

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

The Philosophy of Individualism

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DISTINCTION APPLIED TO POLITICS**

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ABSOLUTE-RELATIVE DISTINCTION APPLIED TO POLITICS

Gordon Brown and Jim Lunsford

This article considers the application of the Absolute-Relative distinction as a tool to clarify issues in the area of politics.

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ABSOLUTE VIEW OF POLITICS

Consider an Absolute Position: If absolute Truth is knowable, to any degree, then it follows that man should act consistent with such Truth. It may even be viewed that the evils of society are the result of people not acting in accordance with such Truth. The school system should insure that every child is given substantial exposure to such Truth. Only behavior and thinking consistent with the Truth should be tolerated—certainly, tolerance for the propagation of Non-Truth is not a virtue. Since Truth prescribes behavior totally (there is nothing outside Truth or Reality), one could consider living under Truth as "Totalitarianism." Such Totalitarianism could come in a variety of forms: (a) concentrated power, where the individual of power argues that Reality is what s/he permits it to be, simply because s/he has the power to destroy anything that differs from what he chooses to make Reality (e.g., military dictatorships, local youth gangs, certain parents); (b) by a person claiming revelation by "God," where "God" is defined as having or being the Truth (e.g., some organized churches); and (c) majority vote where Truth is established by majority vote of the groups or an elite group

ABSOLUTE VIEW (Continued)

within the larger group (e.g., communism, socialism, decision by authorities or experts, groups advocating that the People's "Collective Will" should prescribe individual behavior).

However established, once the Truth is established, total compliance would seem to logically follow. Since the external Truth is Truth for all men, it follows that all good and knowledgeable men would act according to it; and all others could reasonably be compelled to act according to it because such men can be assumed to lack goodness and/or knowledge.

Since the Truth applies to all men equally, equality would be a basic theme, and one central agency would most equitably over see the training in, and compliance with the Truth. If not a World Government, then a Federal Government would be the logical choice to insure that every man, woman, and child got an equal opportunity to live within the Truth. Local Government could perform the fine tuning to insure that each individual complies with the Truth as far as local conditions permit.

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RELATIVE VIEW OF POLITICS

Consider a Relative Position: There is no knowable "external" Truth or Reality available to mankind—the idea is unintelligible. No one can jump out of his "skin" to look at such a world. The only world any person has is his unique world of conscious experience—which is always changing and substantially affected by the individual's sensory system and previous exposure. Similarities between individuals reflect similarities in their sensory systems and past experiences. Each individual is only trying to make sense out of his own conscious experiences. The role of government would be to maximize the individual's ability to "create" his own "world"—to choose his own exposure—self determination to determine his "self," his conscious world of experience by determining the particular environment he will be exposed to.

Central government could most effectively protect the individual from common infringements on self determination such as by foreign assaults—e.g., financial, military, health. Local government could most effectively protect the individual from local infringements on self determination—e.g., local crime, local health issues. Also, since individuals have historically found that their individual choices can most effectively be met by collective action, in addition to government's role

RELATIVE VIEW (Continued)

As protector, government can serve individuals by enforcing agreements between some members of the public (private contracts), and other agreements made between all members of the public (public laws).

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**ABSOLUTE vs. RELATIVE POLITICS:
A COMPARISON**

Two different roles for government—on the one hand, from an absolute perspective, government tries to mold the individual to be “good,” and act according to the established Truth. On the other hand, from a relative view, government tries to mold the individual to be “responsible” and act according to the agreements into which he has entered. Again, on the one hand, it is the government which is responsible for creating the good life for the individual; on the other hand, it is the individual who is responsible for creating a government and environment which is his life. And again, on the one hand, Tom Hayden (former Senatorial Candidate) argues for “The need for a political machine for the people based on block and neighborhood organization, house meetings, grievance organizing, and electoral campaigns” (*Current Magazine*, March 1976, p. 12). And, on the other hand, Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger) lists as one of America’s major foreign policy concerns as “that all...should have the right of self-determination” (*Department of State Bulletin*, July 7, 1976, #1928).

NOTE: This application of the Absolute/Relative distinction to politics is meant to be a “bird’s eye view” not a fine focus. But, this writer believes that this “bird’s eye view” would be substantially verified under a “fine focus.”

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ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

REGARDING MEETINGS: These meetings are informal. Anyone can come. We anticipate that each meeting will involve 5-10 persons at any one meeting. Topics discussed are the result of the stated interested of the particular individuals present.

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES (Continued)

PAST SUNDAY MEETINGS: July 11 TOPIC: Discussion on child rearing—significance between telling a 3-year-old that his behavior is “wrong” vs. telling him his behavior is “different” (or disturbing to certain persons, for example).

July 18 TOPIC: Emotions are relative, but wouldn't something like a brick wall be absolute?

DISCUSSION MEETING every Sunday at 1:00 PM at Glendale Federal Savings, 722 East Colorado Blvd., Pasadena (across from Robinson's). Free parking in back; entrance in back. Further questions, call Jim Lunsford.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Relative/Absolute Distinction applied to Business; another “bird's eye view.”

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