

Pilate Said to Him, What Is Truth?¹

By Greg Witherow

Discussions involving any type of moral code are often fruitless and frustrating. The reason is because a large segment of society has adopted Relativism. Relativism can be described by the phrase, "You have your truth and I have my truth". While Relativism sometimes strays into the sciences (as we will see below), by definition it's not supposed to. It is primarily used to evaluate right and wrong behavior. It is a reaction against Absolute Truth, which is an ethics system of unchanging principles found in Natural Law². What follows is a critique of Relativism. Specifically it will be asked whether Relativism is reasonable or even workable in society. But first, definitions.

Absolute Truth simply means a body of universal truth, known by reason, which applies to all humanity and is instinctively known. We find the existence of Absolute Truth in the sciences. Adding 2+2 and getting 4 is a universal truth. It applies to everyone. The equation was not invented, it was discovered using intelligence. That being the case, do universal values apply to a moral code? Absolute Truth affirms it is so. **Relativism denies it.** In fact Relativism claims there is no moral truth. Instead there is only Moral Opinion. Each person determines their own. It is guilt free (Relativism's appeal). To hold people to the standards of My Moral Opinion is seen as an act of oppression, a desire to control.

However it is quickly apparent that Relativism is itself - an Absolute Truth! It universally applies to all. It is plainly a contradiction. Further, Relativism has an addendum. It is, that in living out My Moral Opinion no one else can be hurt³. Is this not also an Absolute Truth? There are two reasons for it. First, it is necessary to keep 7 billion people, living out their Moral Opinions, from killing each other (this is not an attempt at humor). Second, it appeals to Fairness, an ethic instinctively known by all (think Natural Law). It is inescapable that Relativism is a form of Absolute Truth, requiring Absolute Truth to work, while denying Absolute Truth exists. As society's moral compass, much depends on this logic.

Beyond its contradictions, Relativism is often unscientific. Transgenderism and abortion are examples. Looking at abortion, its morality hinges on when life begins. Princeton University is an Ivy League research university. Its web site lists multiple scientific sources stating life begins at conception⁴. This science, coupled with the "do no harm" of Relativism, should make every Relativist a staunch Pro-Life advocate. However, this is not the case. The science and logic be damned. Pro-Choice advocates avoid the **hypocrisy** of this logic by refusing to ask (or answer) such questions. Meanwhile, babies die.

Finally, in addition to being contradictive and unscientific, Relativism is unworkable. How can a person be held accountable for bad behavior? No is allowed to judge. Want to do opioids? Go ahead. The kids can live with the grandparents. Want to ditch the wife? She'll get over it. Need to cheat to get a degree? If you have reasons, do it. Taboos? They have to go. But a people who lie to get degrees, jobs, loans or who bust up marriages, do opioids or **normalize taboo** is a blue print for a corrupt society. This is how things get bad. Can't happen? Watch the news. Want to live that world? It will cost you.

Relativism "**does not recognize anything as definitive and [its] ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desire**"⁵. While promising to do no harm, it does. In contrast, Absolute Truth builds guard rails, not chains. It is a framework for a common good. When violated, people agree. Our nation was founded on Absolute Truths. The Declaration of Independence states "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights". In the end, is there Absolute Truth? If God exists, yes. If not, you're on your own.

¹ Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea at the time of Christ. He posed this question at Christ's trial, found in the book of John 18, 19

² Natural Law is unwritten universal moral principles regarding ethics, authored by a Creator. The Declaration of Independence refers to it.

³ Hurt commonly means to murder, maim, rape, enslave or steal private property - not emotional sorrow, pain or anger in reaction to actions.

⁴ <https://www.princeton.edu/~prolife/articles/embryoquotes2.html> (accessed February 26, 2017).

⁵ This is a quote of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) spoken at the onset of the 2005 conclave.