

All of the additional moral pre- and proscriptions are culture specific, and although necessary to the smooth functioning of the society of their origination, are therefore non-candidates for universality.

UNIVERSAL MORALITY

At all scales of interaction, PEACE between humans depends on shared standards of right and wrong that are honored, not in the breach, but consistently in everyday actions.

Religious faith already gives us that, it will be argued. Wrong. Religious faiths are culture and historical era specific. They are contradictory internally and with each other. Historically, they all have centuries of blood on their hands—particularly the messianic ones. One can't be encouraged that their followers will ever bring PEACE to the world, since there is no apparent, even gradual, improvement in the behavior of those followers. Okay, granted, humans are prone to error—any system of morality will exhibit lapses in adherence. But the major religion's dogmas, myths and admonitions don't fit the facts of the contemporary world. If you admit all this, but still cling to the ancient wisdoms as the only possible basis for a universal moral code, you might argue that they all have a common thread, and that by sifting out what is outdated, too culture-specific, or just plain wrong, one could arrive at a moral code that all could agree upon. This, in fact has been proposed, and has been given the name, The Perennial Philosophy, which boils down to, "Try to be a good person without the reward of heaven or the fear of hell." If one attempts to get much more specific than that, such as what's entailed in being a good person, the ancient scriptures (to say nothing of our observations of human nature in action) quickly become contradictory. Thus this inquiry.

Morality, like all human intellectual constructs, is found nowhere else in nature (to our present knowledge).

Morality assumes that we have the power to choose (as does esthetics). Affirming the power to choose implies the existence of individual human consciousness as a self-referential entity equipped to remember experience, imagine the future, and will actions in a world perceived as separate from self.

If all events are fate, or the will of God (or Allah), or automatic genetic and conditioned responses to stimuli, then the kind of choices we make which we call morality-based are an illusion—as is choosing a moral code on which to base choices. We must embrace the construct of the unique human freedom to choose, or abandon the construct of moral (as opposed to automatic) behavior.

Adding *good* and *evil* to *choice* completes the bare bones of the moral construct. Behaving morally is defined as doing the most good and the least evil. Both the Buddha and Hippocrates held as the highest moral principle: "Do the least harm."

From this basic premise, three bedrock moral interdictions may be derived. Don't mess with the facts. Don't mess with people's shit. Don't mess with anyone's life.

To temper these three injunctions with the complexity of actual life, I hold that all moral guidance worthy of respect is situational.