

From the Unreal to the Real

*Reflections on Truth and
Discernment*



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One of the earliest prayers of all time is to be found in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

Lead us, O Lord, from death to Immortality;
From darkness to Light;
From the unreal to the Real.

Addressed to the Supreme Being, Brahman, it echoes a cry that has flowed ceaselessly from the human spirit, through all ages and all faiths; a cry for the hidden truth to be revealed.

In an age that has cynically been called the 'post-truth world' this cry has taken on a fresh immediacy and relevance.

Now, more than ever, people of goodwill are called to sharpen and refine their skills of discrimination and discernment. Without the cultivation of a sense of the Real with all its beauty and promise, there is a real danger that despair will characterize the vision of the future. This must not be allowed to happen. Meditators have a particular responsibility. Skills of discernment need to be developed through years of practice, so that the origin of impressions received can be reliably assessed and their significance understood.

By pondering on the thoughts which follow, may we shine a light on the livingness and simplicity of Truth in our times. And may this help us discern the illusory nature of the shadows of the unreal, freeing us to apply goodwill with persistence and authenticity.

It has been said that the true or the truth is that much of the divine expression as any man can demonstrate at his particular point in evolution and at any given stage in his incarnated history. *Alice Bailey*

This question is really concerned with the old one explored in ancient philosophy of finding a criterion of truth. If the picture we build up of the outside world is inaccurate, all our reasoning about it and our actions in relation to it will be correspondingly wrong. But how can we know when our basic conceptions and assumptions are in line with reality?...

Such questions are concerned with finding some touchstone whereby truth can be distinguished from falsehood. In all argument we appeal to each of our basic assumptions, and these in turn shape the nature of our argument. When these basic assumptions are threatened, we fight back to defend them, feeling obscurely that if they fall we fall with them. This leads to an insight: that our basic assumptions are part and parcel of our identity, and therefore frequently when we are defending a truth or a position, we are defending ourselves. A study of such moments of impassioned argument when various abstract or intellectual positions are battled for, brings us slowly to the realisation that they are constructs, mental in nature with a strong surcharge of emotion, and which, like clouds impelled by an invisible wind, slowly change under the sightless pressure of time. They are not constant, but are in process of change and, at the best, of evolution. They change as the impulsing Plan of evolution changes, expanding and reforming so as to become increasingly sensitive vehicles of the Plan in realisation.

One criterion of truth concerning a basic assumption, therefore, is that it should be evolving and not rigid, flexible and not crystallised.

Michael Srigley

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom. *Thomas Jefferson*

There is no religion higher than truth. *H.P. Blavatsky*

The four noble truths of the Buddha

The first truth says that existence is characterized by suffering (duhkha) and does not bring satisfaction.

The second truth gives as the cause of suffering craving or desire for sensual pleasures, for becoming and passing away. It is this craving that binds beings to the cycle of existence (samsara).

The third truth says that through the elimination of craving, suffering can be brought to an end.

The fourth truth gives the Eightfold Path as the means for ending suffering.

This above all: to thine own self be true. *William Shakespeare*

Truth, fiction, and the fuzzy space between can all look the same, especially through digital media. What we see and read is always supplemented by our imaginations, just as bricks need mortar to complete a building. In order to get out of our individual frame – our default setting, as David Foster Wallace referred to it – we can challenge our assumptions and beliefs through education, evidence, and experience. *Sue Walsh*

Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth.
Albert Einstein

Try to remain truthful. The power of truth never declines. Force and violence may be effective in the short term, but in the long run it's truth that prevails. *Dalai Lama*

We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning. *Werner Heisenberg*

Some people think they have discernment when actually they are just suspicious. Suspicion comes out of the unrenewed mind; discernment comes out of the renewed spirit. *Joyce Meyer*

The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) has developed a definition for fake news: “Information deliberately fabricated and published with the intention to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehoods or doubting verifiable facts.” Using this definition, it is easier to separate propaganda, “alternative” facts, and malicious lies from journalism. *Aidan White*

The victim of mind-manipulation does not know that he is a victim. To him, the walls of his prison are invisible, and he believes himself to be free. *Aldous Huxley*

All thoughts vibrate eternally in the cosmos.... Thoughts are universally and not individually rooted; a truth cannot be created, but only perceived. The erroneous thoughts of man result from imperfections in his discernment. The goal of yoga science is to calm the mind, that without distortion it may mirror the divine visions of the universe. *Paramahansa Yogananda*

Synchronicities, epiphanies, peak, and mystical experiences are all cases in which creativity breaks through the barriers of the self and allows awareness to flood through the whole domain of consciousness. It is the human mind operating, for a moment, in its true order and moving through orders of increasing subtlety, reaching past the source of mind and matter into creativity itself. *F. David Peat*

The discovery of truth is prevented more effectively, not by the false appearance things present and which mislead into error, not directly by weakness of the reasoning powers, but by preconceived opinion, by prejudice. *Arthur Schopenhauer*

I've always said to God: O my God, I really want to listen to You: I beg You to answer me when I say humbly: What is truth? Make me see things as they really are. *St. Thérèse of Lisieux*

...the initiate learns to penetrate into the realm of pure reason from the realm of mind, and there he polarises himself, and truth precipitates. *Alice Bailey*

The first thing that must be done is to train the child in the correct use of the discriminating faculty and in the power of choice and of directed purpose. He must be brought to a truer understanding of the underlying purpose of being, and be led to work with wisdom in the field of creative activity. *Alice Bailey*

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*

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

When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall. Think of it – always. *Mahatma Gandhi*

Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth. *Marcus Aurelius*

Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. *Walt Whitman*

The use of the creative imagination... will convey one great reality... that there is no possible separateness in our manifested planetary life – or elsewhere for that matter, even beyond our planetary ring-pass-not. The concept of separateness, of individual isolation, is an illusion of the unilluminated human mind. *Alice Bailey*

I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of the Imagination. *John Keats*

There is no greatness where there is not simplicity, goodness, and truth. *Leo Tolstoy*

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.
Niels Bohr

The truth was a mirror in the hands of God. It fell, and broke into pieces. Everybody took a piece of it, and they looked at it and thought they had the truth. *Jalaluddin Rumi*

It is error only, and not truth, that shrinks from inquiry.

Thomas Paine

Truth is ever to be found in the simplicity, and not in the multiplicity and confusion of things. *Isaac Newton*

You must accept the truth from whatever source it comes.

Maimonides

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

Khalil Gibran

We should not pretend to understand the world only by the intellect. The judgement of the intellect is only part of the truth. *Carl Jung*

...all right ideas are temporary in nature and must eventually take their place as partial rights and give place to the greater truth.

Alice Bailey

Let reality govern my every thought, and truth be the master of my life. *Alice Bailey*

The intuition is a function of the mind also and, when rightly used, it enables man to grasp reality with clarity and to see that reality free from glamour and the illusions of the three worlds. When the intuition functions in any human being, he is enabled to take direct and correct action for he is in touch with the Plan, with pure and unadulterated fact and undistorted ideas – free from illusion and coming direct from the divine or universal Mind. The unfoldment of this faculty will bring about a world recognition of the Plan and this is the greatest achievement of the intuition in this present world cycle. *Alice Bailey*

Art is the lie that enables us to realize the truth. *Pablo Picasso*

In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot. *Czajkowski Miłosz*

The only real valuable thing is intuition. *Albert Einstein*

A basic mystical idea or some new revelation of truth is suddenly recognised by many and finds expression simultaneously through the medium of many minds. No one person can claim individual right to the enunciated principle or truth. Several minds have registered it.

Alice Bailey

Everything that we call Invention or Discovery in the higher sense of the word is the serious exercise and activity of an original feeling for truth, which, after a long course of silent cultivation, suddenly flashes out into fruitful knowledge. *Goethe*

It is the heart sensing that gives rise to the feelings of what is beautiful, true and good... When we can incorporate our heart sensing in the deliberation of determining essential truths, then we experience the truths as warm waves of confirmation in our heart. Such experiences of Discernment grant us confidence in knowing. And furthermore, helps us to affirm the alignment of true north – the source of the heavenly laws found in our hearts as moral laws. This affirmation leads to the restoration of human dignity and nobility. *William Bento*

An illusion can, therefore, be defined as the consequence of an idea (translated into ideal) being regarded as the entire presentation, as the complete story or solution and as being separated from and visioned independently of all other ideas – both religious in nature or apparently completely unrelated to religion. This illusion evokes in the disciple or idealist an emotional reaction which immediately feeds desire and consequently shifts off the mental plane on to the astral; a desire is thus evoked for a partial and inadequate ideal and thus the idea cannot arrive at full expression, because its exponent sees only this partial ideal as the whole truth and cannot, therefore, grasp its social and planetary and its cosmic implications.

Where there is a real grasp of the whole idea (a rare thing indeed) there can be no illusion. The idea is so much bigger than the idealist that humility saves him from narrowness. *Alice Bailey*

Evil itself is but an illusion, for it is the use that is made of motive and opportunity by personality separativeness and selfishness which constitutes evil. From right motive and the same circumstances good may emerge. *Alice Bailey*

The greatest truths have been forgotten because of their very simplicity. Great truths are simple because they are of universal application. Truth itself is always simple. Complexity is due to man's ignorance. *Swami Vivekananda*

The true value of a man is not determined by his possession, supposed or real, of Truth, but rather by his sincere exertion to get to the Truth. It is not possession of the Truth, but rather the pursuit of Truth by which he extends his powers and in which his ever-growing perfectibility is to be found. *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*

Even truth needs to be clad in new garments if it is to appeal to a new age. *Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*

Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it. *Blaise Pascal*

Truth, as it is, is seen and known. Forms in the outer world of phenomena (outer from the angle of the soul and therefore encompassing the three worlds of our familiar daily living) are seen to be but symbols of an inward and spiritual Reality. *Alice Bailey*

Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies. *F. Nietzsche*

Trust those who seek the truth but doubt those who say they have found it. *André Gide*

Facts are many, but the truth is one. *Rabindranath Tagore*

Behind the changing forms of nature lies an immutable pure reality.
Piet Mondrian

Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me.
That means nothing. People like us, who believe in physics, know that
the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly
persistent illusion. *Albert Einstein (at the funeral of Lorentz)*

We need a kind of thinking that reconnects that which is disjointed
and compartmentalized, that respects diversity as it recognizes unity,
and that tries to discern interdependencies. We need a radical thinking
(which gets to the root of problems), a multidimensional thinking,
and an organizational or systemic thinking. *Edgar Morin*

Truth is exact correspondence with reality. *Paramahansa Yogananda*

The water in a vessel is sparkling; the water in the sea is dark.
The small truth has words which are clear; the great truth has great
silence. *Rabindranath Tagore*

Truth stands, even if there be no public support. It is self-sustained.
Mahatma Gandhi

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to
the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of
peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that
unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

The first duty of a man is the seeking after and the investigation of
truth. *Cicero*

Everything can be sacrificed for truth, but truth cannot be sacrificed
for anything. *Swami Vivekananda*

The ignorant person affirms, the wise man hesitates and reflects.
Aristotle

We know the truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart.
Blaise Pascal

The greatest name man ever gave to God is Truth. Truth is the fruit of realisation; therefore seek it within the soul. *Swami Vivekananda*

One should always bear in mind: Just because something is printed on paper, exists on the Internet, is often repeated or has a large number of followers, it is far from true. *Dieter F. Uchtdorf*

If you love the truth, you'll trust it - that is, you will expect it to be good, beautiful, perfect, orderly, etc., in the long run, not necessarily in the short run. *Abraham Maslow*

Truth is a torch, but a huge one, and so it is only with blinking eyes what we all of us try to get past it, in actual terror of being burnt.
Goethe

I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can...
And, to the utmost of my power, I exhort all other men to do the same... I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.
Socrates

There is no finality in the presentation of truth; it develops and grows to meet man's growing demand for light. *Alice Bailey*

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
Christ

120 Wall Street
24th Floor
New York NY 10005
USA

Suite 54
3 Whitehall Court
London SW1A 2EF
UK

Rue du Stand 40
Case Postale 5323
1211 Geneva 11
Switzerland

www.worldgoodwill.org

