

PHILOSOPHICAL PROPOSAL

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# A Universal Philosophy for the Betterment of Mankind

'A Humanist Perspective Defining *A Good Life*'

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To my Lord, the perfect example of 'good'

And little man Keifer who died way too young but helped me understand

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# 1 Introduction

This is an audacious attempt by a lay person to propose a philosophy that can be universally accepted across countries, cultures, creeds, and religions. It approaches this topic from a purely humanist perspective relying on common experiences held by humans both presently and historically. It does not depend on any greater spiritual understanding or knowledge of philosophy or meta physics, but attempts to derive a simple phrase that embodies and allows us to leverage the human experience.

# 2 Parameters

As stated in the introduction, this discussion is limited in sources. It relies on facts found in the basic human experience and acknowledged by a vast majority of society and history. It tries not take a view from a religious or spiritual perspective, or based in any philosophical background, but attempts to place it's foundation on the life experience of every person. It also doesn't consider anomalies within mankind or any modern techniques or features that have been developed. It simply uses experiences shared by 99.9999% of humans through out history.

# 3 The Common Experience

Since we are attempting to take the perspective of all mankind, what is the single experience of all humans? What is the one thing we are all guaranteed to experience?

We are all born, and then we all die. What is common between these two experiences? The birth process is one of suffering for both the mother and child. Death is suffering for both the individual passing and those emotionally near. So suffering is part of the universal human experience. Is it the only thing? We have other experiences, but are those experiences universal? Well if death occurs during the birth process, then there is only suffering.

So suffering is the universal experience for humans. By examining the

world around us, it would appear that it may also be true for all animals, and I contend, could even be extended to all life forms. So now we have suffering as the universal experience of life.

## 4 WHY

Life is suffering. At first examination this appears to be a cruel joke. What do we do with this? And that is the question. What do we do with the suffering? Both individual suffering and the suffering that surrounds us.

So is the point to flee from suffering? Often fleeing suffering merely postpones increased suffering. Minimize suffering? Yes perhaps, but it's still suffering. And minimizing one suffering could possibly increase another.

But we have a question that we can act and chew on. Now, let's change tack, and use this question to analyze social norms and look for examples and how they measure. Let us look at relatively recent history, and use examples that are universally accepted as standards of human behavior.

We start with infamous examples like Hitler and Stalin. Both individuals suffered in life which resulted in personalities determined that the suffering of others was worth the postponement of their own suffering. Their desire for power was the shield they used to protect themselves from additional suffering. Obviously by the way they have been demonized by society they are perfect examples of individuals who did not make the world better.

In contrast we have Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela, three individuals society presents as examples of people who made the world better. All are cases where, after encountering chronic social suffering, they championed a plan to endure and encourage short term personal suffering so that chronic social suffering could be seen and identified as wrong. Meanwhile they refuse to return suffering for suffering, and instead responded in peace and non-violence despite what they endured.

There are many other examples we could bring up, but they all fall between these two extremes: Individuals that cause others to suffer and those who embrace suffering to end the suffering of others. This gives a scale on

which we can quantify and analyze actions.

## 5 HOW

So examining the second class of individuals, the examples of 'good' humans, what did they do, and how did they do it? First, they personally felt the suffering and chose to act. Second, the actions they took were not for themselves but the humans that were sharing in suffering. Third, the actions they took in response to the suffering were non-violent and minimal with respect to causing physical suffering to their antagonist. By enduring the suffering they were able to amplify it so the suffering could be revealed to society as an injustice.

What is required to identify the suffering of others, and care enough to do something about it? Love. Love is one thing that drives individuals to sacrifice themselves for others. To suffer in place of other's suffering. But there is still something missing. Are there actions in love that cause suffering? If you kill the antagonist, even in love for those suffering, does that not add suffering? And following revenge, isn't there more revenge and the suffering cycle continue? How do you keep an action in love from causing unneeded suffering? All of our human examples had something else.

When can you guarantee an action minimizes suffering? When you consider the antagonist and include minimizing their suffering. The 'love your enemy' paradigm, or the ability to forgive without retaliation once the suffering is relieved. This is the basic definition of grace.

## 6 Conclusion

How do we limit our actions from causing suffering? How can we identify the suffering of others that we can assist relieving? How do we handle our own suffering? In general, when love and grace motivate actions, the actions result in a reduction of suffering. So distilled down, what is the point of life? This analysis leads me to conclude that it is to suffer with love and grace.