

Relativists are in trouble. The philosophical system they claim to live by is as unstable as an avalanche! The relativist’s mantra, “Well, that may be true for you, but it isn’t true for me; everybody can make up his or her own truth” may sound benign or even magnanimous, but it actually throws all kinds of obstacles in the path of everyone who claims to live by it.

To be consistent, relativists can make no value judgements whatsoever.

Here’s a summary of Greg Koukl’s list of seven restrictions relativists have imposed on themselves through their own beliefs. The two quotations in it are lifted from Koukl’s article.

Rules for Relativists

First, don’t ever point your finger at anyone else and accuse him or her of doing something wrong. Relativists can’t do this, because their foundational belief denies the very existence of wrong. If they accuse anyone of anything they believe *shouldn’t* happen—things like racism, sexism, or bigotry, let’s say—they’ve stumbled on their own worldview. Advocates of relativism can’t be consistent without dropping words like *should* and *ought* from their vocabularies.

Second, don’t protest evil or complain about its existence. Relativism won’t allow this because, again, as a foundational belief, it denies the very existence of evil and wrong. This presents a huge problem for atheists, because the existence of evil frequently is seen as evidence that God isn’t real. Were God God, the argument goes, He would be omnipotent, and He would eliminate evil. Obviously He hasn’t done this, so

1. He must not be all-powerful and therefore not really God, or
2. He must not be good, or
3. He doesn’t exist at all.

Mark it down. Relativism *itself* robs its followers of the rhetorical thunder they think they have. All three of these points rest on the assumption that evil is real. If a relativist is true to what she claims to believe, she won’t call anything evil. She can’t even call the Holocaust evil, since doing so would be to uphold a specific standard of morality.

Third, don’t ever commend anyone or anything with praise or condemn it with criticism. Why not? A relativist claims to live by a philosophy that renders every action and event neutral. Nothing can be blameworthy or praiseworthy—ever; all things are “lost in a twilight zone of moral nothingness.”

Fourth, you have to throw words like *fair*, *unfair*, *just*, and *unjust* out of your vocabulary. You have to throw out terms

like *guilt* and *innocence* as well. These words represent ideas that, under relativism, simply don’t exist. Think about it. If nothing can be blameworthy (see the third item), then no one ever can be guilty of anything wrong, and no one can be held accountable for wrongdoing. A relativist never can pursue justice and fairness, because nothing ever can be fair and just, or unfair and unjust. This rule simply says proponents of relativism need to make their words and their arguments conform to the beliefs they claim to hold.

Fifth, acknowledge that your belief system makes moral improvement impossible. A relativist certainly can *change* his ethics, but he cannot *improve* his behavior or aspire to anything better in any way. His foundational belief “destroys the moral impulse that makes people rise above themselves because there is no ‘above’ to rise to.”

Sixth, don’t try to engage in debates or discussions that address morality or values. With respect, I am compelled to point out that you have nothing to say. Relativism says all ideas are equally valid, so none can be better or worse than any other. Any claim to the contrary refutes relativism altogether. Thus, when an individual claims to be a relativist, he forfeits his right to accuse anyone of shoving his or her morality down his throat.

Seventh, stop talking about tolerance, because your belief system negates it. Relativism says values don’t exist. If values don’t exist, then how can tolerance, which is upheld as a value to be practiced, be real? It can’t.

You might think the heading of this list, **Rules for Relativists**, is an oxymoron because relativists don’t believe in rules. It isn’t an oxymoron, and I’ll tell you why. Not believing in rules doesn’t render them nonexistent. These rules are applicable because of the nature of reality and the inconsistencies of relativism as a belief system.