

Exploring the Basics

Part 1 - Truth

Stacking Karma
August 2024

Revision	Notes
0.6	Released for proof reading to SV and Maria. Published on Substack.
0.7	Removed irrelevant intro regarding writing itself. Added 'Narrow Perspective' to definitions.

Welcome

Thank you for picking up this paper, and reading it. If you happen to disagree with any part of it, that is better than great! I welcome intellectual disagreement. If you have very little time and/or energy, please point out any error I make in short form on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/StackingKarma>), Or, if you have the energy to beat down an inaccuracy in the world and choose to do so in long form, then please do so and send me a link to your work; may I recommend <https://substack.com>? Regardless of the action you take after reading this, thank you for your company.

Truth as a foundation

What is Truth? It's something that is so very straight forward, yet when this solid word is prodded it turns out to be surprisingly squishy. What is truth to one person may be considered to be not true by another. The word is thrown about with ease in daily speaking, yet the word can be mapped to more than one idea. It seems that since there are so often arguments about what is truth and what is not, wouldn't it be a good first essay to define the concept of truth? If this essay does so successfully, it would be a foundation to allow people who are trying to adjudicate if something is truth or not, to at least say "are we in agreement that what we are looking for was defined in that boring essay about truth?". If we can define what is Truth, and capture its characteristics and traits, then it's a foundational approach for exploring all other concepts.

Furthermore, it seems to me that somehow the very concept of what is truth is manifesting itself in popular culture, academia, politics, and more. Some examples that have piqued my interest in tackling the nature of truth are:

- Post truth era – have you heard this phrase? Apparently we are living through a time where the truth doesn't matter as much as appeals to emotion and personal experience.
- Disinformation Governance Board – this was an advisory board to the US Department of Homeland Security, which had the role of combating false information. A kind of truth checking department. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disinformation_Governance_Board
- David Pakman in Lex Fridman's #375 at the 2:55:03 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2i31fDkaK9A&t=10503s>) had a discussion about the nature of truth, which at some points was decent, and at some points I felt was missing the mark.
- James Sexton in Lex Fridman's #396 at the 3:08:17 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUEjCXpOjPY&t=11297s>) talks about puffery and material misrepresentation of fact; and lying.
- Greg Lukianoff in Lex Fridman's #397 provides a master class in how to not achieve Truth through the actions he opposes. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buarAx_u2qg).
- The reality that fact checkers exist as a part of legacy news media to determine what is true and what is false is incredible. A media adjudicator!
- And much, much more.

It seems to me that the concept of truth is both foundational from an exploration of ideas perspective, and, pops up frequently enough in contemporary conversations to warrant a deep dive. Let's start the task of considering truth.

What is Truth?

Aspects of Truth

Perhaps the best way forward is to lay out the map of what is essential to the concept of truth that will be explored in this essay:

1. Imperfect Humans – Truth exists, and it looks like we humans are the only species interested in figuring out if certain ideas, comprehensions, and models represent truth correctly. Being the only species in the Truth “game” is problematic as our senses are highly imperfect, our brain is not set up for processing data with high fidelity, and we are riddled with all kinds of psychological adaptations that are interfering with pursuing truth, such as the need to belong to groups and needing social status. We are designed for sharing stories and taking action, not pursuing truth.
2. A collection of verified facts that cannot be objectively refuted – If anyone is to have a chance at arriving at the truth, all the correct facts that describe the natural phenomenon must be available. Truth is a complex thing that requires many core facts to be available. In the absence of certain information, we may never be able to figure out the truth of some topics.
3. From concept to action – The human currency is stories, and actionable information; perhaps this essay after a contemplation of truth can impart some practical considerations on the concept of Truth.

Side note on the linguistics of truth: This essay is going to be careful in the use of related words such as: true, truth, not true, lie, fraud and more. It will carefully map each word to an idea, but the emphasis will be on the ideas themselves, and ideally their applications.

Exclusive Platform for Truth

Why Bother with People?

A human is writing this piece for other humans. It seems obvious that people are playing a role in ‘truth’. We either speak it, write it, or twist it to our advantage to get what we want. So why bother with the human component of a human activity? Why bother considering the role of people and their traits? I believe that in any topic where you consider result/outcome of a process, looking at the process (as well as the hardware) will help you better understand the final results. People are the creators of truth statements; or, viewed another way the articulators of truth, while at the same time the custodians of the truth, and the exclusive consumers of truth. We are a type of “truth factory”, “truth library”, and a “truth store”. By examining a core aspect of truth we may realize something that may serve us well in our journey. By examining the ‘obvious’ perhaps we can find something that is overlooked. By looking where others do not, perhaps we may find something of utility.

People and truth for Change

Without people there is no truth. Without people, there is simply one event after the other that follows the rules of the universe. Perhaps, it is more accurate to say that without consciousness there is no truth. Without consciousness nothing is good or bad, there is no value judgment. There is only the reality of the universe marching on through time. Is it bad that dinosaurs were wiped out? Is it good? Without humans there is no such discussion or consideration, there is simply history of existence. I believe this

is what the whole “if a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” is supposed to illuminate. The point so far is that the concept of truth disappears without consciousness. A logical followup to this point is: so what? What do conscious humans (let’s assume humans are the exclusive entity of consciousness on the planet) change using truth? According to this fool (the author), all of the universe is patterns; and what consciousness allows is the changing of patterns. For example, let’s imagine that humans decide that saving the earth is a worthwhile endeavor, and that meteor showers are a potential, and real threat. I mean it happened before, and will happen again. Using truth as a tool we can develop technology that protects the earth from meteor showers, thus changing a pattern of unfolding events in the universe. Consciousness grooms the universe; I just don’t know into what. But that’s a tangent for another essay.

I believe that the only real definition of the utility of consciousness is that it allows the changing of the patterns that the universe plays out. Both internal to the conscious entity by changing the entity, and external to the entity by manipulating the environment beyond what an unconscious entity can achieve (ex: no wolf pack achieved sky scrapers, space rockets, and so on). I guess I should call out some baked in assumptions in my thinking:

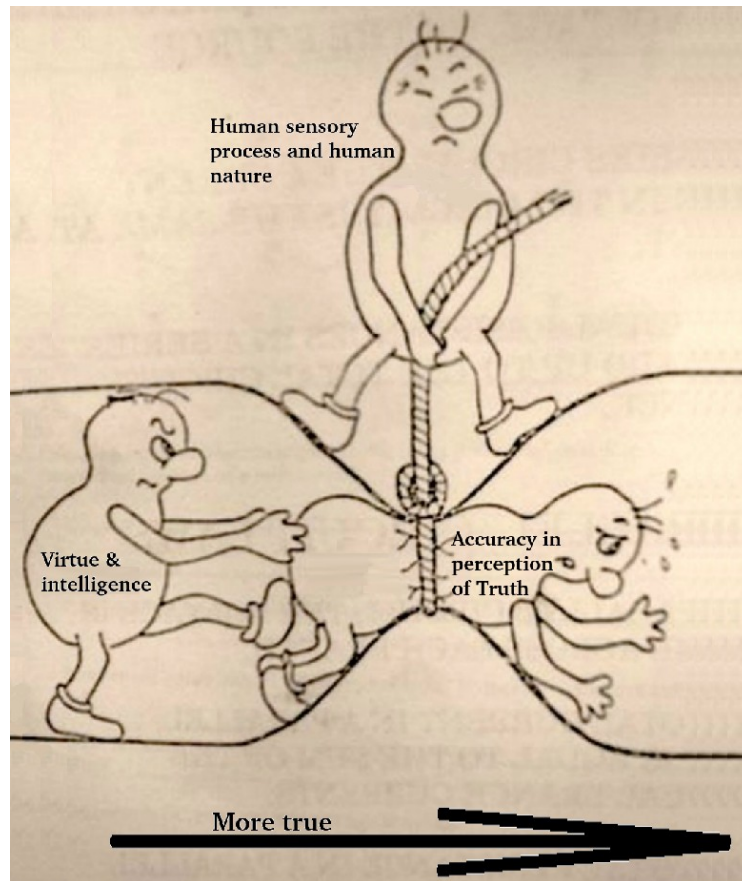
1. The conscious entity has to be able to manipulate the world, ie: hands to make tools. If the conscious entity has no means of manipulating the world (ex: a conscious AI on a PC with no internet connection), there is no chance to change much. The conscious entity must be able to act on the world.
2. The human potential can only be reached by teams of people. A solo person, cannot do much on their own. An achievement that is able to change grand cosmic patterns requires teams of people, not a single person (with our current tools anyway). Which is why it’s so important not to participate in activities that you don’t believe in. My economic reality is drastically crappier after turning down a \$160K/year tax free pain in USD in 2012 working for a ‘defense contractor’. Participating in evil is how evil propagates. Teams change the world, don’t forget that.
3. The rudimentary definition of truth in this context is that truth allows humans to be aligned with the reality of the universe. At the bare minimum, truth allows us to master the physical world by understanding it’s properties through models, and then leverage those models to manipulate the world to achieve technology which amplifies our capability and imagination. More on this later. Let’s try to navigate out this can of worms called ‘humans’ and their relationship to truth.

Truth Headwinds

Ok, so people are an intrinsic part of truth; and we do have significant truth in human societies. Something I struggle with in my mind is where are we today on the “truth meter” relative to other civilizations? All the history I have ever read always contained things that are obviously false that were obvious to some people at that time; some small group of people at the time articulated the falsehoods, yet society marched on to the beat of the something that was obviously not true. It seems to me that any entity that is committed to truth for it’s own sake is going to run into significant societal headwinds... such as being on the opposite side of the masses. That’s to say nothing of our own internal imperfections that are not tuned for truth.

Let’s consider some ‘truth headwinds’. But first let’s do a quick and dirty definition of truth. Truth is the building of a model based on facts that describe some natural phenomenon. If the model is true, then any relevant experience that is also true further supports, and does not contradict the model. The pinnacle of truth is predictive power. I’ll flesh this out deeper shortly. Now, onward to internal and external truth headwinds, where, spoiler, the exclusive foundation for truth (which is humans) is not

built for absolute truth, even though there is tremendous benefit to uncovering, articulating, and keeping in line with truth. Before diving in and getting all heavy, here is a cute graphic to lighten the mood:



Internal Headwinds

As healthy humans carry out action as a means of achieving their various goals, we leverage our senses along with the brain to collect information about the natural world and everything in it. Our experience allows us to build models of the world. The physical world shows us that our models are valid during our never ending goal chaining, AKA life. The models we build and understand in our brain are tools that allow us to achieve our various goals. What are some sure-fire contributors to error in those models that are the result of our physical reality?

1. Our sensors suck at detecting physical reality with high fidelity – Your eyes, ears, tongue, skin, and nose are crappy sensors. First off, our vision has a hole in it. We have a blind spot, that we are not aware of because our brain fills in the details. If you want to find your blind spot you can do the wikipedia thing: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_spot_\(vision\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_spot_(vision)). Another reality regarding vision is that the visible spectrum that our eyes see is quite limited compared to the full spectrum (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visible_spectrum). That is why you do not see the infrared light emitted by the LED on your TV remote when you press buttons, and that's why you can't see Xrays. Your eyes see a limited amount of wavelengths. Let's not get started on optical illusions (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optical_illusion) where a static image appears to be moving, colors are detected incorrectly, and various lengths are incorrectly perceived. How about our ears? Ever hear of a dog whistle or a deer whistle? They produce ultrasonic sound

that those animals hear but we do not. There is a whole lot of sounds about 20kHz that we do not hear. Skin is another dubious sensory organ. Ever seen the rubber hand illusion video? Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DphlhmtGRqI> for a taste, even though there are many versions of this same experiment on youtube.

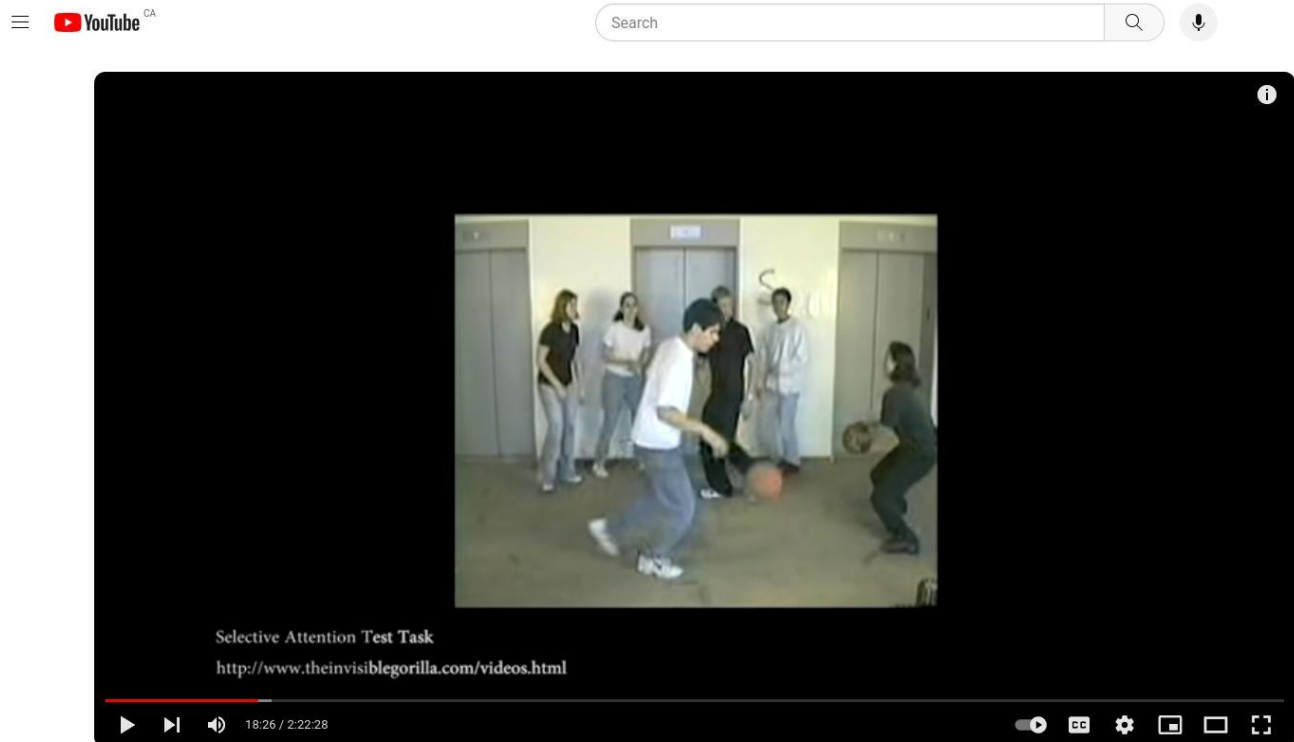


The image shows a YouTube video player. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "rubber hand experiment" and a microphone icon. Below the search bar is a video player showing a man in a blue lab coat with a white rubber hand on his arm. The video player has a play button, a progress bar, and a volume icon. Below the video player, there is a title "Is That My Real Hand? | Breakthrough" and a channel name "National Geographic" with 22.7M subscribers. There is also a "Subscribe" button and a "Like" button with 4.2K likes. Other icons for share, save, and more options are visible.

By hiding the hand and stimulating the skin while engaging the eyes, the body remaps feeling of the skin based on the visual input to the brain. The point here is that the skin doesn't provide the "correct" signal, where it is misleading the human about the reality of the body. I have no doubt the nose and tongue have their short comings as well. Since our sensors are so 'flakey', don't be so sure of what it is you are observing. Cultivate humility.

2. Our brain mutes incoming sensory data based on its goal – In industrial automation, robotics, house appliances, and anywhere you have sensors, you also have some sort of a controller (a computer). The sensors detect temperature, humidity, light value, and all kinds of other stuff, and what the sensors do is they send the data to a computer who receives the status of all the sensors, and then makes a decision based on the program that is loaded. If humidity is high, the dryer keeps running. If the water in the tea kettle is not boiling, the heat stays on (let's imagine it's not a bi-metallic thermal strip, but a temperature sensor and a controller), and so on. So, what the hell am I talking about here? What is my point? Here goes: We operate in a similar manner, but, not only do our sensors suck (as already outlined), but our controller (the brain) that is getting all the data from the sensors sucks in terms of being able to leverage the incoming data to get a full state of the environment we are observing. Bold statement right? Buckle up. From my perspective, one of the most incredible things the human brain does is filter out and ignore incoming sensory data. This seems counter intuitive because, why the hell would you want to literally lose incoming sensory data? Wow, you ask good questions. The problem with sensors that detect the environment is that they are detecting so much data, that we can't process

it all. So what the human brain does is that it ignores information that is irrelevant to the current objective. This is what Daniel Simons showed the world with the invisible gorilla. Basically, if our goal is to achieve objective A, the brain mutes, and filters out everything that is not relevant to achieving objective A. The only way we break out of this loop is if we achieve objective A or some other more urgent objective interrupts us. I strongly suggest you watch at the very least the first 35 minutes of this U of T psych lecture found here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RudKmwzDpNY>) to wrap your mind more clearly about this phenomenon.



2017 Maps of Meaning 05: Story and Metastory (Part 1)



Jordan B Peterson
7.75M subscribers

Subscribe

13K



Share

Save



I know it's Peterson who is a polarizing figure for some reason, but remember that he is in his domain of competence here, and is serving technical knowledge, not room cleaning advice. As is said, you have give the devil his due and this is Peterson at his prime. If you need something super concise, check out the video from 25:30 to 31:20; which is the point I am making here in summary form without the technical buildup that makes the conclusion irrefutable. Long story short, your brain is muting the incoming sensory data constantly. So even through your sensors suck, your brain is ignoring most of that data as well! Punching swiss cheese holes in our data collection is surely going to hurt our ability to grasp truth.

3. Our memory recollection is unreliable – Not only does our brain mute incoming sensory data based on our current goal, but our ability to recall memory is horrible. Can you imagine if you saved a word file with some of your best work, and when you opened it up it was serving up something along the same lines but quite different? You would be unhappy, yet you are very happy with what you remember and would argue that it is true at the drop of a pin. Many times me and my friends recall some formative event that bonded us, and our recollection of the same event varies significantly, and the details are totally missing. Are you married? What shirt did you wear on the second day of your honeymoon? Did you remember? Impressive. How about the underwear on that same day? If you are not married, then challenge yourself to recall fine

detail of an important event in your life. You will see that your memory is not great. If you disagree with the fidelity of your recollection, have a read here about memory implementation: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memory_implantation. The point is that the quality of our memories serves main overarching themes and goals, but loses significant detail which might be critical to get at the truth.

4. Protection of the ego – The easiest person to fool is always going to be yourself. When you become aware of far away murmurings about yourself, do you critically look at yourself, and try to pick yourself apart, or do you label the ‘murmurours’ as fools? The mind is tremendously efficient, and it hides the truth from ourselves as a means of protecting our ego. On a professional level I witness failure on a regular basis. I regularly see people make technical mistakes, and when the error manifests itself, people very quickly blame others who had handed them supplies, but completely ignore the fact that the faulty manner in which the supplies were used was in the exclusive domain of the person making the error. This is standard human nature. For whatever reason, our mind shields us from the errors that we make by blaming others or the environment. But it’s not just others. Many times I have fooled myself, and discredited others, only to realize that a decade ago what was said was both critical and accurate. This is part of the human journey; where we are biased to look good in front of ourselves. Anytime you are biased towards some information, it’s likely that you are going to side with a particular perspective in a predictable manner, and such predictable action is likely to reduce your ability to choose the more accurate perspective. An internal bias to protect the self from painful criticism is a bias that gets in the way of our ability to get at truth. Another parallel idea is that it’s impossible to get someone to see facts where their livelihood depends on them not seeing it.

[Very often, all the activity of the human mind is directed not in revealing the truth, but in hiding the truth](#)

[Leo Tolstoy](#)

5. Natural language is a serious barrier to communication – When humans talk, the ability to pass ideas with high fidelity is possible in very rare cases. Either both parties to the conversation have had the same foundational experiences, and understand the ideas that are compressed into words. Or, in the case where one party is short of an experience (ex: an old man tells a teenager to treasure time), the party that is short of the experience must be willing to try extremely hard to understand the un-lived experience; and the experienced party has to incredibly articulate and interesting. The chances here are practically zero. Another issue I have personally stumbled across is when people think they are talking about the same thing, but in reality they are talking about different things. An example is a couple arguing about some event. One may be talking about the cause of the event, while the other is talking about how it made them feel. Same event different domains. This is very common where people believe they are talking about the same thing but in fact are not. Our ability to communicate is incredibly limited. Which makes working with others on team truth much harder, resulting in yet another headwind due to a state of the human condition.
6. Conforming to authority prevents comprehension of reality – Stanley Milgram showed us that when an authority figure instructs us in an ambiguous situation, we defer to their instructions (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment). Many people that learn about this experiment feel that they would behave differently. I don’t think so. I happen to work with other

adults over which I have some authority. Sometimes I get them to do non nonsensical things like ask a question, get an answer, followed by the same question and the same answer, over and over. During this interaction the aspect of information transfer loses all meaning, and such a cycle is an interesting observation in how people yield, and begin to enter a submissive role. I am very careful to not push too far, and every time the experiment ends in everyone breaking out in laughter. However, I can see that if I didn't create an escape route of laughter the submission would continue. It's interesting that once the roles of authority and a submitting participant are established, it is practically impossible for the submitting participant to break the interaction. Long story short, Milgram's findings are fully valid today. The higher the stakes the more we defer to authority. I mean, we just lived through COVID. So many wild non-sensical things were urged by the authorities, and the majority of people followed the nonsense; the formidable influence of authority should be obvious to the thinking community at this point. Cloth mask to prevent particles the size of nanometers, with slogans like "trust the science", and utterances from senior authority including "I am science" were just plain ridiculous, yet were followed by the majority of the population. This relates to truth as our compliance with authority is something that can derail our pursuits of the truth if that pursuit is curtailed by an authority of some kind. Take notice that this is an internal headwind of voluntary submission.

7. Motivation is frequently unknown – Sometimes I take action and I don't even know why. Unlike mechanisms that protect our ego (such as when we make errors), this point is that we are unaware of our own internal motivations; which basically means that we do not know the truth about ourselves!! for example, I was given a faulty generator from the 1980's and I invested effort to rebuild it. I have no idea why I did it. For it's utility? Because I like vintage technical things? For the technical challenge? To get away from other tasks? To decrease the volume of a landfill? I have no idea! I genuinely don't know. It seems to me that much of what is going on as it relates to humans is hidden from the humans themselves. Sometimes, when the desire is basic, it's obvious why some action is taken (like eating when hungry), yet, at other times, we have no idea. The lack of understanding of motivation is just an example of the fact that we know so little about our brain. Looking for motivation for action by ourselves or by others is beyond "challenging". Just another item that is hidden from us. Which means that if you have a motivation that works against finding truth, and you are not even aware of it, that is a definite headwind. Who knew motivation is so complex?

8. Outsourcing of thinking – Finding truth is an effort that is not easy, and many people outsource their thinking to others. The action of not investing time in understanding the world around us, and outsourcing our thinking to some other entity for the sake of efficiency or due to this being a low priority is a mechanism that is very likely to put us at a distance from the truth. This is bit different than point 6 regarding conforming to authority. This might be seen as the reason of why people choose to conform, yet since there is not a perfect overlap I didn't discard this point. Either way we are done.

There are other internal contributions to our internal headwinds, yet I am losing interest in further cataloging these aspects of our human existence. I believe this list of internal headwinds is sufficient to argue that the exclusive platform for truth has some intrinsic challenges to the activity of pursuing truth.

External Headwinds

Human beings are a social animal. Without other people we are in very big trouble. This 'External Headwinds' section catalogs social trends that get in the way of pursuing truth.

1. It is dangerous to be right when the established authorities are wrong – I am assuming it is obvious that those who are in power want to stay in power. This group does not kindly look at people who expose their unflattering side, especially when it undermines their societal power. This effect is probably amplified if you happen to be telling the truth as it gives much more power to the person who is on the other side of the powerful figure. If you look back in history there are tons of examples. One prime example that shouldn't affect any modern readers is Galileo Galilei, who undermined the position of some powerful people in the Church.
Attenzione amico!
2. In Jordan Peterson's maps of meaning university course (the 2017 one), he lays out a very strong case for the existence of narrative uniting a large group of people who work towards the same goal. Based on my lived experience this seems right. There is nothing in the university course that my experience invalidates. Fundamentally, humans are a story telling creature. The stories tell us about others, our selves, the right way to behave, and orient society. Once a compelling story is set up, and is accepted by a large group of people, the group will start to undertake goals that the group believes in. The team of people working towards some goal is a very powerful force. Whether it's government, an NGO, a corporation, a religious group, the population of some country, or whoever, the biggest milestones recorded in history have all been achieved by groups. The real strength of the human specie is in telling stories to establish a common narrative for a group, and working in a team environment to achieve that goal. It is frequently true that a narrative usually has some issues with it. The odds that the narrative is squeaky clean in terms of being in perfect alignment with the truth is very low. Hence, anyone who challenges the narrative with truth runs the risk of being ejected from the group. In this case, speaking some truth that is detrimental to the narrative can result in being shunned by the group. Essentially, a very strong force that allows our specie to achieve incredible feats, creates an incentive to go with the flow; which is practically never in perfect alignment with the truth. Hence, a fundamental human trait (teams united around a narrative) does not incentivize truth; as any truth telling that the team feels undermines the group's narrative will get you in hot water with the group.
3. When status competes with truth that is a problem – Will Storr does a great job of taking the status game from the shadows and showcasing it in plain sight. On Triggernometry he <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsuSjdB2yyo> fleshes out a case where humans have a fundamental need to belong to groups, and then once in the group to climb the hierarchy of that group; where the status is the value that each individual adds to the group. As I reflect on my life this seems accurate and brings implicit acted out behavior into explicit understanding of ourselves. This reality, which applies to all people, creates an issue for truth. If truth gets in the way of status acquisition, then it's another fundamental human societal behavior that creates an incentive to skimp out on truth. An attractive partner & tons of cash OR truth? Don't ask if you don't want to get dissatisfied...

Essentially this section of external headwinds articulates that for one, battling with authority over truth is a losing proposition for the average person due to the disproportionate availability of resources and the fragile nature of life. Secondly, fundamental human characteristics such as teams that unite around a narrative, and the acquisition of status by people within groups creates an incentives to turn a blind

eye to truth. These are very strong societal headwinds that are very likely to get in the way of truth; and considering that all healthy people participate in these activities, this is not great for acquiring truth by the 'exclusive platform for truth'.

Sweetness of Words

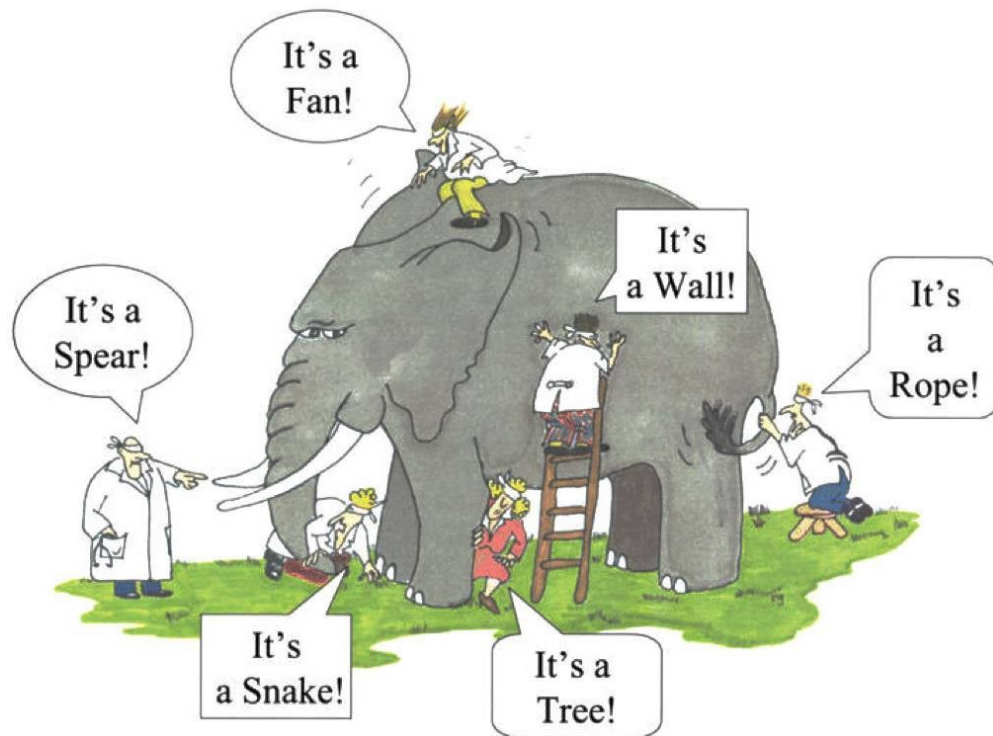
I believe that if you have some tool, any tool, it is important to understand the characteristics of that tool, especially if you rely on it. I believe this view is popular seeing how many owner's manuals there are in existence. If you understand the limits of what is possible with some tool, then you can use it to achieve your objective in an efficient manner that results in minimal undesired side effects (ex: the tool breaking or experiencing excessive wear). Since humans a sort of tool for finding truth, I felt it was important to first examine the exclusive platform for truth. What are the shortcomings? Where do the limits lie in our intrinsic capacity in relation to truth? And having pondered us imperfect humans, I have come to realize that the exclusive platform for truth, is very, very imperfect. Anyone who has spent a reasonable amount of time looking inward will quickly come to realize these ideas are correct. In this section of the paper I have taken the liberty to take from the sciences what my experience has confirmed to be correct, as well as my own experience independent of science. Perhaps the realization that we are tremendously flawed is obvious. Yet, somehow it strikes me in a different way after crafting this esseay.

With this realization deeply embraced by my simple mind, a few things become tremendously obvious. If you are interested in finding the truth, the following approach is not optional:

- You must listen to others.
- You must be respectful/kind to others.
- You must be willing to accept that you are incorrect.
- You must be willing to allow your ego to be punished.
- You must not use any force with others.

If you have good faith actors who are interested in the truth, everyone must work together. Anyone who believes themselves to be correct and all others wrong, seems like an often highly unlikely situation. Reality is too complicated for humans to fully grasp everything. We don't see the past, we extrapolate and infuse meaning to generic action and much, much more.

The very realization that I put forth has been articulated by the "Blind men and an elephant" parable roughly 2500 years ago by the The Buddhist text *Tittha Sutta*, *Udāna 6.4*, *Khuddaka Nikaya* as detailed in Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_men_and_an_elephant). It is interesting to note that for some reason this story has spread all over the world. It is a common parable that is found in many, many cultures. Here is a summary in picture form if you have never encountered it (thanks tineye.com):



It is my firm belief that the popularity of this story is tied to its ability to point out something that is common to all cultures and societies. Namely, that people are very limited in their ability to determine the truth; and when an individual feels correct, their human nature is to argue and enter a confrontation. Which, is never conducive to arriving at the truth. The blind people would be best served to respect each other and to ask questions of each other. The conflict among the blind people has put the truth farther away from each and every individual involved.

Given our human constraints it is unlikely that a single human investigator knows the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Everyone loves quotes, so here you go:

[When a man tells you that he knows the exact truth about anything you are safe in inferring that he is an inexact man.](#)

[Bertrand Russell](#)

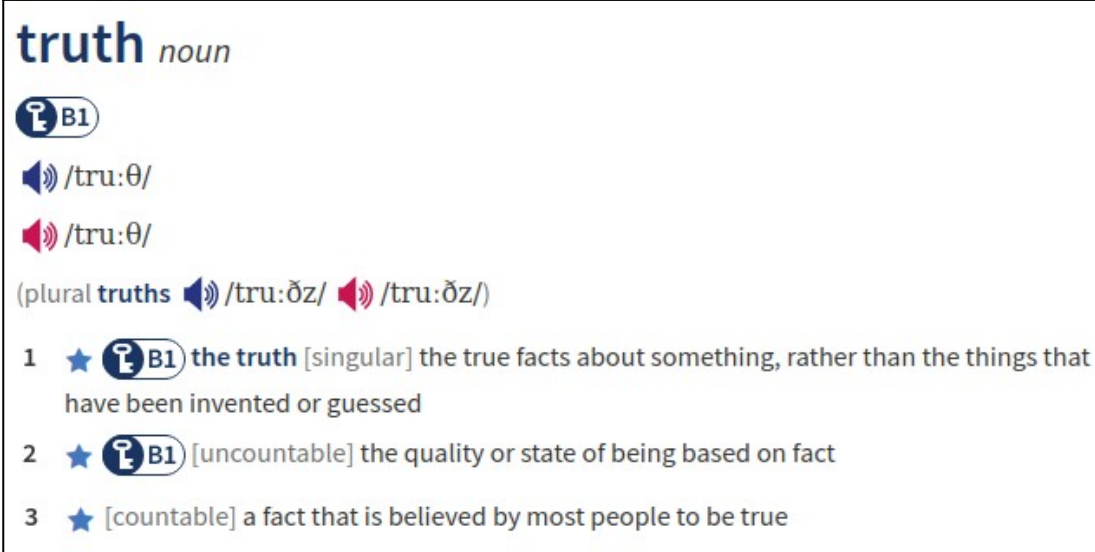
Long story short, it's wise to understand how faulty we are as a unit, to temper our ego, and to work with others. A solid rule is to always make your words sweet enough that if you have to eat them it's not awful.

Defining the Concept of Truth

without further ado, let's define the damn word!


Dictionary Glance


what does the dictionary tell us about the word truth? I just realized all my dictionaries are from Oxford! They must be really good, here is a screenshot from Oxford learner's dictionary with ads and spaced removed (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/truth?q=Truth>):






The screenshot shows the dictionary entry for 'truth'. It includes the word 'truth' with the part of speech 'noun', a B1 proficiency level icon, and two audio icons for the singular form /tru:θ/. Below that, it shows the plural form 'truths' with two audio icons for the plural pronunciation /tru:ðz/. The entry lists three numbered definitions, each with a star icon and a B1 proficiency level icon.



truth *noun*

 B1

 /tru:θ/

 /tru:θ/

(plural **truths**  /tru:ðz/  /tru:ðz/)

- 1 ★  B1 **the truth** [singular] the true facts about something, rather than the things that have been invented or guessed
- 2 ★  B1 [uncountable] the quality or state of being based on fact
- 3 ★ [countable] a fact that is believed by most people to be true

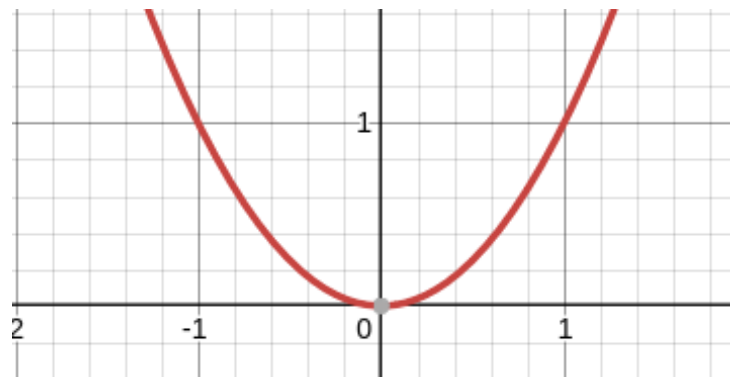
Too Much to Ask of a Dictionary?

The Oxford dictionary gave 3 definitions. In my estimation, none are correct.

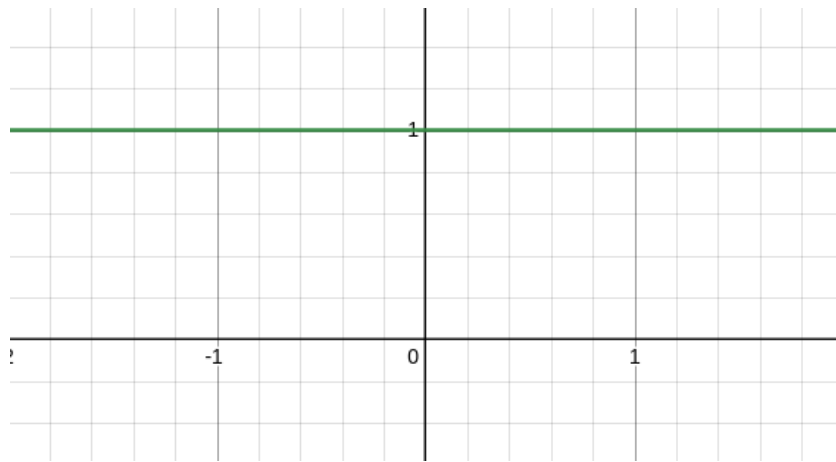
Definition #1 is problematic. The true facts about something may result in the truth. However, the true facts about something can be used to construct a comprehension that is not true. Imagine a simple situation where we have insufficient facts but believe we have all the facts; you might craft a truth that is not true as you miss a key piece. Now, we have already established that you cannot possibly have all the facts and you will be missing something due to 'headwinds'. Since definition #1 can be used to achieve both truth, and not truth; it is not an adequate definition.

Definition #3, is invalidated by the story of Galileo Galilei (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_Galilei). During his time it was a known fact that the earth is the center of the universe and is fixed, and most people thought it was true. According to definition #3, that would make that theory the truth, which it obviously is not, and therefore definition #3 is a bad definition. The truth is not a popularity vote. An argument that most people are ignorant of most things doesn't take a genius to make... just look at our history. This definition is borderline offensive to the rational mind.

Definition #2 is also invalid. I will define facts shortly, and for now let's think of a fact as a correct single data point. The issue with building something on facts as a definition, is that something incorrect can be built using data points. For example, let's imagine that we have a parabola:



And let's imagine that what we know two facts about the parabola. Fact #1 is that we have a point at $(-1, 1)$ and fact #2 is that we have a point at $(1, 1)$. In the absence of any other information, we may leverage those two data points to to the erroneous conclusion that we actually have a line (or some other function that complies with the 'facts'):



Obviously this example is simplistic, but those are the facts we had, and our erroneous graph was constructed exclusively on the facts. Definition #2 says nothing of a critical mass of facts, that make the truth all but an inevitability based on the volume of facts. Hence, definition #2 also fails to accurately capture the definition of truth because the definition captures both the correct definition and a faulty definition.

Build Back Better

Build back better. LOL! A surefire way to assess the quality of someone's work is to see if they destroy or create. I aspire to never destroy something I cannot replace with a superior item, where the new item has improvements and no degradation across any dimension. Such destruction is the only acceptable form of destruction. When such an approach is not available, then creating a competing item is the only way forward. Let's apply this approach to Oxford's definition of the word 'truth'; I have an obligation to define the word truth in a manner which stays true to a dictionary format. Such a definition should also assist us in embarking on a correct course for defining truth. So here is my definition of the concept of truth:

A model of reality built using correct facts that is never invalidated by objective future exploration of reality.

- Stacking Karma

In this definition there are some core elements that I would like to touch on before diving deep in the next few sections. Here goes:

1. **Model of reality** – The purpose of cultivating truth is to allow humans to exist within the constraints of reality. When we break away from the constraints of reality, we can break ourselves, we can break others, and we can break whole societies. Straying away from the truth can be dangerous, and the more responsible the actions, the more likely the danger. When truth is seen in this manner, the role of facts becomes more apparent. Once we collect sufficient facts about some phenomena, we can create a model of that reality, which we call ‘truth’.
2. **Correct facts** – The facts that are collected in the set to support the model, must be correct. If any fact is not correct then it will create an offset between the model of reality and reality itself. The set of facts must be correct.
3. **Never invalidated** – A model that is true, and describes some natural phenomena correctly without any error is the truth. Which means that the truth will capture the behavior of the phenomena correctly as the phenomena unfolds into the future. You can imagine that it’s reasonably easier to capture a true statement about some natural phenomena for a fixed, short time period, than for a model of the thing itself.
4. **Objective future exploration** – Essentially the point here is that as the future unfolds, objective knowledge that is correct does not invalidate the original theory. This is an assurance that the model is correct, but is a bit different than ‘never invalidated’. This part of the definition is an insurance policy against those who would use the world as a means to an end. Let’s imagine that someone wanted to eliminate some pillar holding up a theory that got in their way. In the modern world of the information age, the spigot of subjective information would be unleashed on the theory, casting doubt and ‘muddying the waters’. By invalidating subjective information right out of the gate, this definition of truth allows a shield against attacks on the concept of truth.

Essential Definitions

The definition of the word truth, and an unpacking of it, has already provided some light on what I take as Truth. Before jumping into a full blown articulation, and fleshing out some nuances, I think we would be well served to define some terms that are going to float up a lot. Let’s roll!

- Facts - facts are pixels that make up the picture, where a fact is a single pixel. Facts are a statement about reality where the number of variables are very constrained; making fact acquisition ‘easy’. Another example of a fact is a single item within a set. For example, saying ‘today is Sunday in my locale’ on a Sunday would constitute a fact. It is a correct data point.
- True – This is the description of a statement that is correct. It is synonymous with ‘correct’. The opposite of ‘true’ is ‘false’. This word is used to describe something that has a only two options: true or false. It is a word of adjudication. For example $2+2=4$ is true; and $2+1=4$ is false.

NOTE: the definitions for ‘lie’ and ‘fraud’ may have come from online, or may be mine. I don’t remember.

- Lie – An assertion of something known or believed by the speaker or writer to be untrue with the intent to deceive.
- Fraud – Intentional perversion of truth in order to induce another to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right. An act of deceiving or misrepresenting.

- Perspective – The online dictionary version provided by the search engine is more than good for our needs:

perspective /pər-spěk'tív/ 

noun

1. A view or vista.
2. A mental view or outlook.
3. The appearance of objects in depth as perceived by normal binocular vision.
4. An understanding of how aspects of a subject relate to each other and to the whole.
"a perspective of history; a need to view the problem in the proper perspective."
5. Subjective evaluation of relative significance; a point of view.
"the perspective of the displaced homemaker."
6. The ability to perceive things in their actual interrelations or comparative importance.
"tried to keep my perspective throughout the crisis."
7. The technique of representing three-dimensional objects and depth relationships on a two-dimensional surface.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition • More at [Wordnik](#)

Truth as a Model

My take on the concept of truth is that facts are collected, and are collected from the widest range of perspectives possible. Once enough facts are collected, and are established to be true and correct; a model can be constructed to incorporate all the facts. Ideally there won't be competing models that incorporate all the facts. If there are competing models, then we have insufficient data to build an accurate model. In the case that a model is built, ideally correct future information should not invalidate the model. Furthermore, any predictive capabilities of the model are a significant sign that the model is valid.

The parallels of human activities that engage in this practice are police departments during serious crime investigations, technical trades during troubleshooting, scientists when testing a hypothesis, members of parliament during a hearing, philosophers, and real journalists (who are so incredibly rare nowadays). I am sure that many other professions that generate a theory about the world based on gathering the most amount of relevant information possible, eliminating everything that seems false, and once a set of facts which is all true has been derived, creating a theory that takes all the facts into account.

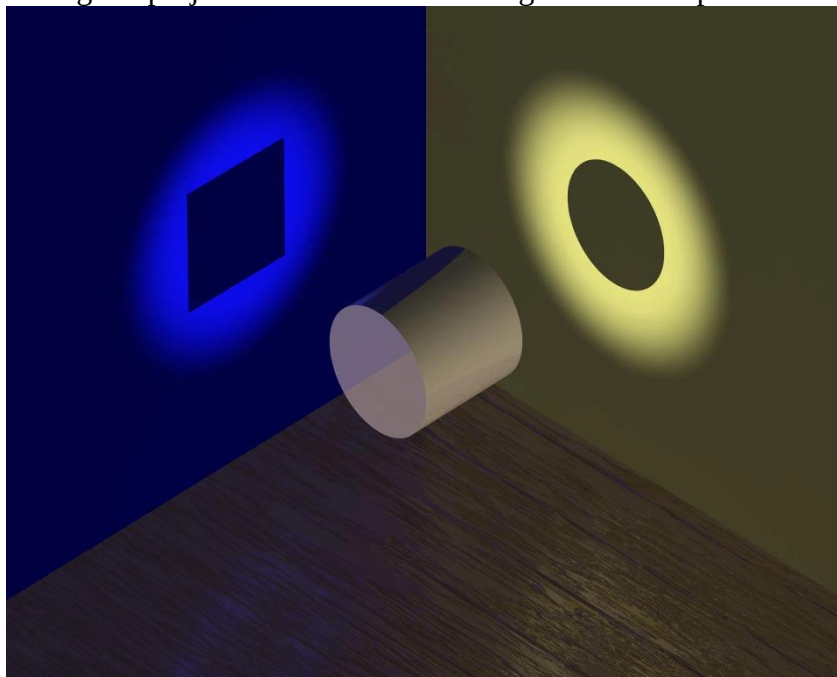
Truth as a Collection of Perspectives

Up to now I have treated the concept of truth in a cold manner. Where the view of truth is facts that can be extrapolated into a model that cannot be refuted, and does not become invalidated in the future. Great! Great? Not really. The issue I am seeing here is that even though such a definition is very logical and technical, it is not really how human beings work. I would like to put forth a human-centric view of truth. The reason for doing so is that humans are fundamentally a goal oriented action machine. We

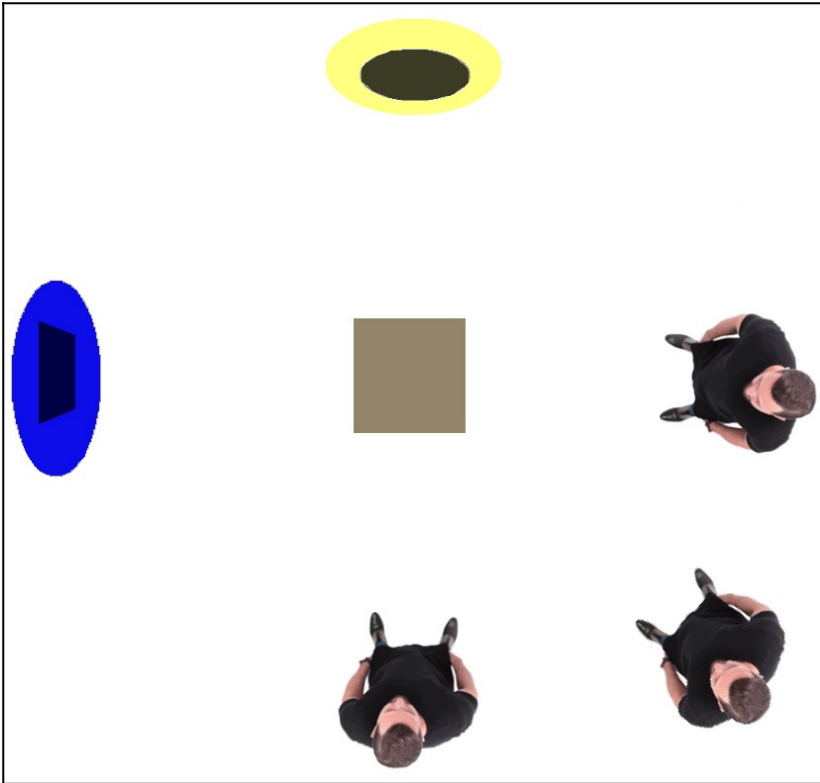
take action based on the best information we have, which may or may not be correct. The definition of truth as a model based on facts is great for institutional work; where the cost of getting the model wrong is high, and resources (including time) are such that an adequate investigation is possible and warranted. In such an environment the view of truth as a model is ideal. But what about our day to day adjudications of reality? Is there a view of truth that can be made more simple so that it could yield results faster for regular people as we go through our regular day to day activities? This is where my definition of perspectives comes in as a human centric definition that is simpler, quicker and yields a working model much faster.

The human-centric concept of truth is the set of all correct perspectives, without any untrue perspectives within the set. It is the aggregation of perspectives. Let's flesh this out.

I'm sure you are familiar with this image which has a 3D shape and two lights shining on it from different angles creating 2D projections that are different geometric shapes.



This image is a perfect parallel to humans observing some phenomena. Each person looks at the phenomena from their perspective. Each person that observed the phenomena has a perspective that is tremendously biased. It is biased not because people are bad democrats/liberals or evil republicans/conservatives or any other shade of ugliness cast by belonging to a 'rival' group. The perspective is rooted in experience, skills, challenges, motivation & current goal (as was covered already) and tons of things that generate an incredible amount of perspectives from the event. Not least of all is also the physical placement of the observer relative to the events. This is akin to the blind men and the elephant; each has a perspective due to their sensory experience, and the physical placement of each person is never the same. The image below shows 3 key perspectives for cylinder with a circle and square projections. Assuming each person is looking straight ahead, and assuming the event is short lived, we will have 3 very different perspectives:



Some person who is interested in finding the truth about some phenomena, can do so by gathering all valid perspectives and finding a way to amalgamate all the valid and correct perspectives. This is a 'quick' way to get at the truth. To get at a model of reality that the perspectives observed by amalgamating the models together. Of course sometimes that is not possible. We might have contradictory information, not enough information, or something else. However, working with other good faith actors that have different perspectives is the best chance for a layperson to get at the truth.

I guess it should be noted that each approach at finding truth has similarities and differences. The similarities are that they are both a human activity based around collecting information and crafting a model of some natural phenomena. The differences is that one focuses on the collection of fact to build a model; where the other focuses on a collection of perspectives to build a model. The factual system is likely more 'sciency', which is slow and likely more accurate in its final model. The largest challenge to the factual system is gathering enough facts to hit a critical mass where the model pretty much constructs itself. The perspective system is likely much faster, but has more noise because of the imperfect nature of humans. The largest challenge is access to a varied enough perspective set; if everyone you consult is in the same silo, the perspective may come from many people, yet it will be a singular perspective. Unique perspectives are not common.

At the end of the day, once you have your set of reliable perspectives, touch base with each one and inquire about their thoughts on some topic. This gathering of perspectives is rather quick, and helps the truth seeker consider a lot of intellectual ground rather quickly. Essentially you take the gist of different patterns to figure out the model where every reasonable perspective is true.

Another analogy for truth is that of a puzzle, where the puzzle pieces are facts, and an assembled island of pieces is a perspective. None of the pieces in the puzzle are identical, and if all the pieced are

present, and there are no pieces that are not of that puzzle, the pieces are never in any contradiction to each other. They may not fit to one another, but that doesn't mean they are not of the same puzzle. I think at this point we are all on board with the definition (at least my definition is no longer ambiguous). Next let's get into the weeds... let's get into the nuances.

False Perspective within the Set

So far the concept of truth has been laid out as a set of facts or a set of valid/correct perspectives that generate a model of some natural phenomena. What happens if a invalid/incorrect fact or perspective is integrated into the data set? The options as I see it are:

- Reduce the quality of the set relative to other sets representing that same truth.
- Consider the entire set invalid/incorrect.

I am choosing to consider the entire set to be invalid/incorrect. What if the false perspectives, paints a picture that obstructs the truth? What if the false perspective is foundational in the model on which other perspectives stack up? For this reason any set with an incorrect/invalid perspective is considered as not true as long as the incorrect/invalid perspective is part of the set. The invalid/incorrect perspective can be so false relative to the phenomena that it is overwhelmingly destructive to the set. For example, imagine observing our 3D cylinder used in the analogy when high on hallucinogens; the cylinder may be wavy and talking to you which is actually a legitimate perspective if you don't hide the narcotic use, but if the narcotics are hidden, then it becomes sabotage! Another example that would kill a set's validity is a human who is having an episode of psychosis due to a chemical instability but we believe them to be totally sane; which means that their observations, and as a result, their perspective would invalidate the set.

For a set to be a valid set, all the facts or perspectives must be correct/valid. As the facts or perspectives in the set approach every possible fact/perspective, the set's quality increases. However, any false/incorrect/invalid perspective within a set, invalidates the set. This is mandatory as the story that is crafted to capture the truth can be misled with even a single false fact; so any false data in the set invalidates the set. So, if a story/model has any incorrect facts in it, it must be deemed not truth, and have the model reconstructed without the false fact.

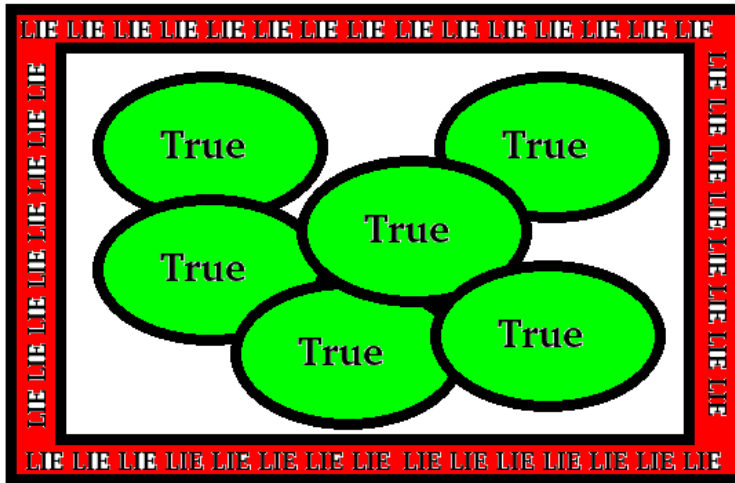
Insufficient Data

In the common case where the truth seeker is short on facts or perspectives to build a model, it is likely that the model will turn out to be false. However, sometimes building several models that fail is a reasonable approach when data (facts or perspectives) are in short supply. This is most likely a very common issue when building a model of reality, aka getting to the truth.

Lying and Fraud

Let's first consider lying. Lying is a practical practice used by the liar to achieve some outcome. As a result, a core aspect of lying is that the lie has to make sense, it has to appear in alignment with what the receivers of the lie already know about the topic. A lie that goes unquestioned by the audience is at the bare minimum very fitting to the situation. It appears to be realistic based on the knowledge of the audience. Which means that the lie will do it's best to absorb as much of what is true (as many perspectives from the set as possible), and then add a false perspective that is intended to deceive (let's not worry if the false perspective is valid or not at this time for simplicity) that provides the audience with information which is conducive to some goal that the liar has. Think of the most popular liar: the boy who cried wolf. He lived in a village, he had sheep, and a wolf was a possibility. He didn't cry

“Zeus is here”! It had to be plausible. Anyway, I am sure this is not very revolutionary. Basically, the way I see a lie is as follows:



The lie encapsulates some facts, and perspectives known/believed to be true, and it is packaged in a container of falsehood (from the perspective of the liar). The reason the container is not detected is because it seems to jive with everything that is known to be true. The lie is created around what is true, and changes reality the least it possibly can to achieve the goal of the liar. The point is that a lie relies deeply on what is known to be true. As an exception, the person meaning to deceive may be mistaken and may attempt to deceive by stating something that is actually true, but we won't chase that rabbit for the sake of efficiency.

When it comes to fraud, the main difference between lying and fraud is that lying is in the domain of thought and communication; and fraud is utilization of a lie or lies to acquire some tangible benefit in the physical world; it is the process of taking over a real benefit by the fraudster that the rightful owner will lose or compromise.

Narrow Perspective

Narrow Perspective or Partial Model are models of reality held by a person or group that are valid in some circumstances, but are not valid in others. The most basic example is imagine a person who has encountered 7 people who happen to have a purple skin color, all of which have smelled like lavender. If this person now states “purple people smell like lavender”, that is a narrow perspective as they have met only a small set of all purple people, and that extrapolation is not always true. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. It is a narrow perspective.

A more realistic example for the modern reader in 2024 is “black people support diversity, equity and inclusion mandates because it benefits them”. Such an extrapolation is a narrow perspective.

I felt this definition had to be part of this essay because even though this falls under a ‘false perspective within the set’ hence, it is not truth, I wanted to put a label on this phenomenon because of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon. I have run into this phenomenon by observing famous people on all sides of the aisle, when vacationing with family friends, and generally speaking it's all over the place. When I last ran into an offensive narrow perspective, and there was a public disagreement, when I stated (quite academically) that since the view they are floating out can be true at times, and false at others, it is not truth; at which moment they started producing all the factual and true examples of instances which supported the Narrow Perspective. Having reflected on this for a little while, it's likely

better to say “I hear you, and I would add that you are floating out a narrow perspective”, over “that is not truth”. Furthermore, what I have learned from my public disagreement with a narrow perspective, is that rather trying to publicly convince that a more complex model is superior, or try to argue that the foundations of the narrow perspective are faulty, it is best to simply ask questions. Ask questions that show how narrow the perspective is. Ask questions that show the limits, and inabilities of the narrow perspective to show the true complexity of our world. Asking questions is an art, and the superior human (which I am not) can surely ask questions that break the narrow perspective; and if not, then perhaps the person asking questions needs to adjust their model.

[The ability to ask questions is the greatest resource in learning the truth.](#)

[Carl Jung](#)

It is my sincere belief that we are living through a time of social unrest, where there is a breaking of bonds between individuals based on group membership. I believe these types of times are rife with Narrow Perspectives that extrapolate from a set of experiences a conclusion that is not truth, and is harmful for social cohesion, fairness, kindness and the ability to improve our mutual circumstances.

Anything you disagree with so far? Let me know on twitter or Substack.

Praxis as a Conclusion

As a quick synopsis, this paper has covered that humans who are the exclusive platform for truth are quite bad at it. Out hardware and software is not conducive for pristine truth; which we defined as a model that is constructed on correct facts or correct human perspectives that describes some natural phenomenon correctly (by correctly I mean that the model is not invalidated through experience). So then, the question is what’s next? What to do with this examination? Ultimately, I believe that once you comprehend something, and integrate it into yourself, you are changed.

A mind that is stretched by a new idea or experience can never shrink back to it’s old dimensions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

This new you, in an ideal situation now has greater capacity for superior action (in relation to the old you). The journey of writing this paper, has allowed me some growth. I’m sad to report that what I learned seems obvious. The sad truth is that many humans don’t seem to understand what I am about to share with you. Perhaps, just like me prior to writing this paper, they understand it intellectually when presented in a certain format; yet they don’t live out this understanding. Having spent so much time thinking on this topic, I think that I am ready to graduate from an intellectual understanding on this topic to living out the following:

- **Arguing over truth is not an activity for finding truth** – If you find yourself arguing with another person about what is true, you are not engaging in an activity that is going to generate truth. To get at the truth, the parties need to unite in a cooperative manner, not a competitive manner. All the parties involved need to submit the fundamental facts and perspectives on

which their model is built. During this phase everyone needs to be willing to discard everything that is not 100% true.

[Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold.](#)

[Leo Tolstoy](#)

Only when the facts and perspectives that are absolutely correct are distilled, can a model be attempted to be put together. If people are arguing about what is true, it is a status competition, or a confrontation of ideology, or egos hungry for fulfillment, or maybe something else; but for sure this is not a game of truth finding. The non-average person who cares about truth is likely willing to have their argument torn apart to get at the truth; where the opposite cares more for the ego, desire of status elevation, or a defense of the group. The latter person is not interested in having their fundamental facts and/or perspectives examined as truth is no importance in those games. Want truth? Don't argue. Want to argue? The chanced to come closer to truth will become diminished. Having the desire and strength to hear our an idea that pisses you off is a critical aspect of an intellectual diet. And once you've invested in understanding why people believe what they believe, steel-man the position of that person/group; and if you can't refute it at full strength, then you have to amalgamate it into your model. Now there is less to argue about; aren't you more happy? LOL.

- **Truth is a team sport** – Considering that our hardware and software sucks at getting pristine data, and that reality is very complicated, it's not likely that a single person can arrive at any meaningful truth. It's possible, but, I believe that it's going to be a very rare event. Likely an event where the person is an incredible human. If you think about the core strengths of the human specie, our ability to work as a large team of people is definitely a very important strength. If you consider any meaningful human feat, it's always a team effort. So, why would this strength not be applied to a topic as complicated as reality?! The ability to work with others is going to stack the odds in the favor of any human group seeking the truth, as long as truth is possible.

[Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.](#)

[Albert Einstein](#)

- **Truth is rarely possible** – Considering our imperfect hardware and software again, and that time is moving forward, and items in history cannot be revisited, the odds that there is enough facts and perspectives to find the truth about anything is slim. Especially that humans don't operate in the domain of truth. Many of our stories, beliefs and other systems are skewed towards making truth not possible. For example, who is the best athlete of January 2024? Such a question cannot ever be answered. How do you define the word 'best'? How do you gather a set of all athletes? The way people think and "work under the hood" is not conducive to truth models. I believe that in the social context, there are considerations that trump the importance of truth. Working well with others, willing to be wrong, asking good questions, and being respectful are just a few aspects of people that are conducive to truth, but are significantly more important than truth from a social context. There must be a separation between human

characteristics and truth. Eloquence, crudeness, strong feelings, social status, group membership, and more, must all be put aside if truth is to be distilled.

[The search for truth is more precious than its possession.](#)

[Gotthold Ephraim Lessing](#)

All these lessons I now understand on a more meaningful level, are the very same lessons taught by the parable of the blind men and the elephant. They (the blind men) argued about the truth, and they didn't find it. They didn't work together, and they didn't find it. Their approach on an individual level, didn't allow them to find the truth. It seems so painfully obvious, yet I never thought much about it. It's kind of embarrassing to admit all this. But, I am merely a fool, and I accept my slice of responsibility.

Thank you for your company on this journey.

Stacking Karma

Twitter: [@stackingkarma](#)

Reddit: [u/StackingKarma](#)

email: stackingKarma@protonmail.com

Odds and Ends

this section captures some thoughts that I didn't want to jettison, nor to explore deeper at this time. Think of it as a blooper reel for an unskilled writer.

Benefit of Truth

There are several reasons for pursuing truth. A strong case can be made for not messing up when the stakes are tremendously high:

It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.
--

On a personal level, being called a chubster by your wife, can be a strong motivational force to increase muscle mass and reduce fat tissue. An alignment of the self with the world, is a crucial step to personal achievement.

A third reason to be aligned with the Truth is that it is a requirement to do anything in the real world that is rooted in the physical, for example, fixing a broken car. If you are not technically aligned with the "Truth" of how the physical world is managing various potential energy to achieve an outcome, you will likely not achieve the desired outcome if the system is sufficiently complex. Examples include any construction, agriculture, technology, sports, and the like. At the technical level being aligned with the Truth allows for discoveries, cures, repairs and building accurate models of the future. If you don't have an accurate model of how some craft works, you won't achieve the full utility of that craft. This is important for technical achievement, but, thankfully, it's very obvious when our model of the system doesn't work. The instantaneous feedback of the natural world is both beautiful and cruel in it's honesty of outcome; are there fruits or not? You can't really fake skills (which are the result of an adequate model of the natural world) in the domain where results speak for themselves.

Another reason, which is what I am much more worried about, is in the domain of ideas, where there is a significant delay between implementation and outcomes. This occurs when people organize around ideas that have been chained together, where the totality of the rational chain has never been vetted in the real world. The academic and intellectual worlds that produce complicated works, such as the work of Karl Marx, unfortunately allow errors to accumulate and compound due to the lack of exposure of each component of the idea to the real world; and when the idea is fully "finished" and is implemented in the real world, something really unreasonable starts happening, like drag shows for kids, and men athletes competing against women athletes. The rise and fall of communism is another one. An example of a current such trend is "cultural marxism". When the product of a person is pure rationality, or a very complicated process that has not been subjected to the real world until it's completion, the baked in error can be very painful when it is put into action. A person who deals with the physical world as a means of extracting a desired outcome, such as a farmer, cannot have compounding errors baked into their interaction with reality without being unaware that something ain't right; where an intellectual can weave ideas and string logical thought built on the ideas of others, and ultimately arrive at an idea that once applied to reality is doomed to fail. Historically speaking these errors are extremely painful and cause harm to large groups of people. Any theory that is holding incorrect facts in it's set should be dismissed as "not Truth", hence not workable in reality. One such theory is communism.

I think that any misalignment with Truth generates issues later on. For example, calling classmates in kindergarten "friend" is something I think is not truthful. In this case as we don't call a spade a spade, we cheapen the meaning of the concept of what it means to be a friend, and I have seen first hand confusion in at least one child in an early grade about what a friend actually is, and is not. Which is a great into for the next section...

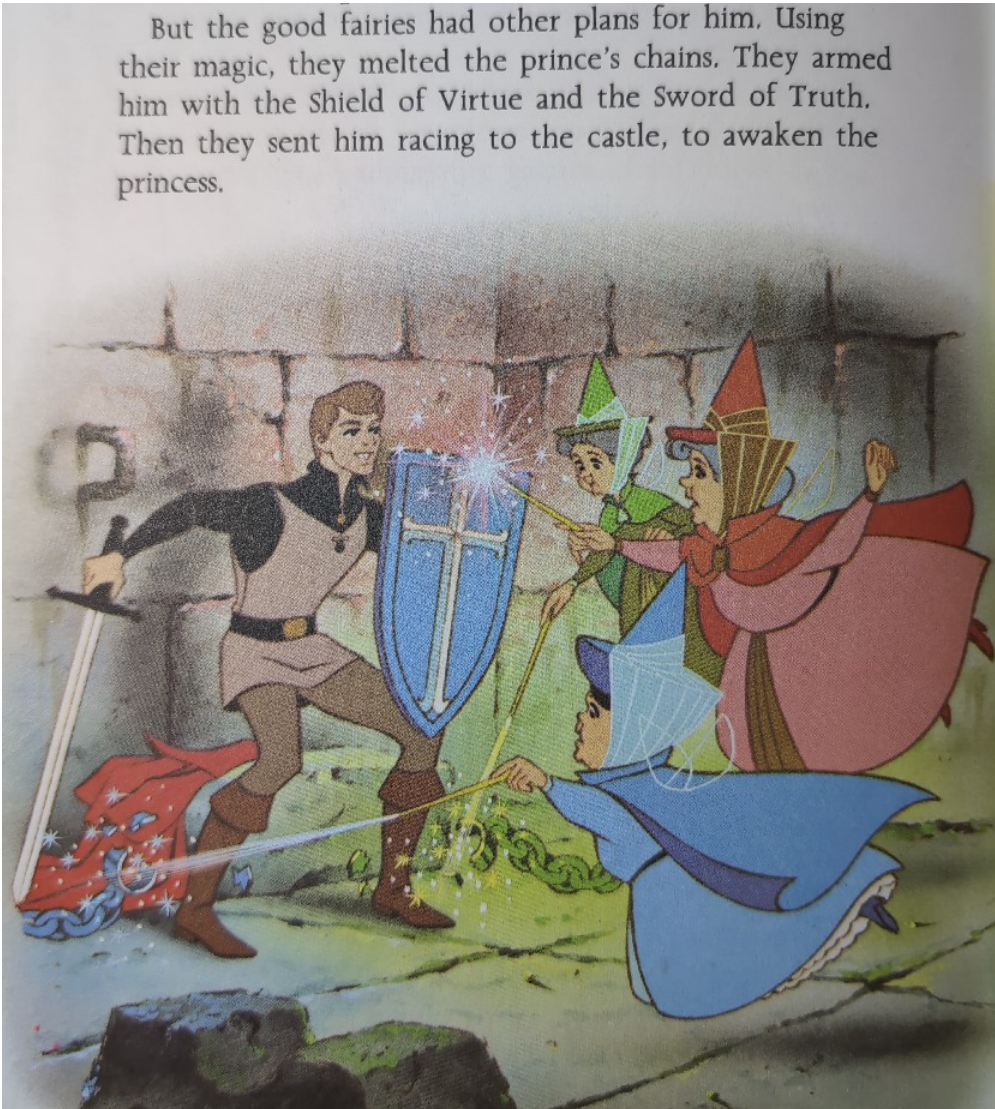
The Downside of Truth

Anything with an upside has some sort of downside. Other than the items enumerated in the “external headwinds” where there was a societal cost to being a teller of Truth (are whistle blowers popular?), there is also a personal downside to truth. Truth can be brutal and cruel. It coldly calls out in each one of us all the our dark inventory that we hide from others, and take great effort to avoid confronting. I’m sure that if we look inward long enough we can all find a Truth about ourselves that we don’t like to look at. The truth is non negotiable, it can’t be reasoned with, it can’t be intimidated. You either hide from truth and plant the seed of suffering, or improve yourself to be in alignment with it. Given that complying with Truth for the sake of it, doesn’t generate immediate status, it doesn’t guarantee a worldly prize, alignment with the Truth is more of a long term approach which pays dividends in the future. Even though truth is always adequate and good in the long term, Truth can be harsh and painful in the immediate short term.

Disney of Old

Continuing the motif of the cruelty of truth, I was really touched by a Disney book from 1986. The creators of Sleeping Beauty had a very interesting take on the tools of battle that a man worthy of a family should have. Have a look:

But the good fairies had other plans for him. Using their magic, they melted the prince’s chains. They armed him with the Shield of Virtue and the Sword of Truth. Then they sent him racing to the castle, to awaken the princess.



The genius here is how concise, and wise the art is. The virtue will allow you stay out of trouble and truth shall cut through the lies and falsehoods that shouldn't exist. Man, I miss Disney of old; they really had some incredible talent.

Stab in the Dark

Ray Dalio did something very interesting. He analyzed the rise and fall of empires, and created a metric for gauging where an empire is in its rise and fall cycle. This is a very cool analysis of history. Having seen several of his interviews, Ray has said that at the end of the empire the infighting between different factions is so fierce that the rules of engagement are not respected. The desire to win for your side when the resources are nearly gone turns quite ugly. This may be the reason for the current post truth, emotional appeal to join our 'in-group', and to relegate Truth to academics as now is not the time to be fancy as it's survival or bust! I suspect our era is moving through a time of a general lack of attention to truth, and an emphasis on drama and charisma. Everyone has a side they are backing, and it's a forgone conclusion that each individual is on the right side, and it's OK to fight dirty. An environment where truth is taking a back seat. My firm prediction is that truth will inevitably come roaring back as I suspect it always does.

I would argue that during these times, the truth is what is needed more than anything to calm the waters and to unite opposing groups into a united effort to get ourselves back on track to the right way to live.

Historical Perspective of Truth

During the writing of this essay I visited a quotes website and queried all the quotes containing the word truth. I grabbed a whole boatload of quotes and organized them. It's interesting that these quotes span a few millennia. I organized them under a common theme. What do you think about my grouping? Does it make sense?

all from: <https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/truth.html>

(1) Truth as a concept is not a simple thing.

[Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.](#)
[Marcus Aurelius](#)

[There's a world of difference between truth and facts. Facts can obscure the truth.](#)
[Maya Angelou](#)

[Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it. Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true.](#)
[Gautama Buddha](#)

[The truth is more important than the facts.](#)
[Frank Lloyd Wright](#)

[Whatever satisfies the soul is truth.](#)
[Walt Whitman](#)

The misuse of truth as a weapon is also a downside. But the relative nature of "truth" in this concept is

an illustration of the complexity of truth:

Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth.

Mahatma Gandhi

The truth is rarely pure and never simple.

Oscar Wilde

Truth is not only violated by falsehood; it may be equally outraged by silence.

Henri Frederic Amiel

When a man tells you that he knows the exact truth about anything you are safe in inferring that he is an inexact man.

Bertrand Russell

We should not pretend to understand the world only by the intellect; we apprehend it just as much by feeling. Therefore, the judgment of the intellect is, at best, only the half of truth, and must, if it be honest, also come to an understanding of its inadequacy.

Carl Jung

Say not, 'I have found the truth,' but rather, 'I have found a truth.'

Khalil Gibran

Truth is what stands the test of experience.

Albert Einstein

it may not be simple, but if it is true it is consistent, as you learn more and more it looks better.

Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.

Albert Einstein

Falsehoods not only disagree with truths, but usually quarrel among themselves.

Daniel Webster

which shows that truths are complex as they always support each other when properly understood; and to always be aligned is complex. unlike falsehoods.

Truth often suffers more by the heat of its defenders than the arguments of its opposers.

William Penn

proper truth can be tainted by who is presenting it from a societal perspective; but the truth itself is not really affected.

There is no truth. There is only perception.

Gustave Flaubert

which talks to the fact that humans have imperfect ways of collecting information, and that truth is more complex than our senses can comprehend.

If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.

Albert Einstein

There is no such source of error as the pursuit of truth.

Samuel Butler

The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the

myth, persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.
John F. Kennedy

No truth can be said to be seen as it is until it is seen in its relation to all other truths. In this relation only is it true.
Elizabeth Prentiss

The most dangerous untruths are truths slightly distorted.
Georg C. Lichtenberg

Intense feeling too often obscures the truth.
Harry S. Truman

There are no whole truths: all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays to the devil.
Alfred North Whitehead

(2) Learning the truth is a complicated process

The ability to ask questions is the greatest resource in learning the truth.
Carl Jung

All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.
Galileo Galilei

I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts.
Abraham Lincoln

Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.
Mark Twain

In seeking truth you have to get both sides of a story.
Walter Cronkite

The ultimate arbiter of truth is experiment, not the comfort one derives from one's a priori beliefs, nor the beauty or elegance one ascribes to one's theoretical models.
Lawrence M. Krauss

The search for truth is more precious than its possession.
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

(3) Truth has the power to cure and improve.

When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.
Thomas Sowell

Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth.
William Faulkner

It is always the false that makes you suffer, the false desires and fears, the false values and ideas, the false relationships between people. Abandon the false and you are free of pain; truth makes happy, truth liberates.

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.

John Locke

You never find yourself until you face the truth.

Pearl Bailey

Tell truth, and shame the devil.

Jonathan Swift

There is not a truth existing which I fear... or would wish unknown to the whole world.

Thomas Jefferson

I seek the truth...it is only persistence in self-delusion and ignorance that does harm.

Marcus Aurelius

There is nothing so strong or safe in an emergency of life as the simple truth.

Charles Dickens

(4) Truth is easy to ignore and run from if that is what the mind wants.

Truth never penetrates an unwilling mind.

Jorge Luis Borges

There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.

Soren Kierkegaard

Most people find facts irritating. Facts interfere with their systems of denial.

Walter Darby Bannard

The naked truth is always better than the best-dressed lie.

Ann Landers

If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things.

Rene Descartes

It takes two to speak the truth: one to speak, and another to hear.

Henry David Thoreau

Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.

Winston Churchill

People say they love truth, but in reality they want to believe that which they love is true.

Robert Ringer

The truth is not for all men, but only for those who seek it.

Ayn Rand

Truth, when not sought after, rarely comes to light.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Never tell the truth to people who are not worthy of it.

Mark Twain

Pure truth, like pure gold, has been found unfit for circulation because men have discovered that it is far more convenient to adulterate the truth than to refine themselves.

Charles Caleb Colton

The truth that makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear.

Herbert Agar

As scarce as truth is, the supply has always been in excess of the demand.

Josh Billings

The truth has never been of any real value to any human being - it is a symbol for mathematicians and philosophers to pursue. In human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths.

Graham Greene

as this person observes that it is a very rare person who can handle the truth which is true. However, I respectfully disagree with his assessment.

We do not err because truth is difficult to see. It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Truth is the cry of all, but the game of few.

George Berkeley

(5) Truth is something that exists in the universe. By “exists” I mean that intelligent beings are able to discover it.

Three things cannot long be hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth.

Confucius

The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.

Winston Churchill

Truth exists; only lies are invented.

Georges Braque

Truth is by nature self-evident. As soon as you remove the cobwebs of ignorance that surround it, it shines clear.

Mahatma Gandhi

Truth will always be truth, regardless of lack of understanding, disbelief or ignorance.

W. Clement Stone

Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold.
Leo Tolstoy

The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence whatever that it is not utterly absurd.
Bertrand Russell

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.
Mahatma Gandhi

The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.
Flannery O'Connor

Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time.
Mahatma Gandhi

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.
Aldous Huxley

Truth is tough. It will not break, like a bubble, at a touch; nay, you may kick it about all day like a football, and it will be round and full at evening.
Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Falsehood has an infinity of combinations, but truth has only one mode of being.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

I cannot give any scientist of any age better advice than this: the intensity of a conviction that a hypothesis is true has no bearing over whether it is true or not.

Peter Medawar

meaning to discover truth you have to be open to seeing it.

A thing is not necessarily true because badly uttered, nor false because spoken magnificently.
Saint Augustine

(6) Truth is a very powerful weapon against oppression.

In a time of universal deceit - telling the truth is a revolutionary act.
George Orwell

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

Arthur Schopenhauer

The simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie. "One word of truth outweighs the world.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

this is when society has gone so far in the opposite direction of truth that mere truth is incredibly powerful.

Truth never damages a cause that is just.
Mahatma Gandhi

which is true from the perspective of intellect, meaning no contradictions. But not from a “taking on a just cause is perfectly safe”.

Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects... totalitarian propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have by the most eloquent denunciations.

Aldous Huxley

(7) There is down side to truth

The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable.

James A. Garfield

Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy.

Warren W. Wiersbe

All great truths begin as blasphemies.

George Bernard Shaw as in it's dangerous to say the truth when it is deemed blasphemous.

To speak the truth is the most difficult of all arts, for in its "pure" form, not connected with the interests of individuals, groups, classes, or nations, truth is almost completely unsuitable for use by the Philistine and is unacceptable to him.

Maxim Gorky

Peace if possible, truth at all costs.

Martin Luther

Nothing in this world is harder than speaking the truth, nothing easier than flattery.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.

Oscar Wilde

If you want to tell people the truth, make them laugh, otherwise they'll kill you.

Oscar Wilde

Superstition, idolatry, and hypocrisy have ample wages, but truth goes a begging.

Martin Luther

The passion for truth is silenced by answers which have the weight of undisputed authority.

Paul Tillich

The idea that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods, which most experience refutes. History is teeming with instances of truth put down by persecution. If not put

down forever, it may be set back for centuries.

John Stuart Mill

Strange times are these, in which we live, forsooth ;
When young and old are taught in Falsehood's school:–
And the man who dares to tell the truth,
Is called at once a lunatic and fool.

George Francis Train

It is only those who are in constant revolt that discover what is true, not the man who conforms, who follows some tradition. It is only when you are constantly inquiring, constantly observing, constantly learning, that you find truth, God, or love.

Jiddu Krishnamurti

You shall know the truth, and it will make you odd.

Flannery O'Connor

Truth uttered before its time is dangerous.

Mencius

(8) Divorcing oneself from the truth is dangerous

Above all, don't lie to yourself. The man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point that he cannot distinguish the truth within him, or around him, and so loses all respect for himself and for others. And having no respect he ceases to love.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

The moment we begin to fear the opinions of others and hesitate to tell the truth that is in us, and from motives of policy are silent when we should speak, the divine floods of light and life no longer flow into our souls.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The truth that is suppressed by friends is the readiest weapon of the enemy.

Robert Louis Stevenson

They must find it difficult ... those who have taken authority as the truth, rather than truth as the authority.

Gerald Massey

(9) Human Characteristics as they relate to truth

Integrity is telling myself the truth. And honesty is telling the truth to other people.

Spencer Johnson

Anyone who doesn't take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either.

Albert Einstein

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

Mark Twain

Wisdom is found only in truth.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The high-minded man must care more for the truth than for what people think.

Aristotle

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

Thomas Jefferson

Seek not greatness, but seek truth and you will find both.

Horace Mann

Truth is always served by great minds, even if they fight it.

Jean Rostand