

Who Am I To Judge? Responding to Relativism

Session 1

Don't Impose Your Morality on Me!

(30 minutes)

- I. Challenges in talking about morality in a relativistic age: businessman example
 - A. A culture that does not believe in right and wrong
- II. **Benedict XVI** – dictatorship of relativism
 - A. Relativism: there is no truth to which we are all accountable
 - 1. Everyone can make up their own morality
 - B. “Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism.” (**Benedict XVI**)
 - 1. It seems Relativism is the only attitude that is acceptable in modern times
 - C. To say that there is absolutely no truth is itself an absolute truth
 - 1. Dealing with “Worldview”
- III. **Modern view** of morality is a question of “**what**”
 - A. What should I do in some abstract situation?
 - B. What should society do?
 - C. Thinking of issues, not how I personally live my day-to-day life
 - 1. Sinking boat and must get rid of one passenger
 - a) A moral moment
- IV. **Classical view** of morality is a question of “**who**”
 - A. Who do I want to become? What kind of person do I want to be?
 - B. Ethics, from the Greek *ethikos*
 - 1. “Pertaining to character”
 - 2. Character is the disposition to live a certain kind of life
 - a) Every moment is a moral moment
 - b) Your funeral – what would you like people to say
 - (1) For what do you want to be remembered most?
 - C. Three features of a classical way of looking at life and ethics
 - 1. Man-as-he-is
 - 2. Man-as-he-could-be-if-he-fulfilled-his-*telos*
 - a) *Telos* is Greek for “end” or “purpose”
 - b) What virtues do I need to live out my relationships as I should?
 - 3. Ethics = getting from man-as-he-is to fulfilling our *telos*
 - a) Look at pieces we need to become the kind of person we really want to be

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Session 2

Recovering the Basics: Virtue and Friendship (30 minutes)

- I. Man is made for relationships (friendship)
 - A. Love **God** and love your neighbor
 - 1. “Charity is friendship with God” (**St. Thomas Aquinas**)
 - B. Virtues give us the skills to live a relationship well
- II. Social harmony and internal harmony
 - A. **C.S. Lewis** – analogy of a fleet of ships (2 levels of morality)
 - 1. Don’t let your ship collide with other ships
 - 2. Make sure your ship runs properly
 - a) Morality inside the individual
 - (1) What if the ship’s steering wheel doesn’t work?
 - B. Laws are not enough to ensure social harmony if we don’t have the skills (virtues) to enable us to keep them
 - a) What good is it to tell a person not to collide with others if their ship is not running well?
 - 1. Social harmony is only built on internal harmony
 - 2. Individual men and women of great character lead to a great society
 - a) Must get to their inner morality
 - C. “What I have failed to do”
 - 1. We can hurt people directly through our words and actions
 - 2. We can also do great harm when we fail to give the best of ourselves
 - b) We are a drag on the team
 - (1) The common good is injured because I’m not doing my best
 - D. Questions of morality always need to be put in **context of the bigger picture**: who do I want to become?
- III. Virtue
 - A. We are called to something better than just not sinning
 - 1. Modern world mandates toleration and coexistence
 - a) We long for so much more
 - B. Values are not the same as virtues
 - C. Virtues are the skills we need to live our relationships well
 - D. “A habitual and firm disposition to do the good” (**CCC 1803**)
 - 1. We do the good consistently
 - 2. We do the good easily
 - 3. We do the good with joy

- E. How do I grow in virtue?**
- 1. Learn about the virtues**
 - a) Study the **Saints****
 - 2. Practice**
 - b) Be proactive and go after the virtue deliberately**
 - 3. Seek the grace of the sacraments**
 - c) Ask for help; you can't do it on your own**

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Session 3

Real Freedom, Real Love

(27 minutes)

- I. Review
 - A. Ethics is about living life with excellence
 - B. Virtues are the basic life skills we need
 - 1. **Virtues** give us the **freedom** to live our **relationships** well
- II. Two different views of freedom (**Servais Pinckaers**)
 - A. Freedom for excellence (classical and **Catholic** understanding)
 - 1. The ability to perform actions of high quality
 - 2. Virtue makes us free for love / friendship
 - 3. Lack of virtue prevents us from loving others well
 - a) Building a grill story
 - B. Freedom of indifference (modern understanding)
 - 1. Ability to choose from different options – no right or wrong choice
 - 2. Free from the decisions or control of others
 - C. The ability to choose is good, but it is not the fullest form of freedom
 - 1. Biggest question is “What are you going to choose?”
 - b) A slave to my selfishness
 - D. Virtue gives me the freedom to love
- III. Moral Law
 - A. Why is there a moral law?
 - a) A guide that helps us fulfill our **telos**
 - 1. Not as random test of our obedience
 - 2. Not to control us
 - 3. To protect us and help us to be happy
 - a) The same reason any loving father creates laws (rules) for his children
 - b) **God’s** law flows from his love for us
 - B. Instruction manual for our lives
 - 1. **God** made us and knows how we work
 - 2. “Your word is a lamp to my feet” (**Psalm 119:105**)

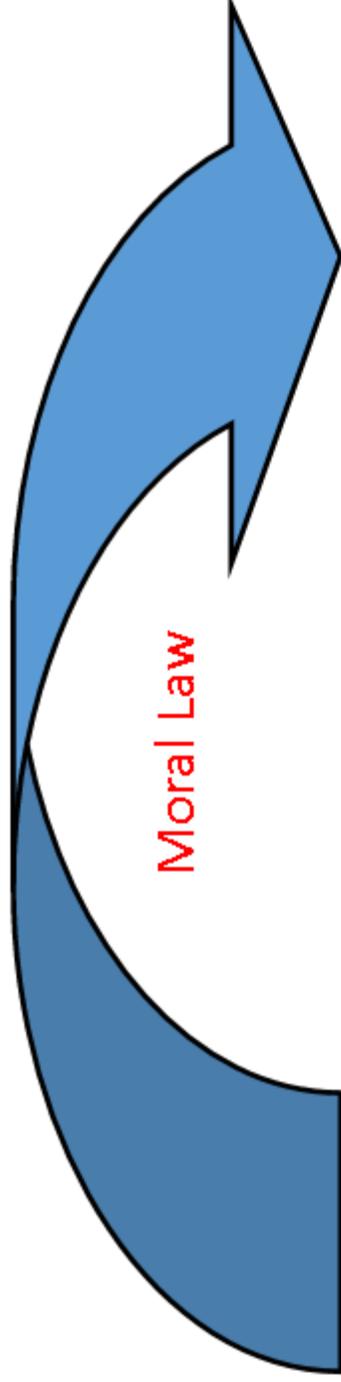
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Session 4

The Lost “Art of Living” (27 minutes)

- I. Counterfeits
 - A. Someone is trained to recognize a counterfeit by studying what is authentic
 - B. Part of the problem in talking about ethics is that as **Christians** we don't really understand the classical worldview of morality
- II. We are made for love
 - A. Every single person is made in the image and likeness of **God**
 - 1. “**God** is love” (1 John 4:8)
 - 2. We are created for total self-giving love – this is what will ultimately make us happy
 - a) The image of the Trinity
 - B. Intellect and will
 - 1. Knowing and choosing to love are what separate humans from animals
 - a) The ability for abstract conceptual reasoning
 - (1) Have free will
 - 2. The *telos* of human life is to know and love **God** and other people
 - C. Relationship and virtue are at the heart of ethics
 - 1. The moral law is only a portion of living well
- III. The Art of Living
 - A. There is an art to living life well
 - 1. We must learn this art of living
 - B. Learned in tradition and community
 - 1. Apprenticeship – we learn how to live life with excellence from those who have gone before us and mastered it
 - a) *The Lost Art of Apprenticeship*
 - 2. Enlightenment (**Kant**) rejected this idea for the goal of being an “independent thinker”
 - a) Separate self from tradition and community
 - (1) Throw off the yoke of tutelage
 - C. We need to learn the art of living so that we can communicate it to a world that doesn't know how to live life any more

Ethics



Moral Law

[Man-as-he-is]

[Man-as-he-could-be-if-he-fulfilled-his-

TELOS

(End)]

Virtues → Freedom → Relationships
to love

Art of Living

Tradition & Community

I. The Lost Art of Apprenticeship: A Few Tips for a Resurging Practice

By **Jared Brox** on January 4, 2016 in [Executive Insights](#), [Teamwork and Communication](#)



According to a 2012 [study](#) by the McKinsey Global Institute, a management consulting firm, we may face a shortage of about 40 million high-skilled workers and 45 million medium-skilled workers by 2020. At the same time, analysts predict that there will be a surplus of 95 million workers who do not have the training to fill most vacant jobs.

It's a bleak assessment of the [ever-widening skills gap](#) in today's workforce. Business leaders are scrambling to find solutions to address the skilled worker shortfall and secure the top talent needed to ensure the future success of their companies.

Bridging the Skills Gap

In light of the current situation, one long-held practice of building the next generation of skilled workers has seen resurgence in recent years.

Apprenticeship has a long history, with roots going back to the Middle Ages and earlier. Craftsmen often employed young people as laborers who, in addition to living arrangements, [received training](#) in their craft. Starting as young as 10, apprentices would live with their master craftsmen teachers for years, learning their trade and honing their skills before eventually striking out on their own, and continuing the cycle by taking on an apprentice of their own.

Today, driven by factors like the skills gap, the rising cost of higher education, and an increased emphasis placed on STEM education in schools, many young workers are finding apprenticeships to be an affordable and rewarding path toward meaningful careers.

Developing apprenticeship programs makes great business sense. Instead of spending time wading through the talent pool looking for workers who already have the skills you need, it may make more sense to find people who are less qualified, but willing to learn.

So, what makes a good apprenticeship?

Just as all businesses have their own individual characteristics, no two apprenticeships will be

exactly alike. However, there are some broader core concepts and practices that will help set the stage for success.

1. **Set expectations**

Before taking on an apprentice, you must first and foremost set expectations. From outlining the training you will provide to setting a framework for what you expect from your apprentice and establishing milestones, both master and apprentice have to be prepared to [make a commitment](#) to each other.

2. **Lead by example**

Anyone who's been in a profession long enough has undoubtedly picked up a few shortcuts along the way. However, in an apprenticeship, it's important to stay away from "do as I say, not as I do." It's hard to know where you're going if you don't know where you've been. Being meticulous about the process, every step of the way, builds greater understanding and respect for the craft and helps develop a more well-rounded apprentice who will be more capable of one day becoming a master.

3. **Let them fail**

Hands on experience is imperative to a successful apprenticeship, but the hands of a novice are especially prone to failure. Although it's inevitable that apprentices will have their [fair share of failure](#), the key is to help ensure they always fail forward, understand their mistakes, and use the knowledge of what went wrong to more confidently get back on the horse.

4. **Don't sugar coat it**

Be upfront about the good, the bad, and the ugly of the job. Painting too rosy of a picture about the work they're banking their career on can create false expectations. If an apprentice is going to have a successful career, they have to be willing to deal with potential pitfalls and be confident that they'll be able to work through them while looking at the bigger picture and understanding that sometimes you have to suffer for your craft.

5. **Don't lose touch**

Although an apprenticeship will eventually come to an end, it doesn't mean the relationship should. Stay in contact with your apprentice and be active in following their career. Let them know you are there if they need help along the way. There may even come a point when the student becomes the master and returns the favor by teaching you a thing or two.

This is by no means a definitive list. Rather, it's intended to be a starting point for building an effective apprenticeship program. The U.S. Department of Labor has a variety of resources available for businesses that want to develop programs of their own, including this informative [Quick-Start Toolkit](#). If you're invested in taking a hands-on approach to building the future of your company, apprenticeships may be the answer to bridging the skills gap. And, in many ways, may be an incredibly rewarding endeavor for everyone involved.

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Session 5

Engaging Moral Relativism

(30 minutes)

- I. Lead with mercy
 - A. **Pope Francis**: “Relativism wounds people”
 1. The **Church** is like a field hospital
 2. No right or wrong encourages people to use others
 - B. We need to address these wounds first
 - C. Two key pillars to mercy
 1. Forgiveness
 2. Healing power in God’s mercy
 - a) Give people hope
- II. Contrast the worldviews
 - A. **Nietzsche** – best way to attack Christianity is to frame its moral way of life as repressive and incapable of bringing happiness
 - B. **Benedict XVI** – we need to contrast the truth and beauty of Christian morality with the secular, relativistic way of life
 - C. Life
 1. Classical worldview – life is a story
 - a) We are all characters striving toward a goal in a conflict-filled plot
 - (1) Will you be the hero of your life?
 - b) Our choices matter – they affect other people for better or worse
 - (1) One choice leads us close to our **telos**, or further away from it
 2. Relativistic worldview – life has no plot
 - a) No right or wrong choices
 - (1) Your choice doesn’t matter
 - b) Your choices don’t affect other people
 - (1) Your life doesn’t matter
 - D. View of self
 1. Classical – intrinsically connected to others
 - a) These relationships are essential to who I am
 2. Relativistic – blank slate, defined by detaching myself from others
 - E. A Good Person
 1. Classical – someone who fulfills his **telos** and lives his relationships well
 2. Relativistic – Someone who does whatever he wants (“Be Yourself”)
 - a) Empty advice
 - F. Justice
 1. Classical – my **responsibility** to others (what do I owe others?)
 2. Relativistic – my **rights** (what do others owe me?)

J. Freedom

1. Classical – freedom for excellence, virtues make us free
 - a) Freedom **FOR**
2. Relativistic – freedom of indifference, my choices don't matter
 - a) Freedom **FROM**

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Session 6

“I Disagree” Doesn’t Mean “I Hate You” (32 minutes)

- I. Law = love
 - A. The **Church** teaches what she does because the **Church** loves people
 - 1. What the world is offering isn’t working
 - B. Bring everything back to love
 - 1. Love is to will the good of another
 - a) Seek what is best for someone else
 - 2. The moral law comes from **God’s** love for us
 - 3. The moral law is there to help us grow in love
- II. Making a judgment vs. judging a soul
 - A. “You don’t have to compromise conviction to be compassionate”
 - 1. Disagree doesn’t mean fear or hate
 - 2. Love doesn’t mean total agreement
 - B. Difference between using our mind to judge an action or choice and trying to make a judgement about someone else’s situation before **God**
 - 1. Opens up an opportunity for substantive conversation on the real issues
- III. Relativism is not value-neutral
 - A. Relativism is portrayed as the “moral Switzerland” – doesn’t take sides
 - 1. “for me” – a very slippery slope
 - B. **Benedict XVI** – relativism is the new dogmatism
 - 1. Relativism is the **ONLY** way to think – modern concept
 - C. It pushes us to think, act, and live in a different way (doesn’t just tolerate our way of thinking)
 - D. We need to guard against the labels of being judgmental and intolerant
 - 1. **Benedict XVI** – Push back
 - a) Don’t impose your Relativism on me

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Session 7

Exposing the Mask: What Relativism Is Often Covering Up (30 minutes)

- I. Recognize that relativism is often a mask
 1. “for me”
 - A. **Benedict XVI** – dictatorship of relativism – the real dictator is one’s own ego and desire
 1. Relativism enables us to do what we want without feeling bad
 2. Makes us a slave to our desires
 - B. Moral relativism is a way of dealing with cognitive dissonance
 1. We feel guilty when our actions don’t match our beliefs
 2. Deal with that guilt by changing our beliefs so our actions are okay
 - a) This isn’t a big deal – justification
- II. Take on the heart of **Christ**: compassion
 - A. We need to be careful not to set ourselves up as judges over others
 1. We don’t know the whole story
 - B. Many great saints struggled with the temptation to judge others
 1. **St. Catherine of Siena** – that would be me without **God’s** grace
 2. **St. Therese of Lisieux** – what we see as negligence is often heroic in **God’s** eyes
 - a) We don’t see the other trials they are going through
 - C. Often when we have a critical spirit toward others it is because we haven’t come to terms with our own weaknesses and faults
- III. Conclusion: What is truth?
 - A. Can I really know it? How can I know it?
 - B. Even relativists nearly always live with some recognition that there is some kind of truth outside of our own selves (a brick wall is a brick wall, even if say it isn’t)
 - C. **God** is ultimate reality, and our minds need to conform to him – not vice versa
 - D. We can know truth because **God** seeks us out and reveals himself to us
 1. **Jesus** is different from any other prophet or religious leader/founder
 2. He claims to be **God**, not just to have a message
 - a) “**I** and the **Father** are one.” (**John 10:30**)
 - b) “... before **Abraham** was, **I am**.” (**John 8:58**)
 - (1) Used the name **God** gave to **Moses** at the Burning Bush
 3. We have a fundamental choice: is **Jesus** who he says he is? And if so, what am I going to do about it?
 4. We cannot say we want **Jesus** but reject his **Church**
 - E. If we say **Jesus** is only a **Way** “for me” and not **the Way** (for everyone), then we are not truly following him

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Session 8

What Is Truth? Answering Common Questions (22 minutes)

- I. How can we talk to friends who think they are happy?
 - A. Have the confidence that what they are experiencing is not true happiness: our hearts are restless until they rest in **God**
 1. Happy on a superficial level
 - B. Model true happiness, joy, and genuine love for them
- II. How do I learn the Art of Living so that I can tell other people about it?
 - A. Don't have to be an expert – start to share with the little you've already received
 - B. Learn more
 1. Seek out an education on the virtues
 2. Surround yourself with like-minded people seeking the same thing
 3. Look for someone to learn from – a priest or spiritual director, a married couple, or someone a little older – to ask questions and just “catch what they have”
 4. Read about the virtues
- III. How do we communicate to people that a classical worldview of morality is freeing and not restricting?
 - A. Goes back to the question, “Are you really happy?”
 - B. Might not want to change behavior, but what is the ultimate goal? Is this behavior leading to true friendship or not?
- IV. Relativism is not value-neutral. Is this intrinsic to relativism as a philosophy, or is it the application of the philosophy?
 - A. Most people haven't thought their worldview out that well and don't realize that it isn't neutral
 - B. Asking the question can lead to a conversation
- V. What do we say to people who are content with mediocrity?
 - A. Many great saints were here at one point
 1. **St. Augustine**: “**Lord**, give me chastity, but not yet”
 2. Intellectually convinced, but not wanting to make the change
 - B. This is why we need to engage both heart and mind
 - C. **St. Bernard of Clairvaux**: Why are there so many people who turn to **God**? “Because they imagine this kind and gentle **God** to be severe. . . .They think that **God** can't help them.” **Jesus** is in the business of freeing prisoners.
- VI. What do we say to people who think that perfection is unattainable (the **Church** offers something perfect, and there is nothing perfect)?
 - A. The fact that we desire perfection indicates that perfection must be possible
 - B. We experience hurt and we don't like it – this indicates that we weren't made for hurt

VII. How do you respond to a humanitarian relativism that says we don't need the **Church** because others will do the work?

- A. Look at what the **Church** has actually done in history
- B. Many people criticizing the **Church** aren't actually doing the work of encountering and serving the poor
- C. Relativism can't require anyone to take care of others – **Christian** morality does
- D. An eighth key to combat relativism might be the prophetic witness of the radical generosity of caring for others