

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

The Philosophy of Individualism

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ABSOLUTE-RELATIVE DISTINCTION APPLIED TO BUSINESS

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 business.

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ABSOLUTE VIEW OF BUSINESS

Consider an Absolute Position: if absolute Truth or Reality is knowable, then harmony, and perhaps happiness, would be the result of every individual acting consistently with said Truth. And, since Reality is all encompassing, such Truth would prescribe proper business relationships. "Business," as used herein, involves the exchange of services and goods.

Knowledge of an absolute Reality, a single Reality for all men, gives rise to the ideal where all people would be working consistent with Reality; and so, harmoniously with each other; and so, working as single social unit—e.g., socialism.

A Centralized Agency would serve the people by coordinating individual business efforts to realize the idealized "State," or "Truth." As a result of loving, compassionate, and caring people in Central Government, administrative systems could be instituted to insure that every man, woman, and child, could contribute "their all" to effect a "State" based on absolute Truth.

ABSOLUTE VIEW (Continued)

Of course, to differ from Truth is undesirable and individuals who resist Truth as established by the "collective will," and interpreted by the Central Agency are resisting the "State" and the "People"; and, as such, they are at least immature, selfish, unloving, and uncaring troublemakers; and, at worst, treasonous and dangerous to the common good.

As for economics, each individual gives what he can and takes what he needs to survive. In a work, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" (President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address). The "surplus" is the "Peoples," and could be reinvested to bring about more surplus; or the ultimate use of "surplus," giving dividends to the "poor" so as to bring about the ultimate ideal "State"—the equality of every individual.

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RELATIVE VIEW OF BUSINESS

Consider a Relative Position: There is no knowable, "external" Truth or Reality available to mankind—the idea is unintelligible. The only Reality a person can every know is the Reality of his own personal experience. The individual determines his own personal experience, not the "State."

"Business" relationships are agreements freely entered into between individuals that anticipate personal gain as determined by each individual involved. More significant than the dividends from the business agreement, is the personal realization that the decisions of each individual makes a real difference to that individual. Each individual is significant and instrumental in making "his reality." Happiness is not so much an end result as it is a way of traveling—that is, determining one's own reality each day by one's own choices is more significant than the particular end result. As the song says, "I gotta be me!"; or, "I would rather be a committed villain than a lukewarm Saint"; or, "Would that you were cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (*Revelation*, 3:15-16).

It is unintelligible to talk of "helping others," "caring for others," "loving others," etc. First, no one has access to the personal world of another to find out what s/he wants; and secondly, to deny one's own life and work for goals which are not one's own, but those of another, is not a model of virtue but of self destruction and slavery in the most demeaning historical sense.

Local and central governments can best serve to bring about the Golden Mean by maximizing the power of individuals to make agreements without adversely affecting non-parties, insuring that individuals have alternatives (e.g., anti-trust laws).

Rather than being True to the "State," it is argued to be true to one's self, for it is the only reality each individual will ever know.

As far as economics, each individual becomes a caretaker of the tangible results of his choices and commitments. If his goal involves currency and he gets a million dollars, what can he do but invest it? Investments which are mutually satisfying to all parties involved would tend to increase the amount of money he has control over; conversely, investments which do not satisfy the parties involved would tend to decrease the amount of money over which he has control; conversely, investments which do not satisfy the parties involved would tend to decrease the amount of money over which he has control. Currency would tend to be controlled by individuals making decisions which tend to be satisfying to the persons involved.

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

On the one hand, the "State" is basically responsible for the individual's well-being and so has maximum control over the individual's behavior; on the other hand, the individual is basically responsible for his own well-being and , so, the "State serves to insure his maximum autonomy.

On the one hand, an argument is made for "equality," which diminishes the significance of the "individual"; on the other hand, an argument is made for "inequality," which gives rise to the "individual."

On the one hand, happiness is having an equal share of the "wealth"; on the other hand, happiness is having your "wealth" a product of your personal commitments: "Common-ism" (equality) vs. Self-determination (individuality).

NOTE: This application of the Absolute/Relative distinction to business 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

Past Sunday Meeting: July 25 TOPIC: Is the "family" a significant social unit?

Past Special Meeting: July 19 TOPIC: Theology: Can "Christian belief" be rationally understood? George Mann, Minister of the Pasadena Methodist Church was a discussant.

Future Sunday Meetings: Every Sunday, at least through September 12,, 1976 at 1:00 PM, meetings are held at Glendale Federal Savings, 722 East Colorado Blvd., Pasadena (across from Robinson's). Free parking in back; entrance in back. Further questions, call Jim Bickley.

Address Changes: For those who will be changing their addresses next month and choose to receive this Newsletter at their new address, call Jim Bickley or mail the new address to the return address on this letter.

Next Newsletter: Relative/Absolute Distinction applied to theology, another "bird's eye view."

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