

Philosophy Corner: The Failure of Relativism

By Ezequiel B. Gutiérrez, Ph.L.

Morality is the quality that makes something good or bad, right or wrong. Through the course of history, cultural traditions and religious precepts have typically set-up norms by which to live guaranteeing order, peace and happiness.

Recent trends in ethics have proposed that no objective truths or modes of behavior can be established rather each person or group of persons sets up its own norms based on culture, experience and/or religion. This way of thinking is widely known as relativism.

In today's self-serving and pleasure consuming society, relativism can seem very attractive. No accountability or responsibility is needed when each individual decides for him or herself what is right and what is wrong. Yet there are universal truths and values thus proving that relativism is not a valid philosophy. A test one can employ to demonstrate the validity of a theory is the test of self-reference.

When someone presents an idea, it can be widely accepted if when tested against itself it proves valid. Moreover the test also confirms whether or not a theory follows a course of rational logic.

Take for instance Heraclitus' maxim, "everything is flux," meaning that everything is changing. He presented this theory as one of his first principles—an objective truth to explain reality. If this were true, and if this statement served as an ultimate explanation of real-

ity, it would follow that the very statement itself is also changing. If it is subject to change the idea cannot be an objective or universal truth.

Without objective truths our ever-wondering minds would encounter an infinite regress of theories or ideas.

As pure relativism claims that "there are no objective or universal truths" it fails the test of self-reference insofar as its very definition by asserting itself as true becomes what it claims there is none of—objec-



tive truth. Therefore we must admit that within human behavior there are mores and values to uphold, never changing and ever present.

The Church through sacred tradition teaches us what is truly right and wrong, good and bad. During this time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, following the mandates of God, we will be more able to actualize our personhood and live in true harmony with oneself, others and our Creator.

continual focus on gangs and their increasing violence.

With all of the new technology, it is easy to lose focus on God and become distracted. Try not to be tempted by the media messages and remember that your true happiness lies in God. My advice to you is to make a priority of devoting some time throughout the day reflecting on Christ and all of his teachings. Next I want you to do more to help others. Do not just do little things when it is convenient for you. Challenge yourselves, devote a few hours Saturday helping those in need by serving food at the Poverello House or volunteering at local hospitals.

Lastly, much work is needed to decrease the number of gangs and violence in this city. In order to prevent violence, the community must unite to stop the problem. Be a role model for your kids and teach them how to find solutions for their problems without using violent behavior. Focusing on God, helping others, and preventing violence are three tasks for now. I know you will do well and make a difference in the world. Best of luck and stay strong in your faith.

Sincerely in Christ,
Paul, Alias Jessica Goston

The mother of two teenagers said to her friend, "I'm worried about my kids' failing eyesight." "Oh, why is that?" asked the friend. "My daughter can't find anything to wear in a closet full of clothes, and my son can't find anything good to eat in a refrigerator full of food."



volunteers.

The Diocese of Fresno is on a three year renewal training cycle. In the Fall of 2015 we will repeat this process again. Until then, any new volunteers, employees and clergy within the diocese will be required to complete three steps before having unsupervised contact with minors. These three steps are: undergo a background check through fingerprint clearance, complete Safe Environment training and sign a diocesan Code of Conduct. These steps are mandated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People to ensure that a "safe environment" is created and maintained for all children and youth. In addition, educational opportunities and resources have been offered to parents. Together with parents, di-

to the diocesan safe environment office as I start to prepare for our yearly audit with the USCCB. THANK YOU!



Cheryl Sarkisian addressing the clergy at a meeting on February 28

The Union between Faith and Reason

By Ezequiel B. Gutiérrez, Ph.L., San Jaquin Memorial High School Teacher

The single most important distinction between us and other species is our ability to reason. Unlike mere sentient beings whose actions are responses to instinct and to survival, man through reason is able to arrive at an understanding of himself, the world and God. When this faculty is used in this capacity, the thinking person is philosophizing.

To philosophize is not alien to the Catholic experience. We come to know God both through faith and reason. Theology is a study wherein we use revelation or faith to arrive at truth and philosophy is the study wherein we use reason to arrive at knowledge. But unlike philosophy which solely uses reason, theology has at its disposal both faith and reason.

To use philosophy means to think in such a way that one investigates everything one can possibly know through reason; where reason leaves off, faith picks up. Philosophy is the only science that truly studies the limits of reason.

St. Thomas Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God, illustrates how one is able to arrive at truth. His proofs use philosophical themes such as causality and the prime mover. Most significantly, the presentation demonstrates how necessary it is to use faith and reason to arrive at concrete definitions.

Philosophical investigations have always

had a primacy within the study of theology. Before one can explain the dual nature of Christ, knowledge of human nature must first be apprehended; this knowledge comes from reason, whereby knowledge of the divine comes from faith.

Pope John Paul II highlighted the harmonious relationship between faith and reason in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Therein, he asserts that the reality of the world, our human condition and God, are subjects that we study with reason, but never without the guide of faith in the process. Without faith, most of philosophy becomes a study of radically inconclusive theories.

All humans desire to know. The journey toward wisdom—and more importantly truth—begins with a sense of wonder. It pertains to human nature to ask questions. How fortunate we are to have in our Catholic heritage an intellectual scope and depth that makes provisions for such use of our reason. To think is what truly sets us apart from other animals. And with the aid of the Holy Spirit arriving at such truth will help us bring to completion the good work God has begun in us.

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love for the Lord."

Saint Anthony's principal, Kimberly Cochran, said Mrs. Gennock's greatest contribution to education has been her ability to inspire her students to learn and have fun.

"I am honored to serve as principal with Mrs. Gennock just a few doors down teaching and leading our students toward Christ each day," said Cochran. "Mrs. Gennock teaches by example."

In addition to being an educator, Mrs. Gennock is also an active member of her parish, serving as a Eucharistic Minister. Her Catholic faith has been the focal point of her life for as long as she can recall, a devotion

Anthony's community."

Mrs. Gennock will be honored at a special ceremony and banquet on the opening evening of the Annual Convention of the National Catholic Education Association in Houston, Texas, on April 2, 2013.

She said she is humbled and overwhelmed by this honor.

"I believe God has a plan for each of us. I pray each morning my thoughts, words and actions praise our Lord. I want to live a life worthy of His plan for me. All good things come from God so I must say, "Thank you, God."

The Failure of Relativism

By Ezequiel B. Gutiérrez, Ph.L., San Joaquin Memorial High School

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Without objective truths our ever wondering minds would encounter an infinite regress of theories or ideas. (God as creator of all living things put a quick end to the nearly infinite regressed argument of what came first, the chicken or the egg.)

As pure relativism claims that "there are no objective or universal truths", it fails the test of self-reference insofar as its very definition by asserting itself as true becomes what it claims there is none of—objective truth. Therefore we must admit that within human behavior there are mores and values to uphold, never changing and ever present.

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Kateri

O Saint Kateri, Li
Your love for J
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Your short and pai
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An Anthology of the Poet

by Fr. James Rude, SJ

Fr. Efreim Trettel was born in Trento, Italy on May 17, 1921, joined the Franciscans and was ordained in 1944. Areas where he worked included Italy and China and then went to San Francisco to be Assistant Pastor at the Immaculate Conception Church in 1953.

In 1963 he founded the ARC (Apostolato Radio Cristiana) to support his ministry for the elderly and the shut-ins, broadcasting, distributing audio/visual cassettes, giving time to personal visitations in hospitals and convalescent homes.

Over the years, Father has written a number of poems which he has gathered in *Son of Francis*. We are told of its vibrancy and simplicity, that it speaks of love, and sings of beauty, sounding like a man enamored with God and with Creation.

One poem starts:

*I was afraid of reaching for
the distant skies above;
they seemed to wrapped
in mystery,
so dark, so far away...*

*And then one day, ...
but you are going to have to get a
copy to see the rest of that wonderful
poem. Father did a book signing at*



CALIFORNIA BISHOPS EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF CÉSAR CHÁVEZ MONUMENT

News Release of the California Catholic Conference

SACRAMENTO – October 3 — California's Catholic bishops released a statement today following the announcement that the former home and workplace of labor leader César Chávez will be declared a national monument:

"We, the bishops of California, are pleased that the Hispanic American Catholic César Chávez will be given national recognition on October 8, 2012 when a monument bearing his name is established on the property known as Nuestra Señora Reina de la Paz (Our Lady Queen of Peace), or La Paz. The monument, to be managed by the National Park Service, will include a Visitors' Center and a memorial garden containing Chávez's grave site.

"La Paz, located in the Tehachapi Mountains of Kern County, was the site of the national headquarters of the United Farm Workers (UFW) as well as the home and

workplace of César Chávez, an inspiring leader who played a central role in achieving civil rights and worker protections for thousands of farm laborers.

"Chávez was profoundly influenced by Catholic social justice teaching. He strived to be a good disciple of the Lord Jesus by bringing the Kingdom of God to the vineyards, fields and groves of America. Seeing the hard plight of migrant laborers, he became a community organizer in 1952, and eventually the founder of the United Farm Workers in 1962. Through his influence and dedication, countless farm laborers today have basic protections—from clean drinking water and safe working conditions to minimum wages and access to healthcare.

"We are grateful for the national honor to be granted César Chávez, his family and his co-workers for their efforts on behalf of the 'least among us.'"

pus. Students with special needs throughout the community were invited to come to the campus and enjoy a carnival like atmosphere. Students came from several local school districts and were paired up with a Garces Memorial student "buddy". They had a wonderful, memorable day enjoying a variety of fun and interactive activities.

Some of the activities were a magic show, a petting zoo, face painting, carnival games, soccer shoot, t-ball challenge, Frisbee toss, and pony rides. Also on campus providing entertainment for the students were the Bakersfield Police Department,

of McDonalds. The day is made possible by a grant through Chevron Corporation and through our partnership with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

Garces Memorial holds this annual event to further our mission. This day helps us to remind our students the importance of being socially responsible and acting with compassion. Our entire campus gets an on-hands lesson in the importance of caring for others, especially those who cannot care for themselves, and the reward of seeing the joy that an act of kindness can bring into the life of a child with special needs.

personal relationship with God, a positive work ethic, and an opportunity to serve my peers in church and school; I would have been much different if I had attended a public high school.

My most meaningful experiences have been San Joaquin's religious retreats, where I grew immensely in faith and helped other seek God in their lives. My vision of God changed; I saw him as a per-

son for me. Religion will keep me emotionally healthy in the crazy life throughout college and assure that I will have spiritual guidance. Again, I am very grateful to have attended San Joaquin Memorial; if I had another chance to go back in time, I would have chosen San Joaquin Memorial. There I have felt at home, and my religion is thriving among my peers.

Intellectual Merit and the Holy Spirit Educators and Students Need Rest and Renewal

by Ezequiel B. Gutierrez, M.Ed, Ph.L., Vice Principal—San Joaquin Memorial

The academic year fits well with the liturgical calendar. Schools culminate their course of study in late spring with finals while the Church celebrates the Feast of Pentecost.

By the time May rolls around you can ask any teacher or student what they most desire and many would surely reply—a vacation.

After hours of studying and preparing for summative assessments, students' brains are overloaded and fried. Teachers find themselves with similar fatigue after long hours of preparing lessons and grading. Offering a chance to reflect on the gifts of the Spirit, this time of year sets the stage for both respite and continued learning.

Teachers, students and families eagerly anticipate the summer months for vacationing and planning for the upcoming

school year. But in order to nurture our mind, body and soul with the new knowledge gained from the work and study of the previous year, time ought to be set aside for spiritual works and service.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit filled weary and tired apostles with renewed energy. Being slain with the Spirit they were afforded skills and talents to work at fulfilling Christ's mission. The summer months are a great way to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit in our own lives. The time off can be used for spiritual and professional growth: Find ways of applying theoretical knowledge to practical tasks. Develop new skills. Exercise the mind. Read literature, religious texts or professional journals. Let's be empowered by the Spirit so that we can return to school refreshed and with a greater sense of purpose.



Garces High students with their buddies at Garces Play Day

Nikki Jamieson to the lower left
Bianca Burkhart to the lower right

