

# **Humanism as an Empirical Moral Philosophy**

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The humanist ethos seems akin to an empirical ethics, where the discoveries of the sciences lead to particular insights about the human condition with some reflection. A certain mulling over the realities of the world in light of human limitations.

There is in this the basic notion of a world or a cosmos "out there," which leads to a separation between the external processes of the world and the internal psychological dynamic of the mind – and, in some sense, an amorphous unified theory in their transactional status.

One, in a way, assumed as a passive, objective system in operation as the universe; another, in one other way, asserted in doctrines including Freedom of the Will, as an active system embedded within the passive system.

In this way, the long-term future of the universe becomes implicated in the actions of every human being in every here-and-now. If one wants a formal non-religious spirituality, then this constructs a modest basis for it.

All decisions in the here-and-now matter, in a concrete sense, for the long-term there-and-then. Then in our own short futures, we harbor even greater potential and, as a result, responsibility for actions in our lifetimes. North American Indigenous spirituality with responsibility to future generations remains non-trivial in this view, too.

Science emerges from natural philosophy, and went by the title in former generations, and exists inextricably linked to philosophy in this way – by history and definition. The naturalistic perspective of the sciences provided to humanism and then fed through compassion-based, utilitarian ethics seen in John Stuart (and Harriet Taylor) Mill gives a viable option in a reason-based approach to ethics.

We can see this in the evidence from the psychological and zoological sciences about the ability to cogitate and feel in other animal species, not simply human beings. In this, other beings matter, not as much but enough. A certain sufficient threshold of feeling and thinking for decent levels of moral consideration within human systems and life.

Regarding the human animal, the same applies and extends to the less fortunate, the destitute, the penurious, the houseless, the workless, the loveless, the parentless, and those living with disabilities or greater prejudice thrust against them, and so on.

Peter Singer has been a pioneer in the effort to realize the work of utilitarianism of Mill with an expanded ethical universe with the inclusion of non-human animals. The do as

you would be done by and love your neighbour as yourself in most mainstream religions exhibit the ethics of Mill and vice versa. The only difference in contrast to the time of Mill remains the increase in the moral sphere or a fuller realization of the Golden Rule's intention in the consideration of other beings.

Remembering, of course, women, for a long time, were seen, and in many cases still get regarded as, non-persons or unequal to men. The Mills with women's equality pioneered the expanded ethical circle for the entirety of the human species. Singer to non-human animals with Effective Altruism.

The Mills in *Utilitarianism: Chapter 2 What Utilitarianism Is* (1863) states:

*I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.*

The ratiocinated consideration of the thoughts and feelings of others tied to the empirical findings of science helps build the better world envisioned by humanist philosophy. Mill, Singer, apparently the Nazarene, and others appear to agree, in principle, with the ethic; while, now, we have the greater capability to know which directions to take given the modern findings of science. Our knowledge grants greater responsibility to work within a wider moral universe.

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P.S. To the transhumanists, this makes transhumanism a speculative empirical moral philosophy, akin to the difference between science and science fiction, where, as with discussions of the Three Laws of Robotics, the Asilomar AI Guidelines, Artificial Moral Agents, so on, human-crafted agents may deserve and garner rights, i.e., "robot rights." This may become the frontier post-animal rights.