



Dr. Fred Schwarz

# The Schwarz Report



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Volume 46, Number 6

June 2006

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And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:11

## Challenging Relativism

by Christopher C. Shubert

**Editor's Note:** The following essay by Rev. Shubert needs to be read in the context of Allan Bloom's comment in *The Closing of the American Mind*: "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative." (Simon and Schuster, 1987, p. 25.) This essay speaks to this issue with insight and persuasive logic. Of course, because logic is in short supply these days, this essay might come up short too. For the sake of our country, churches, and children, let's hope not!

There is no more prevalent philosophy in the modern world than that of Relativism. From physics to philosophy, from logic to mathematics, from psychology to sociology to ethics, there seems to be one credo: There are no absolutes! It has seeped in everywhere, even among those who might seem to have a vested interest in the ultimate absoluteness of truth (Truth, capital 'T'). Even among religionists whose ideology might be expected to be built upon revealed truth, over half believe that truth is a relative proposition—that what is true for you might not be true for me.

There is, I think, no idea that has ever been so quickly, universally, and comfortably adopted than relativism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries. Where have all the absolutists gone? Once more prevalent than homing pigeons, they seem to have gone quietly extinct: There has, it seems, been not a peep of a response to relativism from the absolutists. If any absolutists still exist, they seem content to suffer in silence, scurrying under the furniture when the relativists come into the room. Thus, the ideological conflict between two of the most enormous and portentous concepts in existence seems to have been won without a shot being fired, leaving the incredible question shimmering in the air: Is relativism, after all, unopposable? Is the idea that there is no absolute truth so obviously and unquestionably true that we must now let absolutism slip down into the cold dark waters of Lethe without even a sketch at a rescue attempt?

So, more than just the Zeitgeist, relativism is the intellectual underpinning of the modern culture and the presumed grounds of progress in any intellectual endeavor. It is the unquestioned and unquestionable truth of the age.

Which must, of course, provoke an ironic question: Is relativism the *absolute* truth?

Putting the question in this form helps us see two things: First, on semantic grounds at least, relativism seems to refute itself very quickly. Second, any thoroughgoing relativist is going to have to apply the relativist proposition to relativism itself at some point—if not necessarily for the sake of integrity, at least for the sake of the orneriness inherent in relativism: If relativism is out to disprove everything, then we might as well make a full

*"Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye; forget the past and you'll lose both eyes."* Old Russian Proverb

meal of it and eat our presupposition for dessert. Relativism itself is, by nature, relative.

Which brings us to our first challenge to relativism: If every truth is relative, then so is relativism, and so absolute truth might be as true for you as relativism is for me and, then again, relativism is probably not true all the time but only under certain conditions, so absolutism might well hold true at other times or in other places: If there is no unconditional truth, then the proposition that there is no unconditional truth must itself be a conditional truth and hence not universally true, allowing (even requiring) that somehow, somewhere there must be unconditional truth.

The preceding might at first be taken to be nothing more than a word game on a par with saying, "This statement is false." And so the relativist is sure to object. But if this first critique of relativism falls into the same category of verbal trifle as saying "Everything I say is a lie," then does this not identify the essential statement of relativism—that all truth is unqualifiedly relative—as the same sort of oxymoronic confection as the statement, "I am not talking to you"? And the more one considers this critique, the more difficult it becomes to refute it, especially when one begins to visualize the problem in terms of sets: If the set of all truth contains no unconditional truths, then the proposition that all truth is conditional is not found in the set of all truth because it is an unconditional statement. So relativism, in its most basic form, implodes itself.

Worse yet, think of the position this puts the relativist in when they try to enter any discourse: By beginning with the up-front assumption that nothing is generally true, the thoroughgoing relativist is essentially starting the conversation by saying "I have nothing to say which is necessarily true; it's your option to regard what I say as either true or false, and in either case you would be right."

We have only three directions to go from this wreck: We can either give up on relativism, we can deny the validity of rational thought, or we can refine our concept of relativism to cope with this challenge. Sadly, most relativists choose the second course when there are perfectly good rational responses to this first challenge. For the sake of this discussion, we will follow the last course: We will refine our relativistic concept to cope with the challenge, and move on.

The first step in such a refinement is to distinguish the position of the relativist from that of the cynic: The cynic denies every possible notion of truth, including the idea that propositions are open to analytical consideration. To the cynic, the fact that the denial of truth is a truth-claim which denies itself is simply a proof by tautology: "Of course it makes no sense," says the cynic, "I told you that nothing made any sense, didn't I?" And so the cynic is excused from the discussion. However, the relativist is sure to stand

up for *some* truths: "That's my wallet;" "This is the ladies' room;" or "Don't drink that, it's poison!" are all statements of truth which the relativist is willing to accept as objectively true in some sense, however limited that sense may be. And we need not succumb to the temptation of developing a taxonomy of truth; we can still use this concession of the relativist to make some analytical headway in evaluating this more-refined relativism on its own turf.

The idea that true statements are only true within a given context seems, at first, quite solid. All manner of corroborating examples come to mind: I might say, for instance, that "Calamari is wonderful food;" "The Steelers are the national champions;" "Poison ivy causes a nasty rash;" or "2 plus 2 equals 10." All of these statements are true in their context: Calamari is wonderful food *according to my tastes*; The Steelers are the *2006 U.S. national football* champions; Poison ivy causes a nasty rash *in sensitive humans* (deer eat the stuff); 2 plus 2 equals 10 *in base 4*. So the concept that truth is limited to its context seems to stand on pretty firm ground—at least, we can come up with lots of examples which seem to support the idea. It is orders of magnitude easier to think of qualified truths than of unqualified ones: The earth travels around the sun, but has not done so forever, and will (we expect) cease to do so at some time in the distant future; mass attracts mass, but there now seems to be some counteractive force which is causing the acceleration of the expansion of the universe; Death and taxes are life's two eternal certainties, but Robinson Crusoe was exempt from taxes as long as he was on his island, and there are those who believe that life is essentially eternal. More rigorously, in the past century or so, a logical concept that has stood as universal truth for millennia has been shown to be qualified: The Law of the Excluded Middle (which, among other things, tells us that a proposition must be either true or false) has been categorized as valid only for bivalued logic. In fact, Gödel seems to have shown that every rational system has its point of breakdown, so that even within a system truth is qualified by systematic limitations.

But the astute reader will have noticed a flaw in this line of argument: All along, we have been attempting to prove the axiom that truth is limited to its system by citing examples from a large number of diverse systems: We have been trying to show the nonexistence of general truth by constructing a multidisciplinary argument over a variety of systems. And this is how this second version of relativism is always substantiated: The contextual relativist always constructs a grand assembly of cases from diverse disciplines in order to show that there are no general truths, only specific ones: The general theorem that there is no general truth is induced (in good scientific fashion) from as broad a base of specific cases as can be mustered. Well, of course, this is nothing other than the same problem we encountered in the first form of relativism:

We attempt to prove relativism by demonstrating that it is universally true (and, while we're at it, we uphold induction as a generally valid method).

But this is not the only problem with the contextual version of relativism. Much more important is the question of the *validity* of the context: If a particular truth's context is not valid, then the truth itself is not valid. For example, suppose I claim that your bicycle belongs to me. Of course, you will protest that the bicycle is yours, not mine, and you might even go so far as to offer a variety of proofs that the bicycle is yours—a bill of sale, a testimony of the events which led to your acquiring it, the corroborating testimony of several agreeable witnesses, etc. I might reply that, truth being relative to its context, in *my* context, the bicycle belongs to me. And while I ride off on your bike, you will call the police. Now, there are a variety of ways to analyze this conflict: It might be said that you and I simply have a clash of contexts—that we are both speaking the truth within our context, and that there is simply a 'contextual dissonance'. Alternately, it might be said that some contexts are more comprehensive than others, and that your view of truth occurs in a broader context than mine (i.e., because more people agree with you). Or, it might be said that one context (yours) was valid and the other (mine) was not.

However you analyze our bicyclical contention, though, it is clear that some truth-contexts prevail over others. And, I think, the most broadly useful way of viewing the conflict is to accept that some truth-contexts are valid, while others are invalid. So have we achieved our relativistic aim by isolating truths into contexts? No, it seems that we have merely promoted the problem to another level. For now, we have truth that is not only true in context, we also have truth which mediates between contexts. Put another way, we now see that a truth context is a kind of truth which competes with other truth contexts—and that, within a broader context! If our original intent in proposing the idea that truth is only true in a given context was to avoid conflict between truths, then we have failed, because it is apparent that truth-contexts can come into conflict with each other. However much we attempt to divorce any two truth claims from each other by relegating them to their own discrete contexts, there will always be a broader context in which the two discrete truth contexts will interact with each other and, possibly, come into conflict with each other. An example is in order.

Suppose that I tell you that a bat, though a flying vertebrate, is not a kind of bird. You could rightly reply that this is a purely relative view, and that some ancient methods of categorizing creatures include the bat with the birds. So, which is right? Is a bat to be classed with the birds or not? Well, the answer is relative to the classification scheme you choose. The modern view classes bats with other mammals;

the ancient view classes bats with other winged vertebrates. The modern view could be argued to have more utility, or to be more accurate, but in this case the distinctions of utility and accuracy are pretty esoteric—such distinctions would probably actually affect only about one person in a million (if that many). For the average person, it would make no difference whatever whether a bat was considered a kind of bird or not: I could go my entire life categorizing bats with birds and not be one whit better or worse for it (except in run-ins with chauvinistic taxonomists). So it doesn't seem that we can rank the two views in a superior-inferior relationship; apparently this is a case where truth is purely relative to its system.

Now, suppose a third person comes into the discussion and claims that bats are most properly to be classed with black cats, newts, toads, owls, salamanders, and other magically active creatures, and that bats are more closely related to a mandrake root than they are to a starling or a mouse. After you and I had both registered our astonished stares, we would hasten to make common cause against this extraordinary and unorthodox viewpoint. How can such a view be justified? Well, our guest would reply, some things and some beasts have greater magical energy than others; so it is with bats, some cats, toads, owls, salamanders, etc. In this context, the primary method of classifying a creature is neither morphology nor biology but rather its magical potency.

Our response to this new thesis would not be to attempt to prove that bats are not, in fact, more magical than chickens and rabbits. Nor (despite the newcomer's protests) would we simply accept this view as a fact from a new and equally valid truth-context. Instead, we would reject altogether the context in which the claim was made—which illuminates an important rule of contextual truth: *Contextual truth is only valid if the context is valid*. And, as mentioned previously, this puts the contexts of truth themselves under examination as kinds of truth, open to validation or falsification. There is even more than a suggestion here that truth-contexts are, themselves, truths which abide in broader contexts. One can easily envision an epistemology in which truths abide in contexts which themselves abide in broader contexts which themselves abide in contexts broader still, nesting like Matryoshka dolls until all of them are contained within one great context which defines and qualifies all truth. But where have we arrived? This cannot possibly be relativism—this is, in fact, absolutism, in which all truth must eventually refer to ultimate truth.

So we see, then, that in order for the concept of contextual truth to be valid at all—and especially, in order for the concept to be at all useful—we must qualify the contexts themselves as either valid or invalid. And this requirement,

brought to its logical conclusion, shows that this second form of relativism is not relativism at all—it is, rather, absolutism. So if the goal of the idea of contextual truth was to allow apparently conflicting truth-claims to be simultaneously true by isolating them into their several contexts, we have failed, because there is necessarily a broader context in which those more-limited contexts can (and will) conflict. And this is even true in the cases which seemed most to support this relativistic concept: Even if we consider the statement “Calamari is wonderful food”—about as subjective a statement as one can make—in order for the statement to be considered true in any sense whatsoever, we must accept that certain conceptual qualifiers exist: That calamari exists, that it is a kind of food at all, that someone actually eats the stuff and likes it, and that there exists a “someone” who could hold this opinion. If any of these contextual qualifiers can be shown to be false, then our statement about calamari cannot be true in any sense, even the most subjective. But each of these qualifiers is also a truth-claim which must operate in a context, and so it seems that if we pluck at a single snag we end up pulling the whole sweater apart. There is, then, a sense in which the statement, “Calamari is wonderful food,” is either absolutely true or false.

The best demonstration of this concept that I can think of is the theory of special relativity. At first glance, the theory implies that contextual relativism is quite right. Among other things, the theory proposes that two people moving toward each other with a significant difference in velocity will each perceive their own environment to be perfectly regular, but will perceive their opponent’s environment to be curiously attenuated. Each will measure a yard’s distance in the other’s environment as less than a yard, and clocks in the opposing environment will not seem to keep correct time. An accurate yardstick and an accurate clock in one person’s environment will seem inaccurate when viewed from the opposite environment. So here we have a situation where, “What is true for you, though really true for you, is not true for me.” And this seems to bear out a philosophy of contextual relativism quite well, because it seems to present a natural framework in which one’s own observations, perceptions, and conclusions are completely consistent and valid, but only from one’s own viewpoint. Someone in another viewpoint might observe my environment differently than I, but their observations would be no less consistent, valid, or accurate. So, it seems, we have strong support for contextual relativism from natural philosophy. However, this evaluation of the philosophical ramifications of special relativity would be a shallow one, because special relativity is not a theory which isolates observational contexts, but one which mediates between them. Special relativity explains and reconciles the differences observed between different

perspectives, and provides a mathematical framework (“the Lorentz Transformation”) for predicting and compensating for these differences. In lifting our eyes from the trees to the forest, we find that the theory of special relativity actually bears out what we have already concluded: Contextual relativism only *seems* to be relativism on a superficial evaluation; when one takes the broader view, contextual relativism is actually absolutism.

So relativity is, in fact, absolutism. This is not to say that relativity is the “absolute truth.” It is entirely possible that further observations in physics and astronomy will require a theory more subtle and comprehensive than relativity. In fact, recent developments are beginning to make almost certain the need for a new physical theory that replaces and encompasses the existing ones. What I mean when I say that relativity is absolutism is just that the special theory of relativity does not present us with an opportunity to isolate one truth from another in a way that allows both to be true and false at the same time depending on one’s perspective. Rather, relativity explains and reconciles such differences in a way which resolves the apparent conflict while preserving the original observations. This is an absolutist approach, not a relativistic one: Relativism embraces, expects, and encourages truth conflicts; absolutism seeks to resolve and reconcile them. In like manner, we have found that contextualism is also, actually, absolutism rather than relativism.

And so we have considered the two most common forms of relativism. And as I was thinking through the questions posed by relativism, I found four variants of this philosophy, three of which are commonly proposed by relativists. We have discussed two of the common forms. The third common form of relativism goes something like this: “Science has proven that physical events do not occur as the result of lock-step action/reaction sequences. Rather, quantum physics has shown that physical events are neither certain nor definite, but only merely probable. This being the case, there is no absolute certainty about anything, and so we must conclude that there are no absolute certainties, only relative probabilities.”

Now, it will first be noticed that, while the first two common forms of relativism form a sort of intellectual continuum along the lines of a theoretical denial of absolute truth (and there is yet one more step in this continuum, the fourth form of relativism, which we will discuss later), this third relativistic concept is not a philosophical continuation of the first two—seeking as it does to deny absolute truth along observed empirical or physical grounds. In a way, the new position is almost a capitulation, a redoubt to which the relativist can withdraw should the first two views fall through.

The greatest difficulty in analyzing this form of relativism is that only the most primitive and crude critique is possible

for the average reviewer: Since most people are not quantum physicists, most people are unable to evaluate this argument on its own turf, and so it must usually be left alone as being outside the expertise of the listener. In point of fact, though, this argument is usually waged by relativists who are not, themselves, particle physicists—a telling point. I am not aware of any quantum physicists who are arguing, from the uncertainty principle, that ultimate reality does not or cannot exist; as far as I know, the uncertainty principle says, rather, that ultimate or absolute certainty is eventually immeasurable. Undoubtedly, there are physicists who actually *would* argue that the uncertainty principle requires us to formally dispose of the concept of absolute truth, and it is quite possible that this is the current state of physical theory and that I am merely ignorant of this fact. But the only comment that I have read on the question of whether, given the uncertainty principle, absolutism is still theoretically possible comes from Dr. Hawking, who says:

The uncertainty principle had profound implications for the way in which we view the world. Even after more than fifty years they may not have been fully appreciated by many philosophers, and are still the subject of much controversy. The uncertainty principle signaled an end to Laplace's dream of a theory of science, a model of the universe that would be completely deterministic: one certainly cannot predict future events exactly if one cannot even measure the present state of the universe precisely! We could still imagine that there is a set of laws that determines events completely for some supernatural being, who could observe the present state of the universe without disturbing it. However, such models of the universe are not of much interest to us ordinary mortals. It seems better to employ the principle of economy known as Occam's razor and cut out all of the features that cannot be observed. (Steven W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, Bantam, 1988, p. 55)

Perhaps the most important fact of Dr. Hawking's position is that it places the uncertainty principle squarely in the practical domain: We do not know whether determinism holds true at the particle level or not; it is just that we are unable to measure it. Hypothetically, particles could interact as predictably as clockwork, but we would still be in the same boat we

are in now as far as observing, examining, and measuring their interactions. More importantly, the uncertainty principle is, itself, an absolute and absolutist principle: Absolute, because it always applies; absolutist because it rigorously, analytically, and mathematically describes the limits of human observation. So, like the theory of special relativity, the uncertainty principle does not actually support relativism, but rather, absolutism.

It should also be noted that, although the uncertainty principle does qualify and quantify the degree of uncertainty that limits attempts to measure subatomic particles, it does not seem to have any impact on the sort of interactions which occur at the observable level: Balls dropping from towers, the computer I use to write this, the earth orbiting the sun, and the cells in my body all operate with extraordinary, reliable precision. Scientists believe that X-rays refract off of crystallized proteins with such predictable patterns that they are able to use these refractions to discern the actual shape of the protein molecules, and a scanning probe microscope is said to be able to "feel" the individual atoms of a regular matrix, so the interactions of matter and energy are supposed to be predictable and reliable down to the atomic level at least. As far as we can tell, after years of increasingly fine and detailed measurement and examination, these phenomena continue to act according to natural laws which have been understood and mapped out for decades or even centuries. Any significant irregularity in these processes would quickly become a cause célèbre in the related scientific field: Scientists would jump on the discovery and wrestle with it until it could either be explained by known laws or until it became apparent that the laws must be modified or extended to include the new phenomenon. *It is the inherent assumption of science that all things are ultimately understandable, explainable, quantifiable, and mathematical*—that there is ultimately a knowable "theory of everything". Nothing could possibly be more unscientific than to say that some things are ultimately unexplainable. So it is not at all the aim or implication of the uncertainty principle to sanction the idea that truth is relative.

One last remark must be made about these two attempts to justify relativism from the findings of modern scientific pursuit: Christians are often accused of pursuing a "God of the gaps": As science expands its ability to explain the universe, so God (it is said,) is progressively pushed out of the picture as being the explanation or efficient cause of natural events, and so Christians and other religionists must, over time, claim fewer and fewer things which are directly caused by God:

## The Schwarz Report Bookshelf

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Only the things which remain unexplained by science can be attributed to the hand of God. But are not these relativistic interpretations of the theory of relativity and of quantum physics actually a sort of “relativism of the gaps”? “Science proves relativism,” says the relativist, “but not when we are dealing with everyday phenomena. Science proves relativism in cases very large or very small; scientific relativism is not directly observable to the average person; one must deal with the remotely huge or the remotely tiny in order to see relativism.” But even then, we have seen that neither relativity nor quantum mechanics is relative or relativistic in the sense in which the relativist means the terms.

Again, we have a choice: Do we give up the ship, or do we bail and pump a little harder? I prefer the latter course: I think that there is still a little life left in good old SS Relative.

Let us now revisit our first two forms of relativism, and see how they form a continuum that leads us to our final form: The first form of relativism that we dealt with was simply an absolute statement that truth is relative, but when we thought it through, we found that this could not be valid because this very statement of relativism was an oxymoron. Our next venture into relativism was a little more careful: We put forward the idea that things may be true, but only in relation to their system of truth. However, as we considered this, we realized that truth systems were, themselves, types of truth which might be valid or invalid, and which might compete with other truth systems, and that truth systems, like sets, probably form a hierarchy which is an absolute framework into which any relative truth must be integrated. In the first form of relativism, we simply had a blunt denial of the possibility of objective truth; in the second, we allowed a little objectivity into the picture, but only so long as we agreed that the objectivity was, itself, relative: Truth was truth, but only on its own little island; on other islands, opposite truths might be true. So, by compromising our relativistic principle a little by allowing objective truth within isolated and unconnected truth systems we attempted to save relativism in general.

But there is yet one more step to be taken in this direction: As I thought through the question of relativism, and especially as I thought about truth as a hierarchy of truth contexts, it occurred to me that there was one hierarchical concept of truth that has no absolute end to it: If one considers a number line, it is apparent that there is a direction in which numbers grow larger—the positive direction—and another

direction in which numbers grow smaller—the negative direction. At any point on the line, one may proceed toward greater numbers or toward lesser numbers. Progress can be made in either direction, and if one is moving there is no doubt as to which direction one is traveling. But you will never reach the end in either direction: No matter where we are on the number line, we are always infinitely far from the greatest number and infinitely far from the least number. Might not truth be the same? Might it not be the case that we can proceed from lesser truth to greater truth without even the possibility of reaching Ultimate truth? Could we be on the “truth line”, right now, somewhere between minus one million and minus nine hundred ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine, and laboring toward zero?

Surely, here we have the perfect system! On the one hand, it avoids the inutility inherent in our first form of relativism that, since all propositions are equally true (or false), nothing can be necessarily concluded, no one can ever be corrected, and nothing can be proven or disproven. We have a definite *direction of improvement* for truth. And it avoids the unpleasant implication of our second form of relativism by removing any appeal to an ultimate or final context of truth. So, at last, it seems that we have discovered a form of relativism which allows us to eat our cake and have it, too: We can correct those pesky absolutists (if we can ever find any), showing them to be wrong, without invoking or implying that ultimate court of appeals for all truth claims which is so anathematic to relativism.

In thinking this last form of relativism through, I came to the unfortunate conclusion that I am unable to disprove it. In order to do so, I think, I would have to be able to demonstrate that there *is* an end to truth; I would have to identify and qualify the ultimate truth context toward which all truths must ultimately trend. By faith (and, I think, by experience), I believe that the Ultimate Truth is ultimately inscrutable by nature, incomprehensible to human intellect. By faith I also believe that the Ultimate Truth is personal in nature, self-revealing, and master of reality. So, in some senses, I *agree* with this last form of relativism.

But look at where we have gotten! According to this final form of relativism, all truth is subject to comparison with all other truth, and the superiority of one truth claim vs. the inferiority of a competing claim is not only knowable but doubtless; there is one direction of truth, and all truth claims are

Founded in 1953, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, under the leadership of Dr. Fred C. Schwarz, has been publishing a monthly newsletter since 1960. *The Schwarz Report* is edited by Dr. David A. Noebel and Dr. Michael Bauman. The Crusade's address is PO Box 129, Manitou Springs, CO 80829. Our telephone number is (719) 685-9043. All correspondence and tax-deductible gifts (the Crusade is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization) may be sent to this address. Permission to reproduce materials from this *Report* is granted provided our name and address are given.

measurable against each other as either more or less true. Is this really relativism? Only in the sense that the ultimate grounding radix of truth is incomprehensible and therefore outside the realm of human knowledge. But despite the fact that we have technically upheld a core tenet of relativism, we have poured all of the virtue out of it: Even though absolute truth might be unattainable, yet we still must submit all of our truth claims to evaluation on the great Axis of Truth. No longer can we smugly use the phrase, "True for *you* but not true for *me*," to evade scrutiny: All assertions, all corrections, all beliefs are assigned their place on the number line of veracity, either closer to the ultimate truth (and therefore better) or farther from it (and therefore worse). In fact, the more we look at this form of relativism, the more it looks like theistic absolutism: Looked at from the right angle, it even bears a vague resemblance to portions of the Athanasian Creed. Certainly, this is not what we intended when we started out on our campaign against absolute truth!

We are left, then, with only one conclusion: Relativism, as appealing and popular as it may be, is an almost total bust. Behind each of our relativistic conceptions has lain a sleeping absolutist dragon. And is this any surprise? Intuitively, we sense that if anything is true in any sense, there must be truth in the absolute sense. And our intuition has proven out: We must either be cynics or absolutists; there is no middle ground. We have traveled as far as we can in the land of Relativism. The road runs right into the sea.

But let's not be pessimists. Look at the opportunities for progress! What if the second form of relativism (so called) is true? Does this not imply that we can identify and understand the ultimate set of absolute truth? What an exciting possibility: The absolute, within our grasp! Or, what if our final form of "relativism" is the right answer? There still remains a tremendous opportunity for philosophers and scientists to discern the characteristics and qualities of positive and negative truth. What an excellent tool *that* would be: Imagine being able to subject any proposition to a set of evaluative criteria which would allow one to determine whether it is more or less true than other propositions! Certainly, no such opportunities exist in the relativistic view – a view which smothers epistemological progress in the crib.

So, now that we have had our fun on the merry-go-round of relativism, and now that our heads have stopped spinning from the colors and sounds and motions of our make-believe horses, we may now return to the very real pursuit of truth, comfortable in the fact that the truth is not only out there, but obtainable. In the final analysis, it is still always wrong for an adult male to sexually molest and torture a new born baby for fun. Always and absolutely!

## Mexico's Hugo Chavez

by Dick Morris

In its debate over how to change the U.S. immigration system, Washington neglected to assess the impact Mexico's summer election could have.

And Mexico's choice could not be more important to the United States.

On July 2, the Mexican people will decide whether to elect ultra-leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (known as AMLO) as their next president.

Rumors have abounded for months that Lopez Obrador's campaign is getting major funding from Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. And last month Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz), a moderate Republican, told several Mexican legislators that he had intelligence reports detailing revealing support from Hugo Chavez to AMLO's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Chavez is a firm ally of Cuba's Fidel Castro. Lopez Obrador could be the final piece in their grand plan to bring the United States to its knees before the newly resurgent Latin left.

Between them, Venezuela and Mexico export about 4 million barrels of oil each day to the United States, more than one-third of our oil imports. With both countries in the hands of leftist leaders, the opportunity to hold the U.S. hostage will be extraordinary.

Think we have security problems now, with Vicente Fox leading Mexico? Just wait until we have a 2,000-mile border with a chum of Chavez and Castro.

Lopez Obrador is not inevitable. Recent polls show the candidate of Fox's National Action Party (PAN), Felipe Calderon, closing in. But much will hinge on the resolution of the immigration debate now roiling Congress.

Lopez Obrador has attacked U.S. attempts to restrict Mexican immigration and will benefit tremendously if Congress alienates the Mexican electorate. A recent survey by John Zogby found that two-thirds of Mexicans feel Americans are racist and biased against them. A harsh shift in U.S. immigration policies could fuel a leftist victory in Mexico.

Mexicans are deeply offended by the idea of a wall designed to keep them out. Building a wall on the border without also starting a guest-worker program will play badly in Mexico. A wall with a guest-worker program might go down better, particularly if the legislation didn't include punitive provisions making illegal immigration a felony.

I have worked as a consultant for Fox and PAN, so I appreciate the delicacy of the political situation in Mexico. Fox's election in 2000 ended the 71-year authoritarian rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) heavily dominated by old corrupt leaders linked to the drug traffic. Now PAN

has nominated Calderon, once Fox's energy minister, to run for president.

The PRI's candidate this year, Roberto Madrazo, is widely expected to finish third—the party is still identified in the popular mind with the corruption of the past.

Most observers feel the race will be between Lopez Obrador and Calderon. While the PAN candidate would be no puppet of the United States, he is fully committed to free market economics and wants a close relationship with our country. Lopez Obrador would be part of Latin America's new, anti-U.S. left.

## Bolivia's Hugo Chavez

by Christopher Toothaker

Caracas, Venezuela—Praising Cuban leader Fidel Castro as a model, Bolivia's president-elect arrived yesterday in Venezuela for a meeting with leftist leader Hugo Chavez, who said the nationalization of Bolivia's oil and natural gas was high on the agenda.

Evo Morales arrived in Caracas aboard a Cuban jet and said he and Mr. Chavez were uniting in a “fight against neo-liberalism and imperialism.”

“We are here to resolve social problems, economic problems,” said Mr. Morales, an Aymara Indian coca farmer who has pledged to renegotiate international contracts to extract his country's vast natural gas reserves, the second-largest in South America after Venezuela's.

“This movement is not only in Bolivia,” he said. “Fidel in Cuba and Hugo in Venezuela are logging triumphs in social movements and leftist policies.”

Mr. Chavez said the two leaders would discuss the nationalization of Bolivia's oil and gas resources—a campaign issue for Mr. Morales. Mr. Morales has said his country's natural gas reserves have been “looted,” and that contracts must be renegotiated and national resources placed under state ownership. He also has said he would not take over foreign oil and gas companies operating in Bolivia.

Mr. Morales, who vowed during his campaign to be Washington's “nightmare,” is willing to visit the United States

That Latin Left includes Venezuela's President Evo Morales, who won as an overtly pro-coca-cultivation candidate. And in Peru, Ollanta Humala, a Chavez ally, is likely to finish first in this month's election and probably will win the runoff.

But Mexico, with its vast oil resources and its long border and free-trade agreement with the United States, would be the crown jewel for America's enemies. We have only to hope that Congress won't pass legislation that alienates the Mexican electorate and delivers the country into AMLO's hands.

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, April 4, 2006

but hasn't been invited, said his spokesman, Alex Contreras.

After Mr. Castro, Mr. Chavez is the second foreign leader to meet with the newly elected Mr. Morales, a sign of a growing relationship among the three leftist leaders that has concerned Washington. Mr. Contreras called the three “an axis of good.”

“We are going to change Bolivia; we are going to change Latin America,” Mr. Morales said yesterday.

Mr. Chavez, a strident critic of U.S.-style capitalism, has promised financial aid to Bolivia. The Venezuelan leader says he is leading a socialist revolution and has taken increasing control of the oil and gas industry by reworking contracts with private oil companies and sharply raising royalties and taxes.

Mr. Morales' opposition to U.S.-led efforts to eradicate coca cultivation in his Andean nation also have alarmed Washington. Coca is the source of cocaine, but Bolivia's Indians also use it for hunger suppression and medicinal purposes.

Mr. Morales' government is the first headed by an Indian in Bolivia's 180-year history.

Mr. Morales tended llamas as a boy and rose to power at the head of street demonstrations that toppled two presidents, demanding that more power held by the country's long-ruling lighter-skinned elite move to Bolivia's poor Indian majority.

Mr. Morales has toned down some of his fiery campaign rhetoric since his election last month, promising Bolivia's business leaders that he will create a climate favorable to foreign investment and jobs.

—*The Washington Times*, January 4, 2006, p. A11

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