

Ethics
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Module No 3
Lecture 12

So welcome back to this lecture series on ethics. This is the 12th lecture which is going to discuss deontological ethics. So this is a kind of introduction to deontological frameworks in ethical theory. We will see the root to deontology, we will see a little bit of the conceptual historical roots that deontology or deontological ethical frameworks actually presuppose. We are going to discuss primarily only the Kantian framework in this lecture series. There are various other forms of deontology which we will not be covering here. We are concentrating mostly on the Kantian framework.

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So before we really start discussing deontology, they will see social contract theory, how social contract theory has been divided into contractarianism and contractualism. These are the 2 aspects of the social contract theory. We have discussed social contract theory in detail by focusing the contributions of the 2 philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and Rousseau. So here what I am going to do is that we will just see the difference between contractarianism and contractualism.

Contract aim as we have already seen, emphasises self-love of human beings. I am not elaborating these points because we have already discussed this. And here, the emphasis will be satisfied them and to avoid conflicts we need to obey moral norms. So to the satisfaction of self-interest, but has to also avoid conflicts with other people in the society. And the way in which with this purpose in mind, the moral norms have evolved in society which have to be followed by the members of society.

And we may need these norms to avoid others coerciveness and social conflict. And the the project collective interests of society above self-interest. So in one sense, the norms will take care of the collective interests of the society. So that is the advantage of contractorianism. On the one hand, it starts out with self-interest and self-love but then it also takes care of the collective interest.

But contractualism in fact approaches ethical theory from a different perspective. Here, the emphasis is more on respecting person and the individuality, the person of the individual. That is very important and recognising the dignity of human beings is also very important as far as the approach of contractualism is concerned. And here, we are going to see the contributions of Kant in this lecture and also in the subsequent lectures.

It was Kant who emphasised the importance of autonomy, the importance of respecting every individual. So every individual needs to be treated as an end in himself or herself, not as a means. This is one of those very portable this was of Kantian ethics which we will elaborate later. And it tries to provide rational justification of actions: why do we choose to act in a certain way?

So why instead of choosing or other cause of action, we have chosen this particular course of action? Why is that we consider this particular course of action as a right course of action? All these things are answered, all such questions are answered in this framework and here the commitment to justify by means of universal principle is visible particularly in the Kantian framework they could see this overemphasis, we could see this emphasis on universal principles because Kant says that every action should be based on certain maxims which can be treated as a universal law, as a universal principle so that everyone could follow that and act accordingly.

Before we really proceed, I am trying to wind up my discussion on certain sections of ethical theories and here we will see the 3 approaches as discussed by McIntyre.

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The slide features a title 'Three Approaches: McIntyre' at the top. Below it is a light blue rounded rectangle containing the questions: 'What kind of backing is logically appropriate to moral rules?' and 'What kind of warrant do they require?'. A list of three points follows, each with a number and a corresponding philosopher or tradition in red. At the bottom right is the NPTEL logo, and at the bottom center is the name 'Dr. Srookumar Nellickappilly'.

Three Approaches: McIntyre

What kind of backing is logically appropriate to moral rules?
What kind of warrant do they require?

1. The backing of being part of a form of human life in which our desires and dispositions would be formed and trained toward a recognition and pursuit of certain goods (**Plato and Aristotle**)
2. The backing of being part of a set of divine commandments, obedience to which will be rewarded and disobedience to which will be punished (**Christianity**)
3. The backing of being instructed as to what action will produce for us most of what we now want (**Sophists and Hobbes**).

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McIntyre raises a question what kind of backing is logically appropriate to moral rules? And what kind of warrant do they require? And he says that, he comes up with three potential responses and each of them representing one particular approach, one very significant approaches to ethical theory. One is, the backing of being part of a form of human life in which our desires and dispositions would be formed and trained toward the recognition and pursuit of a certain goods.

This path is largely adopted by Plato and Aristotle. The 2nd one is adopted by Christianity which says that the backing of being part of a set of divine commandments which also we have discussed, the divine command theory, begins to which will be rewarded and disobedience to which will be punished. So that is the approach of Christianity and the 3rd one is largely adopted by the Sophists and Hobbes.

It says that the backing of being instructed as to what action will produce for us most of what we now want. And again you know, these 3 approaches, the advocates of these 3 approaches I have already mentioned, you know Plato and Aristotle, their approach, the keywords, the key concept in their approaches, the concept of good, because we have seen that the kind of Eudaimonism

these 2 great philosophers were practising, were advocating, considers the concept of good as the most important concept, even in the philosophy itself the concept of good occupies a very important space.

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Three Approaches: McIntyre

Advocates	Key concept	Key judgments
Plato, Aristotle	Good	Certain things, sections, or people are good-are well fitted for certain roles or functions in a presupposed social life.
Divine Commandments	Thou shalt	Consequences of reward and punishment.
Sophists and Hobbes	Means to a given end of our desires as they are	Of corresponding form.

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And the key judgements are certain things, sections or people are good, are benefited for certain roles or functions in a presupposed social life. So here comes the character ethics, the virtue ethics in the picture. Now the 2nd one, divine commandments are important there. And here, the key concept is Thou shalt which is indicated or which is articulated in the 10 Commandments of Bible, of Moses.

Then the key judgements are consequences or rewards and punishment. And the 3rd one, Sophists and Hobbes, but the key concept is means to a given and of our desires as they are and key judgements are of corresponding form. So with this sort of concluding remarks on a particular section of our discussion on moral theory, we are trying to move on to the next section where we will give primary importance to the enlightenment era where we will be taking up for discussion, 3 or 4 important ethical frameworks including deontology, egoism, and consequentialism and then we will also see some other frameworks which are relatively not as important as is frameworks.

But before that we have to see what the intermediate (())(7:07), Christianity's moral weakness because Christianity's moral framework occupies a very important role in the historical past of Europe, nearly about 1500 years Christianity played a very important role in European cultural, social and political life.

So naturally, the moral frameworks or the morality which was adopted by various societies, various countries, various communities in Europe was largely influenced by Christianity and Catholicism in particular. But Christianity's moral weaknesses were also quite evident. So this is what again I am taking help from McIntyre here.

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The slide is titled "Christianity's Moral Weaknesses" and lists three points:

- The extent of its **metaphysical commitments**
- Purpose of this life and this world is in the end to be found in another world - **other worldliness**
- The **expansion of life which is made possible by economic growth** made other-worldly religions less relevant.

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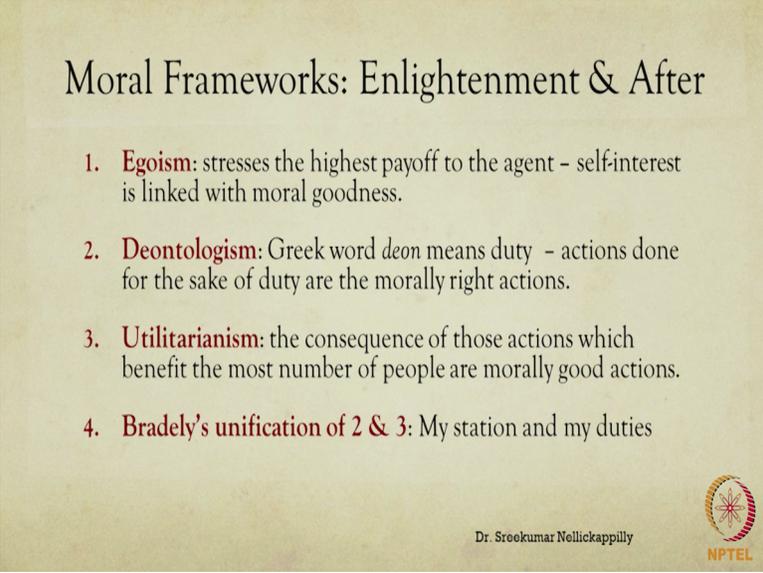
What he says is that the extent of its metaphysical commitments was a major problem here because an era which is increasingly becoming secularised, this has become a problem. The metaphysical commitments of Christianity because Christianity primarily tries to justify everything in the light of afterlife rewards and punishments. So this has become a liability.

Again, the purpose of his life and this world is in the end to be found in another world-otherworldliness, the very idea of otherworldliness. The meaning of this life, the final meaning of this life lies in the other world. Then again, the expansion of life which is made possible by economic growth. That is another very important factor because as we have seen, several

important developments took place during this time which led to modernity and again then to enlightenment.

The Reformation moment, the scientific revolution and various other cultural, historical, social and economic factors. So this expansion which has taken place of life which was made possible by the economic growth that has happened during this period made the otherworldly religions less relevant. So naturally, they were in search of different framework, a more appropriate framework to justify ethics, to justify right conduct.

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Moral Frameworks: Enlightenment & After

1. **Egoism:** stresses the highest payoff to the agent - self-interest is linked with moral goodness.
2. **Deontology:** Greek word *deon* means duty - actions done for the sake of duty are the morally right actions.
3. **Utilitarianism:** the consequence of those actions which benefit the most number of people are morally good actions.
4. **Bradely's unification of 2 & 3:** My station and my duties

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So now let us see important moral frameworks during enlightenment and after. So egoism, this is what we are going to discuss in this lecture series. We will see egoism but before that we will see deontology. I am just taking up egoism because you know, that is very interesting and important theoretical framework which we have to discuss a little in detail in this lecture series.

Egoism stresses the highest payoff to the agent. The self-interest is linked with moral goodness. So what is good for the agent is good. That is a very simplest form we can express egoism in that fashion. But of course, it is not as simple as that. There are different ways in which we can explain egoism which we will do later. deontology, the Greek word *deon* means duty.

So actions done for the sake of duty are the morally right actions according to deontology. So that is again a very interesting distinction which the deontologists try to highlight. Certain people

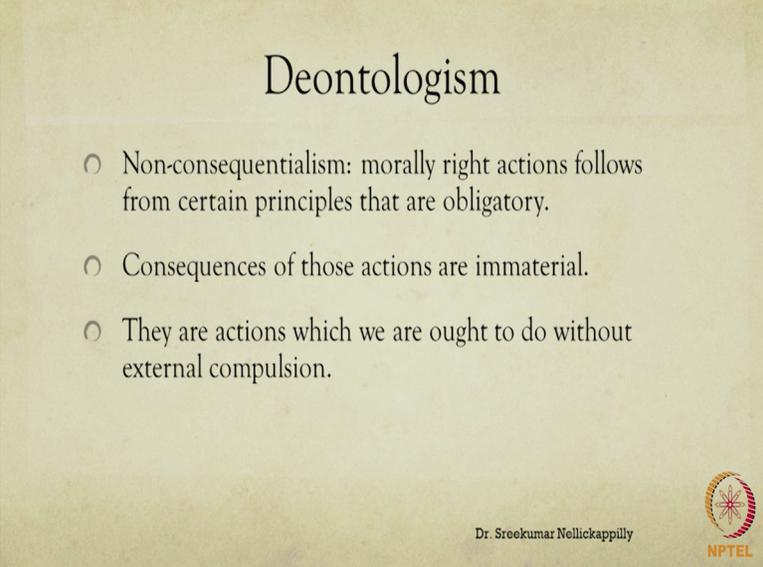
are naturally inclined to do right actions, good actions or rather certain people are naturally inclined to follow their duty and perform actions on the basis of duty. So there is no conscious awareness in the part of this people that they are performing that duty.

They have just inclined to perform actions in that fashion. But deontologists would say that such people are not morally good or rather, the deontologists would argue that such actions are not morally good actions. They do not qualify to be called as morally good because they are not performed with a conscious awareness of the fact that these actions are performed for the sake of duty. Only those actions which are performed for the sake of duty would become morally right actions.

I will extreme this a little later. Utilitarianism, which is again another very important framework, very relevant framework. The consequence of those actions which benefit the most number of people are morally good actions. And there you know, the maximalism is the catchword. Maximum happiness to maximum number of people is probably what the utilitarians are looking towards.

Then we will see Bradely's unification of the deontologists and utilitarian framework. My station and my duties. Here, Bradley takes insights from Hegel's philosophy which will also be discussed as part of this course. Now, let us focus our attention to deontologism. deontologism as we have already mentioned, emphasises on duty. So the emphasis is on duty and actions which are performed for the sake of duty are morally right actions.

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Deontology

- Non-consequentialism: morally right actions follows from certain principles that are obligatory.
- Consequences of those actions are immaterial.
- They are actions which we are ought to do without external compulsion.

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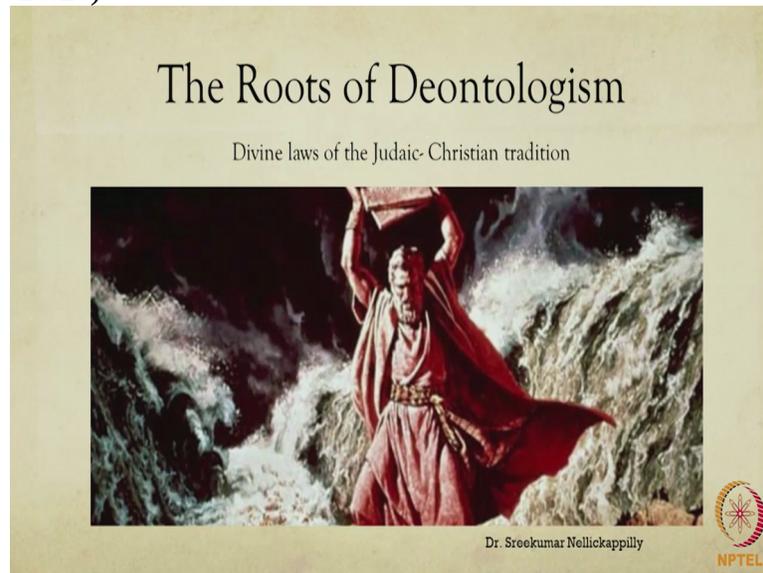
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So whatever consequences to whichever actions lead, they are unimportant. Consequences are unimportant as far as deontologist is concerned. So there is a strong non-consequentialism. Morally right actions follows from certain principles that are obligatory. So what is important is this. They should be based on certain principles, that is all. And their consequences are material. They are actions which are ought to do without external compulsion.

They have to spring from a sense of duty, a very conscious awareness that one is performing those actions for the sake of duty, not that there is a compulsion from someone else. If there is a compulsion from someone else, then one is not free to choose. And for deontological framework, the freedom of choice is extremely important. If there is no freedom of choice, there is no ethics. So that is another very important aspect of deontology.

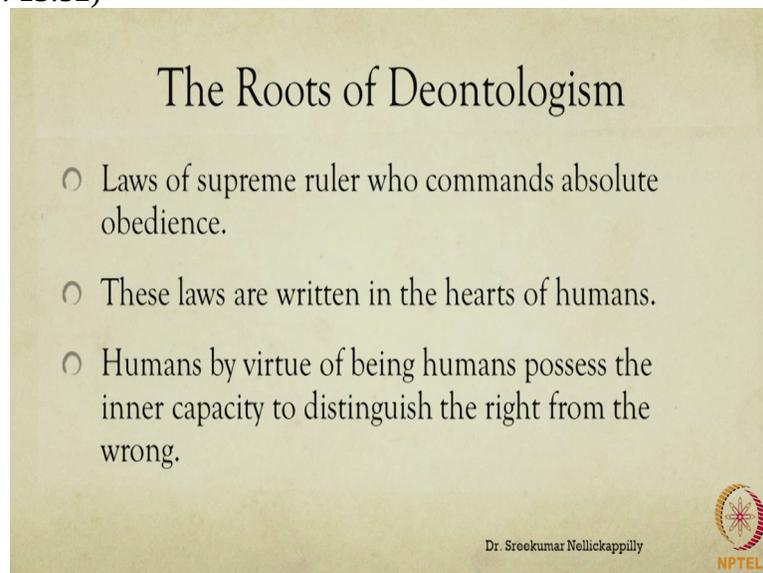
And independent of personal likes and dislikes, one may not like or one may like. That is really unimportant, really immaterial as far as deontologist is concerned. Only duty, duty for the sake of duty.

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And here, when we try to understand the historical roots of deontologism, one is naturally inclined to really turn towards the Judo-Christian tradition, where the concept of moral law is presented in the most emphatic manner. We could see this in the 10 Commandments. They are the lost we followed by all human beings and they are divine laws, they are moral laws, they are natural laws. So there is a larger identification of all these things in the concept of law as propagated by the Judo-Christian traditions.

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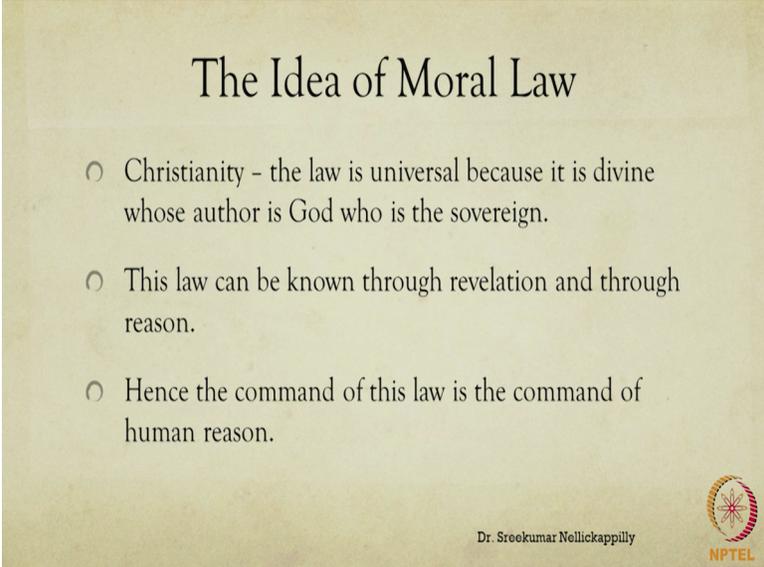


Laws of supreme ruler commands absolute obedience. So this is again has, needs to be underlined. The concept of supreme ruler whose commands demand absolute obedience. There is no way, no exception to these commands, that has to be followed. And these laws are written in the hearts of human. That is another very interesting aspect of it.

So on the one hand, and they are absolute commands, on the other hand, they are written in the hearts of humans. So we by nature know, by virtue of being human being, we know that these are laws, these are rules to be followed unconditionally and absolutely without questioning them. So they are in our hearts. We need not be educated upon them. And there are 2 sources through which we know about this law.

One is revelation and the other one is reason. So humans by virtue of being humans possess the inner capacity to distinguish the right from the wrong. Because of these laws are written in their hearts, they can distinguish right from wrong.

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The Idea of Moral Law

- Christianity - the law is universal because it is divine whose author is God who is the sovereign.
- This law can be known through revelation and through reason.
- Hence the command of this law is the command of human reason.

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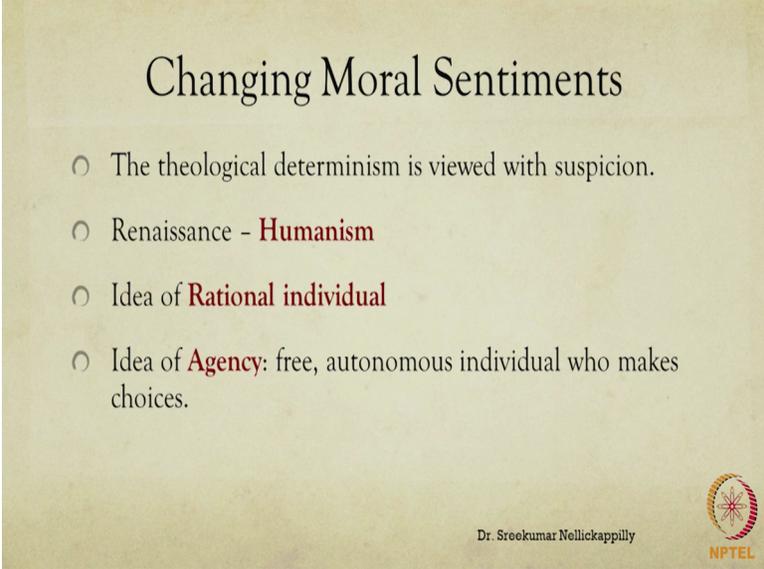
And as far as Christianity is concerned as a religion, the law is universal because it is divine whose author is God who is the sovereign, who is the ultimate authority, who is the creator of everything, who is the Father God. So in that sense, it is absolute and it commands absolute authority. This law can be known through as I mentioned, A revelation and B, reason.

So both revelation and reason are the sources of this law. So this actually points to an important aspect of moral law. On the one hand, we get information about the moral law through Scriptures. Scriptures are revealed text and they tell us what the moral law is but we do not really need the Scriptures to understand about this moral law. We can ourselves reach this moral law, ourselves understand this moral law by employing our reason.

So reason alone is sufficient to understand this moral law. Hence the command of this law is the command of human reason. So this aspect is very important because though Christianity as a religion accepts or rather gives a lot of importance to revelation or rather primary importance to revelation, at the same time, it recognises that you know the moral law can also be known through reason.

If it is known through reason, then possibly we can do away with the Scriptures and employ your reason and understand them. So that possibility leaves a lot of room for further conceptualisations about moral law. And this very idea that the moral law can be known through reason needs to be understood from the context of changing moral sentiments that happened using Enlightenment.

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Changing Moral Sentiments

- The theological determinism is viewed with suspicion.
- Renaissance - **Humanism**
- Idea of **Rational individual**
- Idea of **Agency**: free, autonomous individual who makes choices.

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The theological determinism is viewed with suspicion during this period. As we have seen, several developments in terms of scientific revolution and reformative movement ultimately led

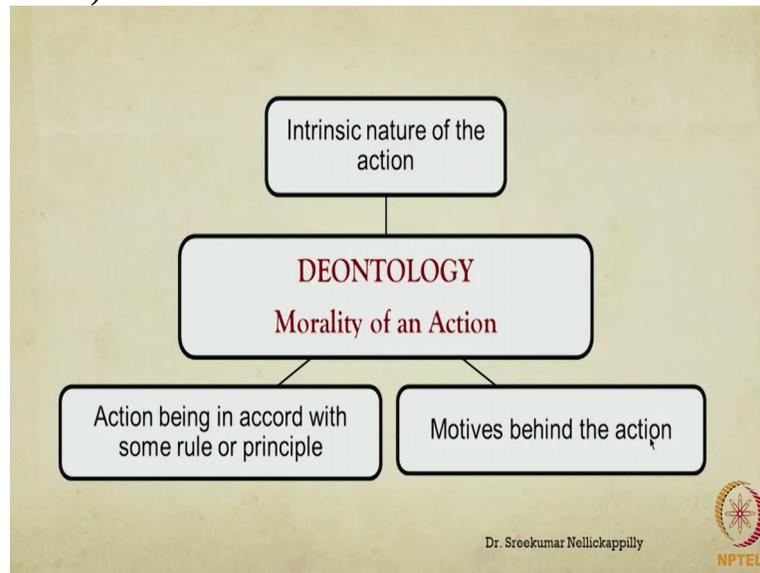
to suspect, the kind of theological determinism proposed by religious frameworks particularly Christianity. And Renaissance from 14th century onwards was a major cultural force in Europe and Renaissance highlighted the importance of humanism.

So human beings now suddenly become important. They became independent or rather independence is often proclaimed, their relationship with nature and with other human beings have become very important during this age and in that way also, the emphasis was more on the human individual. The idea of rational individual emerges and acquires new dimensions during this period and the idea of agency, the moral agent, see the moral agent is a free agent.

The very concept of moral agency presupposes freedom of choice. One has no freedom or if one can act only out of external compulsion, then there is no scope for talking about agency. Then one is not an agent. One is only a kind of slave in the hands of someone else. But Enlightenment conception of man of the human individual emphasises the fact that human beings are not just slaves. They are agents, rational agents, they can make choices and execute them and act on the basis of the conscious choices they make.

So the autonomous individual who makes choices is reemphasised in this context and the inner capacity to distinguish the right from wrong is identified with universal rationality. It is not just the mercy of the Scriptures but universal rationality becomes important here. Now if you try to understand deontology in this context, let us see this figure.

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Morality of an action can be understood from 3 perspectives as far as deontology is concerned. First, action being in accord with some ruler principle. So there is a rule, universal rule which is a rule suggested by human rationality that it reminds rightness and wrongness of our actions. So our actions can be in principle based on certain principles or rules which are universal. That idea is propagated by the deontologist.

Then the 2nd one, the intrinsic nature of action which means that an action in itself is right or wrong. Not that you know the consequences of an action makes it right or wrong. See for instance, we know that quite often many of our actions will have consequences and there are actions which lead to good consequences and there are actions which might lead to bad or undesirable consequences.

There is a tendency among us to identify those actions which have good consequences as good actions and those actions which lead to bad consequences as wrong actions which is not correct according to deontologists. They say that the moral worthiness of an action is internal to the action itself whatever is the consequences.

If the actions performed with the right kind of motivation, the right kind of intention, and if it is based on a universal principle which can be followed by everyone in this world, then that action is right in itself regardless of the consequences. Then the 3rd one, motives behind the action is

very important. This is what I just said. The motive, if it is performed with the right motive, right motive is always the motive to follow the duty.

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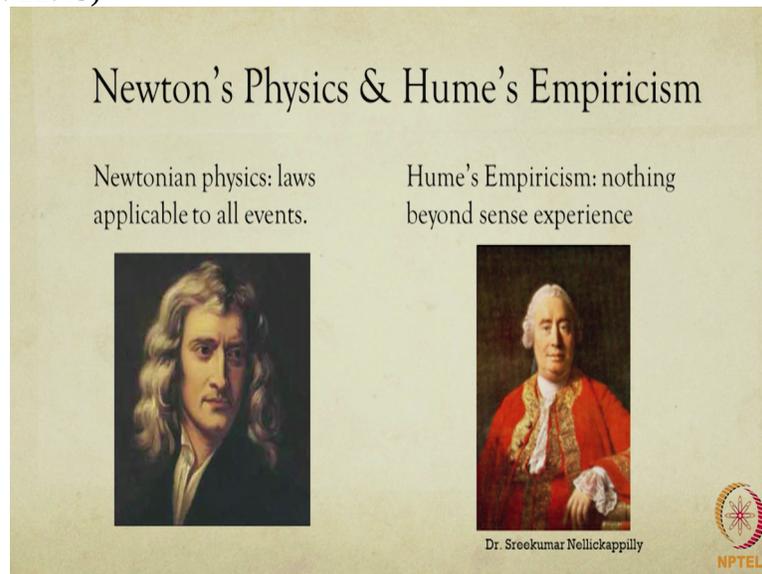
Now changing moral sentiments. Again you know modern science, the idea of universal law of nature. I am gradually going to introduce the importance of Kant, Emmanuel Kant, his contributions in deontology. So modern science definitely had significantly influenced the moral sentiments of a particular era in Europe and also played a key role in shaping the moral frameworks, the moral outlook on that particular era.

So modern science functions on the basis of the very idea of universal laws of nature. What science does is, it serves certain phenomena and tries to explain every phenomena that happens in this world in terms of certain universal principles, certain laws of nature. These laws of nature are universal. Modern science emphasises that every phenomena in this world happens on the basis of certain laws of nature which are universal.

There is a certain kind of determinism. It suggests determinism. And human actions and choices for that matter are to be understood as events in nature and hence are also determined. We have to understand the actions performed by human beings also forming part of nature. So they are also determined. And this rejects freedom and the rejection of freedom will amount to the rejection of choices, the very possibility of making choices and that means there is no ethics

possible, the impossibility of ethics, no scope for ethics. And here, the spirit of this age can be summarised with the contributions of 2 traditions of philosophy or 2 approaches in human thinking that was dominant during this age.

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One was represented by Newton's physics where laws applicable to all events are emphasised. So, Sir Isaac Newton was not scientist who made several discoveries and inventions. He was a great scientist who proposed a model of universe. He tells us how the entire universe functions and works and he talks about universal laws, Newton's law we have studied in our schools because they are so important.

And the every phenomena in nature, every event in nature, happens follows these universal laws. So there is a kind of determinism in one hand which emphasises universality and on the other hand, you will find David Hume's empiricism. Humean tradition in the empiricist philosophy would highlight the fact that sense experience is extremely important. Anything that exists needs to be experienced with the help of sense organs.

And humean theory actually takes us to a very interesting conclusions. Hume follows the basic assumptions of an ideation theory of knowledge which was devised by deontologism Locke and later on also contributed heavily by George Buckley but Humean philosophy is quite interesting

because he says that there is nothing in this world, nothing beyond sense experience. We cannot talk about anything beyond what we perceive with the help of sense organs.

So he says that we have only impressions and ideas. Ideas are nothing but copies of impressions. Our encounter with this world ultimately lead to the creation of emotions. But we are not even sure about the world, the world outside there and we cannot say that it is the world and is responsible for producing ideas or impressions in our mind. We just get impressions. That is all.

These impressions might leave its copies in the mind and they are the ideas. So I am not going to the details of Humean philosophy but in a nutshell, Hume argues that there is nothing beyond sense experience. And Kant's target or rather Kant's responsibility was to reconcile these 2 traditions of philosophy and thought which can be represented by rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism stands for universal laws for mathematical model of knowledge, for everything that is a priori, absolutely certain, et cetera.

And empiricism stands for a posteriori form of knowledge, knowledge which is the result of human experience. Kant says that all experience are a priori law governed like Newtonian causality. All experience are a priori law governed. And again not because the external world imposed but because the concepts through which we grasp the world. See this is the most interesting aspect of Kantian worldview.

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Kant's Reconciliation

- All experience are a priori law governed like Newtonian causality.
- Not because the external world impose but because the concepts through which we grasp that world.
- No experience is received passively, but comprehended actively using a priori concepts and categories.
- With them we order and understand perceptions
- Concepts without perceptions are empty; perceptions without concepts are blind.

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The experience is law governed not because these laws are there in the world, in the external world but because the concepts through which we grasp the world are such universally formulated. We approach the world with certain concepts which are universal. These concepts by means of which we understand the external world, so-called external world, they actually represent the very logical structure of a human mind.

So they are our contributions. We contribute them and in that sense, they are subjective. Not that every individual contributes them in a different way. There is a larger agreement, there is a large kind of unity among such a perceptions, among individuals. But the concepts which we employ which all human beings employ in order to understand the world are universally is the same.

No experience received passively, but comprehended actively using a priori concepts and categories. So there is no concept of passive reception of sensations. All sensations already reached the mind in an ordered fashion. They are initially ordered in terms of space and time and later on, they are ordered by in categories of understanding. There are 12 such categories.

Each category represent a particular texture, logical aspect of the mind by means of which the mind categorises, mind segmentises, mind analyses concepts or the external world and understands it. With them, we order and understand perceptions. So Kant famously says concepts without percepts are empty and percepts without concepts are blind. Both are mutually complementary, act in a scheme of things.

And his reconciliation therefore accepts both physics and freedom-both necessity and freedom. Necessity in the physical world because a physical world largely functions on the basis of universal laws which are laws of nature. And freedom is accepted in the moral world, in the world of action. Phenomenal world: determinism, necessity, universal laws and moral world is ruled by freedom and choices.

Hence there is a possibility of ethics. So this is a fundamental assumption in Kantian philosophy. Morality is all rational creatures abide by the same universal moral law. Hence morality is possible. If people followed completely different moral laws, then morality is not possible. Of course, there will be different moral schemes. There will be different moral principles people apply across traditions and cultures and civilisations.

But at the same time, there are something which is fundamentally underlying these different moral principles and laws and percepts. That is the moral law. What makes all these percepts moral is a moral law. We will discuss that. We will now wind up this lecture here because now we have to discuss in more detail, Kantian contributions to the deontological framework. For the time being, we will stop here, thank you.