Truth is objective, which means that it describes external reality, the way things really are outside ourselves. While this seems obvious it needs to be emphasized because some people claim truth is subjective, which means what’s true for one person is not necessarily true for another. They claim each decides what is true for themselves.

But if truth were entirely subjective there could be no basis for law that all must obey, no news reporting, no contracts, no financial accounting, not even a meaningful conversation between close friends. There would be no point in consulting, or even constructing, a data base of information that all could access.

There would also be no point in going to school to learn the facts about a particular subject. And an educational institution that taught its students that truth is merely subjective would be acting in opposition to its very reason for existence.

Words must have the same meaning for all persons, based on reality external to each of them. In fact, to claim, “Everything is relative,” implies objective truth for that very statement.

The Action Connection

Truth is ascertained by the intellect. But human beings are not pure intellects. We act, and we do so by exercising our will, which introduces an element of subjectivism and which is influenced by our heart, our feelings about what we want, and these tend to be lazy and selfish.

With everyone deciding for themselves how to act, there are bound to be conflicts putting everyone in danger from the actions of others. Moral relativism can destroy a society by lawlessness, by anarchy. There must be rules regarding action.
These rules and the foundation for them must be known through the intellect and accessible and understandable by all, which means they must be based on objective truth, universal and unchanging.

How then does one find an objective standard of right and wrong? Science is no help in comparing non-material issues. But every human being possesses human nature, and by observing this we can develop a usable standard, the natural moral law. We may not agree on the details, but all can have a notion of responsibility for our decisions, with our intellect controlling feelings, and justice toward other people. We can respect their rights to life and health, their property and reputation, their opportunity to educate themselves, earn a living and have a decent family life, and we can provide help in their time of need. We can also return gratitude toward our Creator.

Genuine moral activity is not something imposed by some individual or group or even the result of mere custom. It must flow from the free decisions of every person deciding on the basis of a sense of how one ought to act, based on this objective standard. Thus we can do unto others as we would have them do unto us.