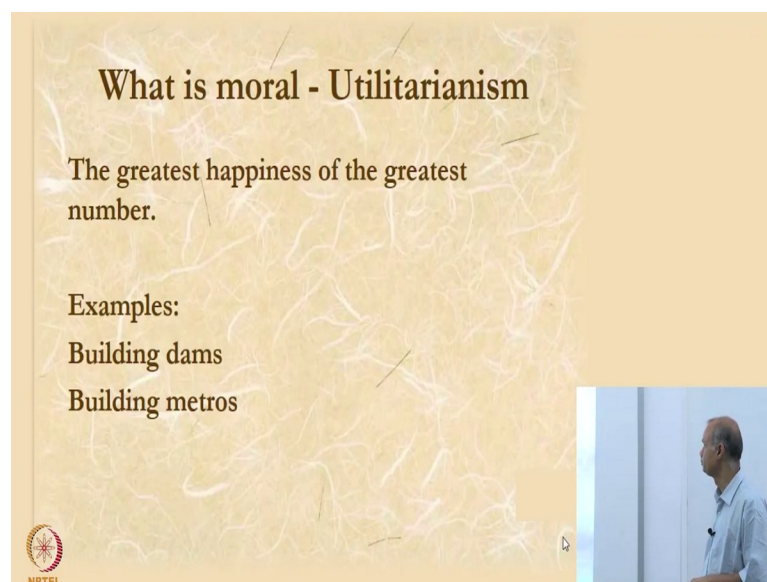
some bones - these are statements of science. A statement of ethics does not have proof and this is a fundamental differentiation.

Every human being has an inherent worth - there is no way of proving this. This we take as what is it called a postulate what mathematicians call an underlying postulate that cannot be proved we just take it for granted. There have been societies in the past which did not take this for granted and they were different societies. Slavery was an established and accepted institutions in fact in most societies throughout history.

Today we say no we do not accept slavery because we have accepted this as a maxim. Previous societies did not accept there is no proof we cannot prove this statement. It is just there and we accept it because we believe in it there is belief here there is uh I the word faith is so maligned that I do not want to use the word faith. But there is faith in this statement that every human being has an intrinsic worth.

And ethics is based on this principle so one must recognize that we are accepting this uh for all our ethical principles.

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Okay. Let us, ah utilitarianism so this was developed in the 19th century I think Mill and Bentham are the originators of this philosophy and they said well moral is that which causes the greatest happiness of the greatest number. And I think a large number of social institutions, a large number of social governmental decisions are based on this principle. So

for example simple examples uh if you are from you know not many of you are from Bangalore.

But you kind of watched you go on this flyover from electronic city to the silk board a metro is coming up and as it was coming up if you go on the fly over you could see going towards your left hand side that a large number of buildings were broken down existing buildings there existed for 30, 40, 50, 60 years they were broken. So that a metro could come up of course they were compensated the people who owned those buildings are compensated but the government has the right to take over land from individuals for the sake of a greater good, quote unquote, greater good. uh

So, often large uh projects are justified based on this principle. Building dams right dams cause a lot of displacement of people because water levels rise up and there I mean there is examples where whole village areas are flooded. So the villages have to be relocated but it is justified based on this principle. So this is a very, very important principle of social ethics very controversial but we do not have time to go into the controversy maybe this will come up again the next three days.