

What About... Being Right or Wrong?

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If I am right, are you wrong?
If you are right, am I wrong?
Do you agree with the statement in this picture?

This is the classic argument of the relativists. Their idea is that truth is relative to your perspective. Relativism says, "What is true for some people at some times in some places is not necessarily true for all people at all times in all places." I suggest just the opposite. What is true for anyone at any

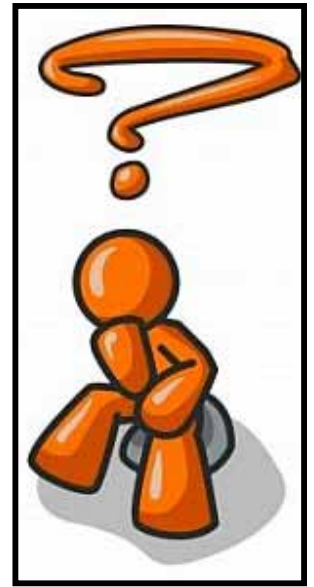
time in any place is absolutely true for everyone at all times in all places.

Truth is always absolute

For example, if I said "Ronald Reagan was president," it is implied that I mean: of the United States, in the 1980s. If I did not imply a time and place, I said nothing at all. Also, notice that if Ronald Reagan was President of the United States in the 1980s, then it is absolutely true for everyone, at all times, and in every place, that Ronald Reagan was the President of the United States in the 1980s. Now let's talk about the picture.

First, it is absolutely true that the man on the right thinks the figure on the ground is a 9. It is just as absolutely true for the man on the left as it is for the man on the right, that the man on the right thinks it's a 9, and vice versa. So there is no relative truth here.

Second, notice that the actual meaning of the number, or whatever it is, has nothing to do with the perspective of either of the men. Its actual meaning is determined by whoever put it there in the first place, not by either the man on the right or the left. For example, I fly an airplane at Muskegon County Airport. The airport has a runway identified with a 6 on the end because it points 60 degrees toward the northeast. You see a big 6 on the end of the runway as you land. But the control tower sits near the center of the airport, so from the perspective of the air traffic controller, the runway identifier looks like a 9, which would indicate 90 degrees. If the controller said, "To me, it's a 9," and vectored an airplane coming in over Lake Michigan through the fog to runway 9, the incoming aircraft could hit several runway lights, skid across the tarmac and slam into the



terminal building. Whether it is a 6 or a 9 is not a matter of perspective. One is right and the other is wrong.

Third, the statement in the picture, "Just because you are right, does not mean I am wrong," is either nonsense, irrelevant, or incorrect. If you or I make a nonsense statement, then no contradiction is possible, since nothing was said to contradict. If we make claims which are rational, but about two different subjects, then the above statement may be right, but it's irrelevant. For example, if I say, "Giraffes can't speak," and you say, "Yeah, but elephants can't fly," then just because you are right, does not mean I am wrong. But so what? The statements are not relevant to each other. If, however, you and I say two contradictory things which are rational and relate to one another (they are about the same thing), then there are only three possibilities: (1) you are right and I am wrong, (2) I am right and you are wrong, or (3) we are both wrong. But we cannot both be right.

Fourth, the above conclusion, "You just haven't seen life from my side," is just as meaningless as disagreeing about whether it is runway 6 or runway 9. Life, like the runway marker, means what the Maker said it means, not what we perceive it to be. When you and I say things about life which contradict, then: If I am right about life, you are wrong, if you are right about life, then I am wrong. But we are both wrong if we disagree with the Maker of life—

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... Then the Lord formed man...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (Genesis 1:1; 2:7).