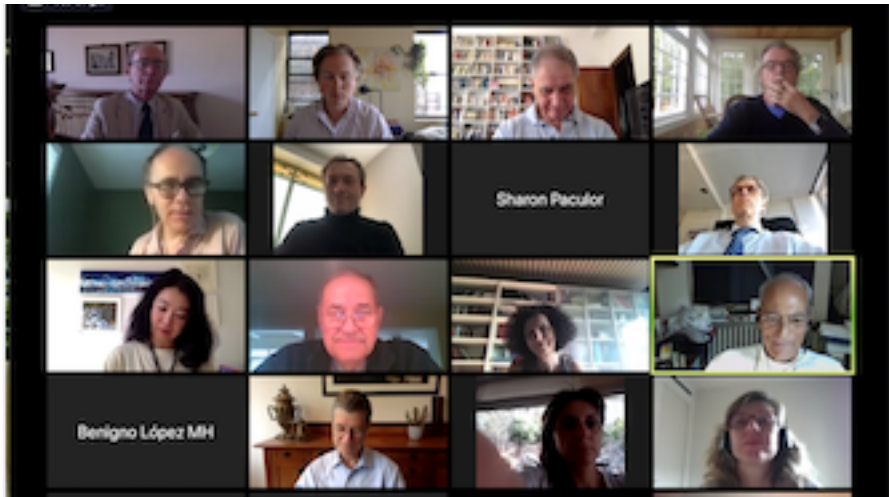




"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy". Debt relief and forgiveness

Science and Ethics of Happiness and Wellbeing



Our third SEH meeting consisted in a reflection on the fifth beatitude in the Gospel of Matthew, “Blessed are merciful, for they will be shown mercy,” and the Lord’s Prayer’s appeal to “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In this time of Covid-19, with all of its unprecedented challenges for health, wellbeing, global finances, and vulnerable populations, we examined the ways that the global financial system, including the SDG call for debt relief (Target 17.4), can serve as an act of mercy for those who are suffering.

We discussed the relationship between debt forgiveness and happiness and well-being, including the ethics, history, and future of debt forgiveness, in addition to the neuroscience and psychology of forgiveness, pro-sociality, and mercy at the individual and group levels.

The following questions guided our discussion:

1. *What does the history of debt forgiveness, both ancient and modern, demonstrate about the value and limits of debt forgiveness?*
2. *How does debt forgiveness affect the well-being of the debtor and the creditor?*
3. *What do religious traditions teach on debt forgiveness, usury, etc.?*

4. *Does the neuroscientific and psychological evidence support debt forgiveness, prosociality, and mercy?*

5. *What are the possibilities for a new global social compact based on debt forgiveness and mercy?*