

Departmental Seminar

Social and Existential Functions of Virtue

12:00noon. – 1:00p.m. | March 15, 2018 (Thursday)

Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

Why are people virtuous? Integrating work from social psychology and positive psychology, I argue that virtues serve social and existential functions. First, virtues help people cultivate and maintain trusting relationships, which helps meet evolutionary goals. On an interpersonal level, data reveal that humble individuals are perceived as more desirable as potential mates than arrogant individuals. On an intergroup level, humility promotes intergroup tolerance and reduces retaliation following criticism by an outgroup member. Second, virtues provide individuals with a sense of meaning in life. Perceiving oneself as altruistic, engaging in acts of gratitude, and offering forgiveness are all associated with greater meaning in life. Finally, I suggest that virtues may provide individuals with a sense of well-being and meaning precisely because of their positive effect on social relationships. Implications and future directions are discussed.

~All are Welcome~