

# ***RELATIVELY SPEAKING***

*The Philosophy of Individualism*

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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.

**INTRODUCTION**

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the American people will pick individuals to represent them. At issue is who best will represent them. Supposedly, candidates will be selected that reflect the goals of a majority of the people.

In order to have a representative, an individual must first have something that can be represented. You can only have representatives, if you have ideas that can be represented. So, it follows that in order to have representative government, individuals must have ideas or philosophies that can guide day-by-day decision making. Before arguing who is the "best" representative, you first must have ideas; if the individuals involved do not have ideas, there is no sense in discussing the best representative.

Using the work "philosophy" to describe the ideology underlying a person's hopes, aspirations, values, choices, etc., the question becomes: What is the philosophy of the majority of individuals that is to be represented?

## ***ON POLITICS: Introduction (Continued)***

An individual's philosophy will identify what are to be the relevant and significant issues of the day, as well as the resolutions to these issues—the philosophy establishes the "questions" and the "answers."

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### **ABSOLUTE VIEW**

Knowable, external, Truth exists independent of the individual. Every individual should be subservient to such known Truth. God is Truth, and so, Truth is God. To disagree with known Truth, is to set yourself against God, Goodness, Truth, etc. And so, every right thinking American should, in service to God and Truth, do what he can to see that all Americans are equally subjects to the dictates of Truth.

Since the political structure to which all Americans are to be subservient is the Federal Government, wealth and leadership should be directed to this Central Agency; and, this Central Agency would be responsible to see that all Americans have an equal opportunity to follow the Truth. It can be noted also that all Americans should be loyal to the Truth, and so to the Central Agency as the representative of Truth—loyalty to government and the laws emanating from it; no man is above the "law."

To describe the guidance given the individual by the Central Government, consider the three classical areas of individual experience—body, mind, and spirit:

Applying the Absolute philosophy to the "body," the Government would be responsible for jobs, health, the economy, housing, etc., for each individual. As for "mind," the Government would be responsible for nursery schools, primary/secondary/college education, research exploration, etc. As for "spirit," the Government would be responsible for legislating morals and values including areas such as sex, abortion, censoring of bad books or undesirable personal behavior, encouraging support for law and order, loyalty to Government, etc.

Ideally, Central Government would apply the known Truth to all Americans from conception to death, including taking the responsibility for every individual's health care, training in thinking the Right way in a life-long learning program, and freedom to live in an environment free from moral pollution.

### ***On Politics: Absolute View (Continued)***

As contrasted with “self-determination”: (a) every individual should be subservient to the Truth; (b) since Truth applied to all people, general public benefit always takes priority over individual desires; and (c) every individual should be “loyal” to the laws of Central Government, since they reflect Truth.

Consistent with the above position is the recent California Supreme Court ruling in which the majority argued that “It should hardly be necessary, as we enter the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to reaffirm the principle that all private property is held subject to the power of the government to regulate its use for the public welfare.”

Consider that the Democratic Party, and Presidential Candidate Jimmy Carter specifically, tend towards an absolute philosophy of government in areas of “body” and “mind”: Federal government agencies should increase their control and support in the areas of jobs, price controls, general economy, health care, education, etc., A couple of cases in point: Carter was quoted in the *CTA/NEA Action* of October 17, 1976 (the National Education Association [NEA] is the largest national teacher organization; the California Teachers’ Association [CTA] is the one of the largest teacher organizations in the state) as calling for a “stronger and stronger” federal role in the funding of public education. Carter was quoted in the FL-CIO’s Memo from *Cope* (August 2, 1976), as supporting the repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, “which would permit the abolishment of Right to Work laws” [Carter supports the repeal of Right to Work laws in the various States through Federal action]. One last example, the Democratic Party support of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, which would apparently place the Federal Government as the responsible agent for resolving the unemployment problems—such “responsibility” to be accompanied by appropriate funding and control over the jobs of individuals.

Consider that the Republican Party, and Presidential Candidate Gerald Ford specifically, tend towards an absolute Philosophy of government in areas of “spirit.” Federal government should increase its support and control in the areas of abortion decisions, loyalty to government, “love it or leave it” type thinking, etc.

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### **RELATIVE VIEW**

It is unintelligible to talk of any knowable, external Truth. The only world a person can know is his personal world of conscious experience. Government can be

***ON POLITICS: Relative View (Continued)***

“bit” during a time of emergency, or “small” under normal conditions; but always, government would be striving to maximize the freedom of every individual to determine his own life—maximizing self-determination.

For at least two reasons, it is awkward to speak of “loyalty” to government. First, there is nothing to be “loyal” to, since every law or method of law making is subject to change through the efforts of individuals. And, secondly, it is awkward to speak of “loyalty” to your “representatives” or “public servants,” or to speak of “loyalty” to a government being “ruled by the consent of the governed.”

Applying the relative philosophy to the “body,” the government would insure the rights of every individual to enter into contracts with others. Every individual would have maximum freedom to enter into agreements with other individuals as a means of resolving issues of employment, health, etc. Government could insure that individuals do not deprive others of their freedom to enter into contracts (anti-trust laws, right work laws, etc.)

As for the area of “mind,” the relative approach may emphasize that education is primarily left up to the individual as a life-long process. “Formal education,” or government-directed education, may focus on those skills necessary to enable people to communicate with each other—reading, writing, arithmetic, statistics, logic, etc.; and, exposure to ideologies (ideas) common to the culture, such as capitalism, communism, existentialism, views of history, etc. Such formal education would be kept at a minimum so that, with less money channeled to government control, the individual would have more money under his own control, thereby maximizing the opportunity of the individual to be responsible for his own education—the books he reads, skills he learns, beliefs he becomes exposed to, etc. In a word, the more wealth retained by the individual, the more he is able to be responsible for his own life-long learning.

In the area of “spirit,” the government would attempt to maximize the freedom of every individual to establish his own values and to act on his own values. This is a “mini-max” type principle, where the freedom of one individual increases up to a point where it substantially decreases the freedom of another.

Consider that the Republican Party, and Gerald Ford specifically, tend towards a relative philosophy of government in areas of “body” and “mind”; emphasizing increased freedom and responsibility to individuals to resolve issues of labor, such

***ON POLITICS: Relative View (Continued)***

as right to work laws, etc.; and minimal federal control of education, limited to insuring that some individuals do not deprive other individuals of formal education.

Consider that the Democrats and Jimmy Carter specifically, tend toward a relative philosophy of government in the area of "spirit": emphasizing increased freedom and responsibility to individuals to resolve issues of abortion, morals, etc.

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**ABSOLUTE v RELATIVE CONCLUSIONS**

1. Since laws tend to be enacted rather than repealed by legislatures, the issue before the American people is whether they want the Democrats to limit self-determination in the areas of "body" and "mind," by extending Central control over areas such as jobs, labor, and education? Or, does the American public want the Republicans to limit self-determination in the areas of "spirit," by extending Central control over areas such as abortion?

One factor complicating the selection is to determine what effect a particular candidate would have, given the existing conditions.

2. One reason Americans may be avoiding voting is that they feel that a real choice is not being offered.

3. Another reason Americans may be avoiding voting is that they are involved in a re-examination of their values, goals, ideologies, etc. During this time of re-examination, individual Americans are fluctuating between ideologies and as such can give no clear directive to their "representatives." Consequently, they may choose not to vote, or to vote on cosmetic issues such as whether a candidate "looks good," or says a few "words" which make them feel positive or negative.

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