

# Sam harris thesis review



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“ Morality and values depend on the existence of conscious minds—and specifically on the fact that such minds can experience various forms of well-being and suffering in this universe. Conscious minds and their states are natural phenomena, of course, fully constrained by the laws of Nature (whatever these turn out to be in the end). Therefore, there must be right and wrong answers to questions of morality and values that potentially fall within the purview of science. On this view, some people and cultures will be right (to a greater or lesser degree), and some will be wrong, with respect to what they deem important in life. (Harris, 2011) This is Sam Harris’s thesis in his book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. This proposition purports science can answer questions about morality. Science is about empirical evidence not social norms or accepted moral standards (morality). His stance on morality is centered on naturalistic fallacy. It is the thought that morality is the result of evolution and social conditioning. (Craig 2012) The laws of nature do not determine right or wrong behavior with relativity to the conscious mind.

We as humans do not become more moral as we evolve. As situations around us change our morals change based on what’s more beneficial to us. “ We are selfish to one degree or another; we lack complete information about the consequences of our actions; and even where we possess such information, our interests and preferences often lead us to ignore it. ” Harris states. (Harris, 2011) However, his thesis contradicts this statement. I agree with many other critics of Harris” regarding his idea of well being. He does not define well being or what justifies it.

If well being is a part of the science of morality what can increase or decrease well being? How can well being be the foundation for morality? I do agree with him that our minds can experience much suffering. However, the measure of suffering is not a science. The laws of nature do not determine if our response to unpleasant situations or suffering is right or wrong as he suggests. Philosophers believe morality comes from the soul. Scientist believe morality comes from certain areas of the brain. There are many tests out to study brain functions.

These tests display activities in certain areas of the brain that respond to an emotional stimulus. Although scientist continues to research this issue, no network of nerves has been found to determine the process of moral cognition. (Young & Dungan, 2011) Science does not tell us how to live or explain the differences between right and wrong. Morality is based on a school of thought. Morality does not appear in any type of science. Our morals change as our culture change. Right and wrong is determined in the court of public opinion.