The Live and Let Live Philosophy

A Brief Introduction

by MARC J. VICTOR

We live in turbulent, polarized times. Despite unprecedented comfort and prosperity, thoughtful people across the political spectrum feel exhausted by constant conflict, anger, extreme polarization, and hyper-partisanship. Political arguments strain families, friendships, and workplaces. Yet most reasonable people, whether progressive, liberal, conservative, libertarian, or anywhere in between, share the same core desires: safety and security, freedom to make our own choices, opportunities for our children, and a society that is fair, prosperous, and peaceful.

The problem is not our shared aspirations; it is the flawed method we use to achieve our goals. We must refrain from forcibly imposing our moral views and lifestyle preferences onto everyone else through government power and coercion. History shows this approach breeds resentment, waste, and escalating conflict. It is time for a fundamentally different approach. How the Live and Let Live Philosophy ("3L Philosophy") provides a practical framework for resolving conflicts peacefully is explained below.

What Does "Live and Let Live" Mean?

The familiar phrase "Live and Let Live" resonates across nations, cultures, and political lines because it captures a simple, fair intuition with two equally essential parts of the phrase.

LIVE

As a competent adult, you are the rightful owner of your life. This means you must be in charge of your body, your peacefully acquired property and

money, and your time. You have the right to make your own decisions, take your own risks, hold your own values, and peacefully pursue happiness however you define it. No one else has a superior claim to direct your life. While it is always wise to carefully consider the thoughtful counsel of others, you are the "iron-fisted dictator" of your own life. This is what it truly means to live your life.

LET LIVE

If "Live" means you are in charge of your life, then to "Let Live" means to extend the same equal and reciprocal right to every other competent adult. Allow them to peacefully control their own bodies, property, money, and time, even when you strongly disagree with their peaceful choices because you find them immoral, unhealthy, unwise, or not in their best interest. This is the price we must pay if we are ever to achieve and maintain a free and peaceful society. Are you willing to pay this price if others also agree to allow you to peacefully live as you choose?

To aggress against another person or their peacefully acquired property violates the "Let Live" part of the phrase. The 3L Philosophy defines "aggressing" as initiating nonconsensual physical force, or engaging in fraud, coercion, substantial threats of force, breaching valid contracts, or similar acts that violate another competent adult's right to control their own life and property. The 3L Philosophy holds that all such aggressing should always be illegal. In complex situations, the 3L Philosophy provides a mechanism to resolve predictable, reasonable disputes without resorting to force or coercion, fostering societal harmony.

The Critical Distinction Between Legal Rules and Moral Rules

Distinguishing between legal and moral rules is indispensable to understanding the 3L Philosophy. This distinction is the key that makes the 3L Philosophy work. Legal rules are the mandatory minimum standard of

conduct, explaining and publicizing how humans must not act. Legal rules must be followed even by people who do not agree or are entirely ignorant about what the law says.

The violation of a legal rule carries formal consequences such as incarceration, fines, restitution, or monetary damages. Because of these formal consequences, we must be extraordinarily careful about what rules are imported into the law. Only aggressing - acts that violate another competent adult's right to peacefully control their own body, property, money, or time - should be unlawful. When this legal rule is enforced, no person's rights are violated because no person or group properly has a right to aggress against another. Every victim crime equates to aggressing against another person or their property.

Moral rules describe how we should live and treat each other. They are not mandatory and are properly enforced through persuasion, reputation, and voluntary association or disassociation. Despite centuries of good-faith debate, reasonable people maintain sincere disagreements about many aspects of morality. That disagreement is manageable only when we keep our personal moral views outside the law. After all, we are each free to choose who we freely associate with.

When we instead import our personal moral views into the law, we necessarily employ government force to impose them on others who disagree. As a result, we necessarily aggress against others when those moral rules are enforced via the law and thereby guarantee perpetual political warfare. The 3L Philosophy offers an escape. We must outlaw all instances of aggressing and keep morality voluntary. This approach allows competent adults to live peacefully according to their own values, even when moral disagreements persist. A good way to think about this distinction is that humans should enforce the law with due process, while

enforcement of morality should be left to God, Nature, the Universe, or Karma.

The Legal Principle: Don't Aggress!

The first of the two principles comprising the 3L Philosophy is the Legal Principle, which mandates that all aggressing is legally prohibited. The corollary is that all voluntary interactions between consenting and competent adults are lawful. All people should always have the absolute lawful right to resist all aggressing from whatever source. The law properly recognizes this concept as either self-defense or defense of others. This right to resist all aggressing is absolute. As such, there are no exceptions to the Legal Principle. No exceptions to the Legal Principle are needed for us to realize the civilized, free, peaceful, prosperous, charitable, fair, and just society and world all reasonable people desire.

The Legal Principle applies with the same force to all people, groups, corporations, and governments. All groups, corporations, and governments are created entirely by individuals. Because no individual has a right to aggress, even acting collectively, individuals cannot delegate any such right to aggress to any group, corporation, or government. Governments cannot, therefore, legitimately claim powers that individuals do not possess and cannot delegate. As a result, each organization must be held to the same peaceful standard. The rule is simple: if it would be wrong for you to do it directly to your neighbor, it remains wrong when done by the government or any other group, organization, or corporation.

Applying the Legal Principle consistently and fairly is the only way to build a society and world rooted in freedom and peace. We cannot aggress our way to a free and peaceful society or world. When the law's only job is to prevent and punish aggressing and otherwise leave competent adults free to live as they choose, we maximize personal liberty while protecting everyone's fundamental rights to live however they peacefully desire.

The Moral Principle: Be an Excellent Human

Strictly applying the Legal Principle secures freedom. But freedom by itself does not automatically result in peace. For genuine peace, we must inspire a culture in which enough people actively strive to be excellent humans voluntarily. The second of the two principles comprising the 3L Philosophy is the Moral Principle, which encourages everyone to strive to be an excellent human voluntarily.

Unlike the Legal Principle, the Moral Principle is not law; it is an enthusiastic suggestion. Every person remains legally free to entirely ignore the Moral Principle so long as they do not violate the Legal Principle by aggressing. As with free speech, we properly defend the legal rights of others to say offensive things with which we entirely disagree. The same is true for peaceful conduct. We must be prepared to defend the legal rights of others to violate the Moral Principle peacefully. Competent adults must have a protected legal right to peacefully live in ways with which we strongly disagree. But if we truly desire peace, we should voluntarily strive to live by higher standards and encourage others to do the same.

Being an excellent human includes the aspirational values of cultivating high character (practical wisdom, moral courage, justice in how we treat others, balance, integrity, honesty, empathy, fairness); win/win thinking; open-mindedness; genuine tolerance of peaceful differences (with zero tolerance for aggressing); voluntary kindness and civility; a commitment to truth and rational inquiry; building high levels of trust; and consistent self-improvement. Each of these voluntary aspirational values is entirely within your control. Nobody can stop you from holding and pursuing these aspirational values right now.

The Moral Principle encourages everyone to adopt these aspirational values voluntarily through persuasion and example, but never through the force of law. The Moral Principle's ultimate goals are to optimize human happiness

and well-being while minimizing suffering. Because aggressing against others is never compatible with acting as an excellent human, we can conclude that if everyone voluntarily followed the Moral Principle, there would be no need for the Legal Principle. However, because we know in advance that not everyone will aspire to be an excellent human, the Legal Principle is necessary to set out our mandatory minimum legal standard of conduct that all humans have a legal right to insist upon. The legal right to resist all acts of aggression is our most fundamental right.

Reasonable Disagreements

Even reasonable people who fully embrace the 3L Philosophy and its derivative Legal Principle will sometimes disagree in good faith about how the Legal Principle applies to complex situations. We can therefore anticipate reasonable disagreements about how the Legal Principle applies in complex situations and effectively resolve them in advance.

Because no universal, one-size-fits-all correct answer exists for how the Legal Principle applies in every complex situation, the 3L Philosophy seeks only to achieve a reasonable interpretation of the Legal Principle in complex cases. When people equally committed in good faith to the 3L Philosophy maintain sincere disagreements about the Legal Principle's application after civilized discussion, we can properly conclude that more than one reasonable Legal Principle interpretation exists. In such circumstances, the local community, whether a city, town, or smaller community, should select which reasonable Legal Principle interpretation becomes local law through whatever peaceful process it prefers, such as a fair vote, court decision, arbitration, mediation, or other voluntary agreement.

This local approach respects the need for clear rules that define the boundaries of aggressing, while recognizing that different communities will reasonably disagree about complex edge cases. It prevents any single Legal Principle interpretation on complex issues from being imposed

nationally. Instead, it allows local communities to serve as experimental laboratories that test which reasonable Legal Principle interpretations produce the best results over time. People remain free to lobby for their preferred legal rules or to attempt to influence communities that adopt legal rules they dislike by voting with their money or their feet. Competent adults can also voluntarily contract around these local Legal Principle interpretations by consenting to specific acts, just as participants do in most sporting events.

Applying the 3L Philosophy to Real-World Issues

The 3L Philosophy provides a simple, just, and consistent framework to analyze any issue:

Step 1. Check if someone is aggressing to determine if the Legal Principle is being violated. Ascertain if any person, group, corporation, or government is initiating nonconsensual physical force, engaging in fraud or coercion, endangering others, breaching a valid contract, or otherwise aggressing against another person or their property. If yes, the conduct should be illegal and terminated immediately. Formal legal consequences may apply. This conclusion ends the 3L Philosophy analysis. If reasonable minds disagree, the local community should adopt whichever reasonable Legal Principle interpretation it prefers. If no aggressing is occurring, move to Step 2.

Step 2. Because no person, group, corporation, or government is violating the Legal Principle, the conduct should be legal. Competent adults should have the legal right to make their own peaceful choices, even if what they choose to do is immoral, unhealthy, unwise, or not in their best interest.

Step 3. Check for excellence to determine whether the Moral Principle is violated. Ask whether the legal conduct aligns with being an excellent human. If yes, the conduct should likely be encouraged. If no, feel free to

encourage excellence and/or peacefully discourage the conduct via persuasion, boycotts, or disassociation, but defend the legal right of others to peacefully engage in the less-than-excellent conduct even if you conclude it is immoral, unhealthy, unwise, or not in their best interest. Defending the legal rights of others to peacefully act in ways we personally disagree with is the price we must pay to achieve freedom, peace, and our highest level of prosperity. Are you willing to pay this price to achieve these goals?

This three-step analysis resolves most political issues reasonably, consistently, and justly, while promoting freedom, peace, and our highest level of prosperity. As previously stated, think of the 3L Philosophy as requiring humans to fairly enforce the Legal Principle while trusting God, Nature, the Universe, or Karma to enforce the Moral Principle. This is how we Live and Let Live together!

Join The Live and Let Live Movement

The 3L Philosophy is not partisan or ideological. It is not left versus right. It is a practical peace philosophy for reasonable people of goodwill who are tired of endless conflict and ready to try a better way, one that respects everyone's freedom while encouraging personal excellence and voluntary cooperation. We seek to move past the divisive tribalism that is tearing our species apart and instead celebrate our differences while inspiring each other to bring out the best, high-character versions of ourselves. Let's live our best lives together and work to leave the world better than we found it in the short but wonderful time we remain alive.

This short article offers only a brief introduction to the 3L Philosophy. If these ideas resonate, I warmly invite you to visit our website and join the Live and Let Live Global Peace Movement at www.3L.org. You can learn more about the 3L Philosophy by reading or listening to The Live and Let

Live Philosophy - The Abridged Version for a much fuller yet accessible explanation.

For a complete analysis and explanation of the 3L Philosophy, including a detailed application to more than twenty-five specific political issues such as gambling, prostitution, LGBT issues, drugs, free speech, racism, religion, firearms, taxes, wealth inequality, immigration, healthcare, abortion, and many others, along with responses to common objections and thoughts on implementation and transition, please read or listen to the full comprehensive book, The Live and Let Live Philosophy: Two Principles for Freedom, Peace, and Prosperity.

Both the comprehensive book and the abridged version are available at www.3L.org. There you can also connect with others in the Live and Let Live Community, apply to become an officially recognized ambassador, and explore the Live and Let Live Engine, an open-source online encyclopedia examining these ideas and their application across a wide range of issues. Visit the site to join the community, apply as an ambassador, and contribute to the Engine.

Our foolish insistence on attempting to force our moral preferences and preferred way of life onto one another through political power has failed miserably. That approach has resulted in endless and growing conflict. We now also face extraordinary global challenges. Because of our rapidly increasing technology, smaller groups of people have the increased ability to inflict greater amounts of harm on larger numbers of people worldwide. The time to act is now. The reasonable people of the world must urgently come together to champion a practical plan to achieve freedom, peace, and prosperity.

A better path exists, one built on respecting each person's ownership of their own life while inspiring excellence in how we treat one another. Thank

you for investing some time to learn about the 3L Philosophy and our plans to help improve the world by promoting freedom, peace, and our highest level of prosperity. Let's celebrate and enjoy our common humanity together rather than fight over our trivial differences. Join us and be part of the solution.

Live and Let Live!

About the Live and Let Live Community

Your Journey Starts at 3L.org

- Read the **52-page Abridged Version** of the Live and Let Live Philosophy, for a better understanding
- Wear the message via our **shop**,
- **Donate** to help the movement grow and change the law.

Become a 3L ambassador

3L ambassadors are trusted representatives of the movement. They help advance 3L's mission to align the law with the Legal Principle and promote the Moral Principle as a means of reaching our full potential. Successfully changing the law requires a critical mass of support, which in turn requires widespread awareness of 3L. Ambassadors receive support, mentorship, and access to a global network of change-makers.

YouTube: @TheLiveandLetLiveMovement

Instagram: @3LMovement

Podcast: The Live and Let Live Show