

The Possibility of Moral Change

Description

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Is it possible to change our behavior to be more moral? This is the question addressed in [Lesson Three](#) of [Are You Minding What Matters?](#) We've covered [Lessons One](#) and [Lesson Two](#) in earlier posts ([here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) and so far, the [podcast episodes](#) corresponding to those posts are our most downloaded episodes! So, I figure you'll want to have [Lesson Three](#) as a post/podcast/video as well. Plus, the subject is just incredibly important. I should also mention that I recently published all the written parts of [Are You Minding What Matters? on this website](#), so you don't need to wait for more posts or podcasts in order to access the material. That said, here are the introductory paragraphs of [Lesson Three: Our Moral Possibility](#): (or [listen to the Podcast Version](#))

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Knowing how to differentiate between truth and falsehood ([Lesson One](#)) and between right and wrong – moral and immoral – ([Lesson Two](#)), is certainly getting somewhere. But how far does it get us if it turns out it's impossible to change our behavior? Say you've been in the habit of carrying out a certain action but, through reflecting on [our previous lesson](#), you've discovered that that action is immoral. Your awareness of the immorality of your action would only be of practical benefit if you're able to change your behavior to no longer carry out that action. Otherwise, it would seem that all you would gain from the knowledge of the immorality of your action is a sense of guilt and perpetual entrapment as you continue making the same action with no hope of change. So, it's imperative to determine whether it's possible to change our behavior to become more aligned with material reality – to be more moral. In short, "What is our moral possibility?"

### **Is it Possible to Change Our Behavior?**

On one hand, the answer to this question seems so obvious that the question itself appears a little ridiculous. After all, all children are taught to change their behavior in an increasingly civil direction (we hope). Complaining, hitting, and tantrums are discouraged while patience, politeness, and consideration of others are encouraged. And while these changes don't take place in all children equally, or at the same pace, the fact that these changes actually occur can hardly be denied.

Likewise, there are countless examples of individuals reforming their lives from less moral patterns of behavior to more moral ones. There are abusers who stop abusing, addicts who stop using, and haters who stop hating. Examples aren't hard to come by; you've probably reformed your behavior in some respects yourself or have witnessed someone you know do it. One inspiring example of moral reformation is the more than 200 Ku Klux Klan members who left the Klan through the influence of Daryl Davis, a black man who engages in respectful conversations with KKK members out of a desire to understand how someone could hate another person merely

because of the color of their skin. [Googling “Daryl Davis”](#) will bring you to some concrete examples. If members of the KKK can reform – if they can abandon the immoral beliefs and actions integral to racism, then, once again, it seems that the changeableness of our behavior (even in a positive moral direction) is a fact that can hardly be denied.

Or can it? Despite the above-mentioned facts, there are a couple of challenges sometimes raised to the idea that we can actually change our behavior. The first is quite radical when viewed from the experience of everyday life, yet it’s taken seriously by a large number of educated people. What I’m referring to is the idea that change, and time itself, is an illusion. And, of course, if change itself is an illusion, then the idea that we can change our moral thoughts and actions is ultimately an illusion as well.

So, we need to consider whether time really is an illusion, and that’s what we’ll do in the next post. Until then, don’t forget that [Are You Minding What Matters?](#) is available to read right now. While it is still unfinished at the time of this post, there’s a whole lot – extending well into Lesson Six. I hope you read it! ?