



The Real War on Truth Is to Replace It with an Idea That Makes Us Feel Good

Description



What is Truth? Winston Smith explores the crux of the matter in a recent article. In essence, the war of ideologies that ultimately shape our cultures is about what is true and what is not – what is reality and what is not. This war on truth is more visible than ever before and we are witnessing an attempt to replace objective truth with subjective truth – whatever you “feel” is your reality is your reality, and whatever resonates or aligns with you is true for you.

People need the truth about the world in order to thrive. Truth is important. Believing what is not true is apt to spoil people's plans and may even cost them their lives. Conversely, a dedicated pursuit of truth characterises the good scientist, the good historian, and the good detective.

Philosophy, the study of human knowledge, is being completely thrown off by the notion that there is no objective truth. “Truth”, they say, is completely subjective – i.e., subject to the individual who decides “what is true for them.” Disbelief in any objective reality used to be regarded as a psychopathology of delusion, for which we would attempt to treat. Now it is a core philosophical tenant of the 21st Century.

By Winston Smith

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” – John 18:37-38

What is truth? Herein is the crux of the matter (pun fully intended). The war of ideologies that ultimately shape our cultures, when boiled down to the essence, is about what is true and what is not – what is reality and what is not. The epistemological struggle is now being completely thrown off by the post-modern notion that there is no objective truth. “Truth”, they say, is completely subjective – i.e., subject to the individual who decides “what is true for them.” A disbelief in any objective reality used to be regarded as a psychopathology of delusion, for which we would attempt to treat. Now it is a core philosophical tenant of the 21st Century.

Of course, there are personal *opinions* about things that are true to one and not another. For example, I believe John Cage wasn't nearly the composer as was Pyotr Tchaikovsky and he probably led way too many talented composers up the avant-garde path who would have otherwise written beautiful music. That's my personal opinion and others may propose that Cage was a genius of the 20th Century. Now any thinking and cultured lover of good art will recognise my opinion closer reflects objective truth (I jest of course – please don't email me abuse) but it is nevertheless a subjective perception.

The one who decides that gravity is no longer a truth for them, or that they are a woman (whatever that is) in a man's body, or that there are no universal moral or ethical principles and so having sex with a 5-year-old is perfectly OK, have departed from any objective truth. They choose to disengage from what we call the *correspondence theory of truth*: a truth that corresponds to a real fact or state of affairs in the real world. My Oxford Dictionary says something is true if it is “in accordance with fact or reality”, and that reality is “the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them”. Truth doesn't sound like something that's open to whatever any and every individual would like to define it as. Imagine engineering buildings and bridges if this were the case? “You know I really feel that overextended span will take that excessive load... I've got a good feeling about it.” Imagine this sort of subjective ‘truth’ in healthcare? “Well, it didn't do very well in the truncated and fraudulent clinical trial, and eventually killed most of the mice, but I just know it's going to do great when we release it on the population – I feel that's true.” Not that engineers or scientists would do that right? I mean they are firmly grounded in objective truth... right?

To stick with the Jesus theme I started with, the attack on truth has been going on since the very beginning. The snake in the garden of Eden (and you can take this as an actual event as I do, or as an instructive parable as I believe someone like Jordan Peterson does) is the embodiment of Satan. Satan is said to be the ‘father of lies’, and he sows seeds of doubt in the minds of Eve about what God has said (representing objective truth). God had just told the happy couple in the garden that they could eat of any tree in the garden but not from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, or they will die. Sounds like a good warning; stay away from the poisonous tree, but everything else is free game. Satan comes along and says “Did God actually say you can't eat of any tree in the garden?” To which Eve replies that it was only the one tree that was off limits. Satan undermines Eve's confidence in the truth by telling her God was lying and wanted to keep them from being just like him. Departing from the divine objective truth to embrace what looks like a more pragmatic, self-serving ‘truth’, was Satan's ploy – if you embrace your own truth, you will be like God, however, if you listen to God's version of the truth you will be limited and hindered.

This same philosophy is pervasive today: whatever is beneficial or pragmatic for you, the individual, then that is your ‘truth’. ‘Truth’ is whatever makes you feel better, happier, and more fulfilled,

regardless of what is actually 'out there'. Bertrand Russell said, "It is only after we have decided that the effects of a belief are good that we have a right to call it 'true'." But this has to be both a false and dangerous way of considering truth. My father loved to smoke a pipe, it gave him a great sense of pleasure and calm and for him, smoking was good – that was his subjective 'truth'. However, the objective truth was that smoking was poisoning his body and probably contributed to an early death from cancer. We are, now, much more aware of the objective truth of the dangers of smoking, but back then smoking was seen to be a life-enhancing enjoyment. The point is, we can't escape objective truth even if our subjective 'truth' refuses to acknowledge the true state of things. The stunningly tragic stories of gender transitioning with irreversible surgery and hormone therapy are today's case in point. I'm sure you know some of the stories.

And on the 'fluid' gender issue, we hear all the time that it's whatever you 'feel' that is your reality. Whatever resonates or aligns with you is then true for you. You may have an X-chromosome and a Y-chromosome but if you feel like a female then that is true for you – the objective reality that you are actually a biological male doesn't matter, that's not 'your truth', it doesn't fit with everything else you feel and believe. This is what we call the *coherence theory of truth*: something is true if it coheres (agrees with) all the other beliefs one has. It is a completely self-referential philosophy where 'truth' is just a matter of internal agreement, not external reality. This is a foundation of the New Age movement – coherence of one's beliefs, not belief in an external truth. In fact, it is the hallmark of postmodern thinking that there is no objective truth, nor is there objective reason, morality, reality, and the meaning of words and language are equally subjective (and thus open to manipulation to support the idea of no objective truth).

So where does the postmodern unhinging from reality leave us? Can we really say "there is no truth"? If there is no truth then the statement "there is no truth" can't be true. So, there is some concept of truth. But if it's just a self-indulgent, internally 'coherent' set of beliefs with no reference to external reality, where does that leave us? I don't think it's leading us to utopia. I think it will continue to feed a narcissistic delusional part of us which will likely leave us more vulnerable to the manipulation of the propagandist who really knows what is going on here. Satan whispers to the struggling and overly self-conscious teen "Did your parents really say you were a boy? That's just a social construct designed to control you and rob you of true freedom. You feel like a girl don't you? Be free, be the girl you know you are."

The war on truth is nowhere more centre stage than in our media – the self-appointed ministries of truth deciding what subjective 'truth' should be told and what objective truth should be censored. This astoundingly broad and effective "fact checking" operation is founded on both the pragmatic and coherence theories of truth in some sort of epistemic free fall from objectivity to subjectivity. "Safe and effective" bombards the media, based only on a feeling, a subjective belief in some unproven benefit, in the face of the reality of "unsafe and ineffective", yet the power of subjectivity and internal coherence now trumps objective reality. Of course, it's all in the service of propaganda and The Great Power Grab of the 2020s – objective truth is being sacrificed to the god of chaos.

So how are we going to recover from this delusional state of creating our own individual truths so often at odds with objective reality? Could we possibly move into an epoch where objective truth becomes, once again, the thing to grasp and to honour and build upon? Will we come back to a place where men are men, women are women, and investigative journalists do actual journalism? Can we come to a place where we can see the world for what it really is, rather than from an egocentric, internally-

referential virtual reality of our own narcissistic black hole?

It will take brave souls. Indeed, a brave new world (but not the Huxley type) to venture out of our caves of 'safety' and self-indulgence to face the truth – a truth that may not always be pragmatic for us, or coherent to us, but the truth nevertheless.

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