

45.Morality

We can use the scientific method to learn something about the nature of physical reality, but we have no accurate instruments to test morality. We have a moral compass, of course, called a conscience; but it has no external testability. We may have religious beliefs, laws, and social norms to guide our behavior, and of course we learn correct attitudes from our parents, teachers, and friends-but none of these methods are universal. This diverse modern age we live in compounds the problem further: the times seem to get increasingly ambiguous morally, and skepticism about everything is becoming more and more ordinary. Indeed, many people scoff at the very idea of moral certainty. They claim that all morality is situational, that the "right" behavior varies from time to time, place to place, and circumstance to circumstance. Others go even further, insisting that socially-imposed ethics are alien to the liberty of a free individual. Under this notion, we should all choose for ourselves what behavior is acceptable and honorable, and be accountable only to our own consciences. However, morality cannot be merely a private code of conduct; it is also a matter of community standards of behavior and practice, with the purpose of promoting decent, harmonious relations among us all.

Comprehension

1. Why are moral questions so controversial?
2. Does it seem to be a clear definition of morality today?
3. Why do some people reject the notion of ethical standards?

Your opinion

1. Is capital punishment moral? Explain your answer.
2. Is suicide moral?
3. Is war moral?
4. Is it wrong to steal food if your children are starving?
5. Is a lottery just another form of gambling and therefore immoral?
6. In what circumstances would a love affair be acceptable?
7. What (if any) responsibility do the rich have to help the poor? Why?
8. Is euthanasia moral?





9. Is assisted suicide moral?
10. Should victimless crimes like prostitution be tolerated, especially if the practitioners are licensed and medically inspected?
11. What is wrong with giving up an unwanted baby for adoption?
12. Why is birth control a controversial issue?
13. Is it just to impose a sin tax?
14. Should rich people be taxed at the same rate as others?
15. Should we arrest beggars? What about aggressive panhandlers?
16. How can we tolerate the condition of homelessness?

