

THREE SIDES TO EVERY STORY: RELATING THE ABSOLUTES OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION TO RELATIVISTS

Gordon R. Lewis
Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Philosophy
Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary

A motto on my desk reads: "Every story has three sides -- Yours, mine and the facts." Unfortunately many people have despaired of ever finding the 'facts'. That was the problem of a medical doctor with whom I talked. This distinguished specialist said,

I used to think that there were three sides in counseling a married couple: her side, his side and the truth. If I could only discover the truth and tell them, that would solve the problems. Now I do not think there is a third side, the truth. Each has to forgive the other, and that's it. They wouldn't accept the truth if they heard it.

The problem of such relativism becomes acute when we realize that some four billion 'knowers' in the world bring to the knowing process very different backgrounds, personalities, interests, purposes and abilities. A brief list mentions some 36 variables in human knowledge and this could be extensively enlarged.

CHART 1

Location in space (East or West)	Ability to draw sound inductive inferences from evidence
Physical condition	Ability to deduce valid inferences from premises
Mental ability	Peer Pressure
Mental discipline	Motivation to learn in the different fields
Habits	The degree of value placed upon knowing in relation to other activities
Traditions	Present culture or sub-culture
Selectivity in attention	Past culture or sub-culture
Facility in imagination	Economic level
Related past experiences	Sex
Hereditary factors	Race
Attitudes	Ability to synthesize vast amounts of material
Disposition	Ability to analyze material in its smallest details
Memory	Capacity for applying knowledge to life situations
Language used	Capacity for seeing the general implications of specific instances
Ability in the use of the language	
Intellectual honesty	
Ability to overcome pride, greed, selfishness, lust, hate, etc.	
Willing to reconsider biases and prejudices	
Ability to use terms with precision	

Because of so many variables it is common to maintain that all knowledge is relative and no absolute can be known. In spite of the