Does Anything Go?

There is a considerable amount of sentiment circulating about, especially among the intellectual elite, that asserts there is no God, thus no universal Moral Code. A world without God is a very dismal place, even by the atheist's account. The twentieth century existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre describes such a world condition:

Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself… Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimize our behavior (Thompson and Jackson).

Could there be a more depressing view of life than the one expressed? By this account there is nothing, and I repeat, nothing, that can legitimize or call into account any human behavior if there is no God. List all the evils that exist in the world, murder to mayhem, prostitution to pedophilia, slavery to human sacrifice, and no one could call it evil, much less call it into account. Because of a completely amoral, relativistic view of the world, we have people who refuse to recognize regimes like that of the lately deposed Saddam Hussein as evil. Some refuse to judge the Holocaust as wrong. I suspect these people are unable to form judgments about such people and events because they are not the victims, but the view is none-the-less startling.

While some people think this way, most of them do not live it, at least not completely. We have a lot of people professing a philosophy of complete moral freedom, but few, if any, live out its tenets faithfully. Most have very strong opinions about what is right and wrong, what is a good course of action and what is not. They promote Sartre's view when they want to protect their favorite vice, but they want to appeal to some standard of behavior when others do not live right. If this were not so, there would be no basis for laws. We would live in a condition of complete anarchy. Survival of the fittest would reign and might would make right. It would be a very dark and ruthless world, void of compassion or mercy.

Interestingly, Sartre was not all wrong. His premise that a world without God would have no basis for morality is correct. But, we are once again confronted with that pall of "ought" that we cannot escape. We try to deny that there is a universal Moral Code, refuse to recognize God, ignore His existence, or flaunt His values, but sooner or later, we are confronted with the inescapable fact that some things are simply wrong. It is the nature of the world in which we live. That some things by nature are right and some things are wrong is an inescapable, universal, eternal fact. God is and not everything goes. And we are greatly indebted to the existence of His Moral Presence that everything does not go. Things are bad enough on this planet as it is.

Sartre's premise, combined with our experience, rather than disposing of the notion of God, reinforces it. By the words of one who would deny that God exists, God is linked to any universal morality. But we find that

universal morality is an ever present and inescapable reality. Therefore, God is! We are getting closer. The journey is about to begin.