
RELATIVELY SPEAKING*The Philosophy of Individualism*

Number 16**Editor: Gordon F. Brown, PhD****December 1982**

In this month's issue

SEMANTICS: Love	1
TALK BACK	
Monologue	2
Dialogue	3

SEMANTICS: LOVE

This is the season when we will be hearing about love, hope and charity. The problem I have always found with these terms is that they can mean almost anything. Here are some relative thoughts about "love."

First, consider that the theme running through the common usage of the word "love" could be described as "choosing to communicate."

Thus, "I love you" means I choose to communicate with you. When parents say they love their children, this means that they choose to take the time and energy to communicate with their children. When a spouse says he loves his partner, it simply means the he has taken the time and energy to communicate with her. When someone says they have lived with and loved another person for several years, that would indicate considerable interaction in a wide variety of situations.

One thing I like about this definition of love is that it accommodates interactions that are negatively charged as well as positively charged. People can feel closer to each other after a negatively charged interaction just as with a positively charged interaction.

What greater gift during this holiday season could one person give to another than to give the gift of a little extra love—a little extra time and energy in listening to an other's point of view, expressing one's own, and discussing their implications and interactions.

I tend to avoid the mechanics of the holiday season—the opening of gifts, the preparation and ingestion of food, and even the decorating of a tree. To a degree, these activities could provide a setting for communication, but it seems to me that they more often detract by focusing attention away from people and onto the objects themselves.

SEMANTICS: LOVE (Continued)

For those with a religious bias, the holiday can be seen as time commemorating God’s love for man—choosing to communicate with man.

For those with a loved one who has passed away, this can be a time to remember an experience where they had interacted. Interestingly, those times of communicating can sometimes be more vividly remembered and appreciated now than at the time they occurred. Surely, it is no distortion of the English language to say that “their love continues.”

Perhaps each of us has a self portrait that can be described in terms of where and with what we choose to communicate. As we look back at where we spent our time and energy communicating last year, we can see where we are; and as we look to the next year and set our priorities and start living those priorities, we can see what we are becoming.

* * * * *

**T A L K B A C K
M O N O L O G U E**

Beverly, Arcadia, CA
Preschool Teacher

I am looking forward to the newsletter and the ideas it will contain. Being a preschool teacher, I need encouragement in presenting theories of relativity to the children as well as to the teachers. Thanks for the exposure to relativity!

Charles, Seattle, WA
Computer Programmer-Analyst

I do very much enjoy your newsletters when they unexpectedly appear. I hope you can manage to continue publishing them. I continue to find relativity to be a useful tool in organizing my experiences. For some reason, however, I rarely discuss relativity or related ideas with others. I am becoming interested in changing this. I hope to receive another newsletter soon.

Carole, Lompoc, CA

Your ideas are always refreshing.

* * * * *

T A L K B A C K
D I A L O G U E

Ken, Pasadena, CA

It seems that those people who are absolutists in religion are always trying to force their values on other people.

I tend to agree, particularly if they take their absolutism seriously. If they are certain they have the truth, it seems to logically follow that: those who differ from them are wrong; and the most significant act they can do with their lives is to make a wrong person right. GFB

Vanessa, La Canada, CA

Dr. Brown, you are the most remembered and respected teacher in my five years of college. Thank you.

Vanessa, those days were meaningful for me as well. As you probably know, my teaching style was a new experience for many students—some experienced a remarkable contribution to their educational progress, while others were not able to benefit at all. Unfortunately, the college's trustees have become involved in virtually every aspect of the college, and as far as I am concerned, have replaced the college's educational goals with a custodial and vocational type of program. It simply is not practical to work towards educational goals at the college. A few of us have started a "Teachers for Education" organization but it will be several years before we will be able to achieve even our short-term goals. A colleague who receives the newsletters approached me the other day and suggested that we add an "education" section to the newsletters. More on this later. GFB]

Joe, Little River, CA

Hi Gordon. Got your latest output and was happy to get it. I cheer you on with the subject, religion, which you have chosen for further exploration. I am an atheist as were my parents before. It bothers me not one bit not to have an explanation for the origin of the things on it and in it. I do have an uneasiness in this area when I am confronted by the statement that the great relativist Einstein expressed a belief in God. I haven't looked for it, but I have yet to see Einstein's statement. I suggest that you explain the terms "God" and "religion," else I pursue your discussion based on assumptions.

Thanks Joe. I love a debate! I doubt that either of our positions can be adequately presented in just one letter. I will make a brief comment now and follow-up with additional comments in future newsletters.

TALK BACK: DIALOGUE (Continued)

To begin with, your term “atheist” interests me. I tend to use the term to describe the position of a person who accepts the burden of arguing that there is no God, as distinguished from my use of the term “agnostic,” which simply argues that the existence of God is unknowable. As I see it, the atheist has the burden of showing that something does not exist. I for one, have never seen such a demonstration. You can show that something does exist by simply producing it, but how do you know that something does not exist? I realize that the position of atheism could be arrived at by logical inference: If a person argues that he is omniscient (possessing all knowledge) and that “God” is not to be found therein, I suppose that it follows logically that God does not exist. Joe, at your convenience would you drop me a short note describing briefly your use of the term “atheist”? Thanks again for your letter and your continued support of the newsletters. In the next newsletter, I comment on the term “God.”

* * * * *

NEWSLETTER INTEREST IS UP

As measured by the contributions since the last newsletter, the interest is up. For the first time since writing these newsletters, the contributions covered the out-of-pocket expenses for printing and postage. Each mailing costs about \$80 and the contributions since the last newsletter totaled about \$100. Considering the past infrequency of these newsletters, it is very gratifying to break even on these expenses.