

**Communicating Scientifically Formulated
Spiritual Principles in Interstellar Messages**

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Past attempts to construct interstellar messages have usually avoided content about which there is considerable disagreement. Religious beliefs are typically excluded because of the challenges of adequately representing the diversity of such beliefs. Instead, message content has emphasized basic mathematical and scientific information, about which there is considerable consensus. In this paper, the absolute separateness of religious and scientific accounts is questioned, and a methodology is suggested for constructing interstellar messages that convey information about scientifically verifiable spiritual principles. The paper reviews a pilot study illustrating 1) the creation of a taxonomy of spiritual principles and 2) ways this taxonomy might be encoded in interstellar messages.

Sixty-six spiritual principles were sampled from a source attempting to identify spiritual principles believed across a range of religious traditions [1]. Each principle was judged for degree of similarity to each of the other principles by subjects from diverse religious traditions. The composite similarity judgments of all participants were subjected to a cluster analysis, which provides a statistical method for identifying principles perceived to be most similar. This resulted in a taxonomy that highlights perceived interrelationships between individual spiritual principles and that identifies major classes of spiritual principles such as “forgiveness,” “gratitude,” “love,” and “giving.” Consequently, this taxonomy provides a framework for describing the nuances of the major classes of spiritual principles.

Having clarified the content to be communicated, the spiritual principles can then be translated into a “language” based on fundamental mathematical and physical principles. These scientific principles are used to express spiritual principles in terms of overt interactions between individuals, using behavioral descriptions of interactions consistent with empirically validated psychological processes. This method is illustrated in a message sequence describing “forgiveness,” which can be characterized as breaking a cyclical pattern of maladaptive interactions.

Benefits of constructing interstellar messages describing spiritual principles will be discussed, including contributions toward clarifying, operationalizing, and empirically testing the mechanisms underlying possible spiritual principles.

[1] Templeton, John Marks. *Worldwide Laws of Life: 200 Eternal Spiritual Principles*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 1997.