



Truth First

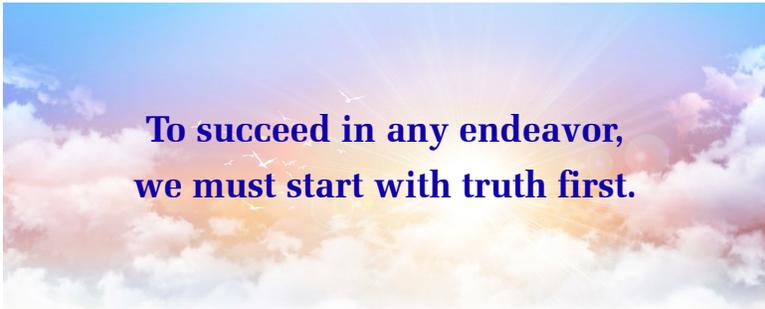
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Abstract: To succeed in any endeavor, we must start with the truth first. Perceptions, impressions and feelings are not equivalent to truth. Truth can be uncomfortable, but in the end, it is far more comfortable and secure than fiction. People often hold assumptions as truth rather than as possibilities. Imagination is powerful, but does not automatically result in physical manifestation—fortunately. Subtle feelings are invaluable. Starting with three-dimensional factual reality, we can explore other “realities” and ultimate Truth, like sages of old. Ultimate Truth is ineffable, best expressed in poetry.

Starting with Truth

Before we can proceed anywhere, on anything—a trip, building a bridge, solving a world economic problem—we must gather all the information we need, and it must be correct. For our trip, we need to know the **actual** location of roads and hotels—not where they used to be or where we hope they are. For our bridge, we need to know the **actual** strength of our bolts and the load capacity of our i-beams. To solve an economic problem, we need to know who **really** did what, who really is doing what, and what is really being paid for what.

If any information is in question, we must ascertain what is true, what is correct. Many “facts” taught in school have turned out to be incorrect. It is good, prudent and proper to question what is true and what is not.



**To succeed in any endeavor,
we must start with truth first.**

Two plus three equals five—not seven, not $5\frac{1}{2}$, not 5.003—whether we like it or not, whether we want it to be true or not, whether we believe it or not.

People can debate the meanings of “two,” “three,” “five,” “plus” and “equals.” For example, “two” could actually represent 2.01, 2.04, or 1.96, rounded. When added to 3.00, this could equal 5.01, 5.04, or 4.96, all of which can be represented by 5.0 but none by 5.00. This is simply the truth of the matter.

2.0	2.0
+ 3.00	+ 3.00
5.0	5.0

When it comes to qualities, such as extraversion or intelligence or aggression, one must define how each quality is measured. Extraversion might be “defined by the E score on the Myers Briggs Personality Assessment.” “Intelligence” might be “measured by the score on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale.” One might define aggression, “as determined by the number of times someone does these particular actions in this particular situation as observed by these trained researchers.”

All statements can be refuted by assigning a different meaning or measuring tool to terms in the original statement. The Old Testament forbids charging usury, which meant “interest” in any amount.¹ In order to practice usury without censure, people re-defined “usury” to mean “unreasonable interest”—so whatever one thought was “reasonable” would be okay. This re-definition in effect nullified the original law. If someone re-defines “green” to mean the color pink, the statement “Grass is green” becomes false.

To determine whether a statement is true, we must take the time to comprehend the definitions implicit in that statement. Sometimes people assume everyone knows what they mean, and forget that definitions are even necessary. There have been endless debates about whether “God” exists—yet people rarely define what they mean by the term “God;”² one person means one thing, someone else means something different, so the arguments lead nowhere.



If we **believe** that two plus three equals seven, or 5½, or anything other than five, then, when we try to build a bridge or solve an economic problem, we’re going to run into insurmountable difficulties. No matter how benevolent our intentions, how capable our workers, or how sincere our beliefs—or prayers, we will not be successful.

Our failure would simply be a natural consequence of untruth. It’s impersonal. Problems will persist until we learn and accept the truth of the matter. Beliefs and prayers cannot make two plus three equal to seven.

Acknowledging facts in three-dimensional reality is the starting point of truth—and of sanity. Psychotherapists heal mental illness by speaking the truth at the appropriate time, dispelling untruth that the patient believed. All good psychotherapy combats lies.³

1 Deuteronomy 23:19-20, Leviticus 25:36-37, Ezekiel 18:8-17.

2 See “God”, <https://wisdom2joy.com/God>.

3 M. Scott Peck, M.D., *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, (1983), p. 162.

Evil starts with an untruth, and lies continually, if subtly, thereafter.⁴ One of the artifices of evil is to induce people to believe that truth does not exist.^{5,6} To eliminate evil, one must start with revealing the truth first.

An unpleasant truth is preferable by far to a pleasant lie. Untruth eventually thwarts our efforts and impedes our success. It can blindside us if we don't pay attention. If we face the truth early on, we can adjust our goal or path and actually make progress. If we foolishly proceed based on untruth, our foundation eventually collapses.



By its very nature, the light of truth eliminates darkness and ignorance.

Truth is important. We can't get anywhere without it.

***Without truth, there can be no justice,
no right-ness, no dharma, no pono.⁷***

Without truth, there can be no love.

Without truth there can be sentiment, emotion, wishes, imagination, belief ... but not love.⁸

To figure out what is true, we must look at what actually is, what one actually does, at the actual fruits.

4 For a more detailed discussion, see *Bad and Evil*, Part 4 Evil, p. 9-10 or video/audio 4, https://wisdom2joy.com/Bad_and_Evil.

5 After John Silkinson, "One of the artifices of Satan is, to induce men to believe that he does not exist." *Quakerism Examined*, Ch. 4, p. 239-40 (1836: Thomas Ward & Co., London).

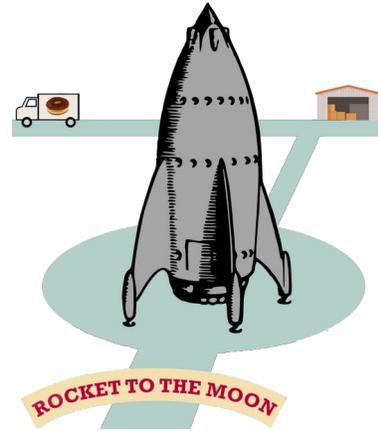
6 Where duality exists, evil exists.

7 "Dharma" is a Sanskr̥t word meaning right action, right-ness. "Pono" is a Hawaiian word meaning a state of balance and harmony with all, resulting from doing right by oneself, other people, and the world.

8 For a more detailed discussion, see *About Love*, https://wisdom2joy.com/About_Love.

The Donut Machine Story

Just outside New York City is a huge Rocket to the Moon. It has a big flashing sign at the entrance that says, “Rocket to the Moon.” It looks just like a rocket to the Moon. Inside are many armed guards, scientists with security clearances, and equipment with flashing lights of many colors. It has a budget for a rocket to the Moon which is approved by Congress every year. News reporters write stories about the Rocket to the Moon nearly every week. It has had several scheduled launch dates which have always been postponed so far. It has a Rocket to the Moon Souvenir Shop for tourists.



Do you know what it does every day?

It makes donuts, which the people of New York eat for breakfast.

What is it?

It is a donut machine.

It thinks it is a rocket to the Moon. It looks like a rocket to the Moon. It wants to be a rocket to the Moon. But ***actually, it is a donut machine.***

To find out what someone actually is or wants, look at what one actually does. People always do what they ***really*** want to do. If they want something but do something else, it's because they wanted the something-else more. What they think they are, what they say they are, and what they want to be are irrelevant.

Look at the donut: what they actually do.



9

“My Truth”

A well-known lesson in psychology classes is to stage an unexpected event in the classroom, and then each student immediately writes down what happened. The reports are always shockingly different. That is the point: perception is not the same as reality.

Perception is always incomplete, and is often not even factual. We may see a snake and think it is a rope, or see a rope and think it is a snake. Our perception may be truly what we think we perceived or noticed, but there is a huge amount of processing in our brains in between an event and our sensory perception of that event, and again between our perception and our impressions, feelings and memory about our perception.

9 From the original oral story by Reuven Bar-Levav, MD.

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All of us have filters on our perception. If we're in pain, our normal sensitivities are dulled. If we're afraid of something, we may deny or fail to perceive evidence of it, or we may be hyper-vigilant and sense it when it's not there. If we have a firm opinion or belief, we may not perceive evidence that it might be wrong; or we may simply reject the evidence outright without considering it (which is bigotry). Fear plays an especially important role in perception itself, as well as in our ability to correctly interpret perceptions and information.



**Careful perception can lead us toward truth,
but perception is not in itself truth.**

This doesn't mean that there is no such thing as truth! We may not *know* the truth, but the truth about everything exists. Johnny really did or didn't rob the bank. People's perceptions about the robber's height, clothing, and voice may be different, but either it was Johnny, or it wasn't.

If perception were truth, reality, then our furniture and even our bodies would disappear when we sleep, since while sleeping we don't perceive them. Yet all we have to do is to ask someone to watch us while we sleep to see if we disappear, or run a video camera. Our bodies and furniture don't disappear. We thus call our bodies and furniture "reality." It is a shared reality. It is not personal.

Someone can truly think or "feel" that the body does not exist while sleeping, or that two plus three equals seven. But in reality, the body exists; and two plus three equals five.



Many people think that their perceptions are equivalent to facts. Psychologists, in order to help clients heal and grow, need to help people acknowledge their own emotions and sensations. Someone invented the expression "my truth" to help in just this type of endeavor.

"My truth" means, "what I truly feel" or "what I perceived" or "what I really think" or "what I believe." It is not what we call "truth"—a factual, objective statement about reality. "My truth" may be a real feeling, a real perception, or what the speaker really thinks. But it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with objective reality.

“My truth is that Johnny robbed the bank” is an absurd statement. He either did or he didn’t, and there’s no “my” about it.

“My truth is that Mary is angry” is equally absurd. Mary might be angry, but she might not be. It may be correct to say, “I think Mary is angry,” or “I am afraid because Mary might be angry,” or “Mary sent me an email with the subject in capital letters,” or “Mary shouted at me and I feel hurt,” or “Mary’s facial expression reminds me of my mother’s when my mother beat me severely.”

But someone’s perceptions and feelings are not the same as facts. Maybe Mary wasn’t angry at all. Maybe she was alarmed and shouted to prevent an accident. Maybe Mary simply wanted to increase the chances that her email would be read. Maybe she had just remembered a terrible scene in a movie that resulted in her facial expression.

We don’t know whether Mary was angry or not until we ask Mary whether she was angry, and also until we ascertain how aware she is of her emotions, and how honest she is likely to be in her response. Some people are consciously aware of their emotions; some are not. Some people admit their feelings, some don’t. Some people think it is wrong to be angry, and they are unlikely to admit to feeling angry even if they are.



“My truth” is a helpful concept in psychology. It is highly recommended that we always tell ourselves the truth about what we perceive and feel.¹⁰ But “my truth” is not at all the same as truth or reality. As psychiatrist Scott Peck put it, “Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.”¹¹

Truth, objective factual reality, exists. In this three-dimensional world, our furniture is real, our bodies are real, and two plus three really equals five.

10 *Prescription for Peace*, 2 Pillars, https://wisdom2joy.com/Prescription_for_Peace, video/audio 2.

11 *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth* (1983, 2003, Simon and Schuster), Ch. IV Grace, Grace and Mental Illness.

Truth, Security and Comfort

Sometimes the truth is mighty uncomfortable. If we have been living with a spouse for twenty years and believe we are both very happy in our marriage, and suddenly we get sued for divorce, it is shocking and hurtful. If we have believed since childhood that we are genetically descended from a great religious master and have a special place in heaven, and then we see genetic evidence that we have no relation to that master, it can turn our whole world upside-down.

If we have been taught by sincere, loving teachers since childhood that a certain event occurred in history, that the planets move in certain ways for certain reasons, that certain foods are good and even necessary for our survival—and then we see very credible evidence to the contrary, it calls into question everything else we were ever taught by anyone. Such experience is scary, discouraging, and can be overwhelming.

Believing that one's opinions are true causes people to feel confident. Most people have an inordinate need to "be right"—inordinate because the feeling of "being right" assumes more importance than the truth of the matter. People sometimes become extremely disturbed when their opinions or beliefs are challenged with facts. One research study showed that when presented with facts that contradicted a strongly held opinion, most people became more entrenched in their opinion, instead of more open to truth.¹²

When people see or hear a truth they find unpleasant, they often deny it without reason. They simply refuse to consider it. They proceed as if it didn't exist. A Nobel-prize-winning scientist was once asked during a convention speech about a certain theoretical prediction, and he replied, "I don't believe in unicorns and I don't discuss them."¹³ The prediction was later shown by experiments to be correct, and has since given rise to technology that is familiar today.



Truth can be frightening and challenging. If one thinks information threatens one's livelihood, safety, reputation or world view, one is likely to either not see it or not take it in, no matter how intelligent or rational one is the rest of the time.

In addition, most people have traumatic memories buried deeply in their subconscious. To avoid re-experiencing their fear and pain, people may lie, steal, beg, cheat, or drink. Only when a current pain is as great as the original one are most people willing to uncover a fearful, traumatic memory.

Fear also inhibits our ability to reason, remember, and connect the dots. Humans are easily controlled through fear. People are more strongly motivated by fear of loss than by attraction for something desirable. Intellectuals often mistakenly think they are above being manipulated—but salespeople and spies know better.

12 Study on emotion-based political reasoning, Drew Westen *et al.*, "Neural Bases of Motivated Reasoning: An fMRI Study of Emotional Constraints on Partisan Political Judgment in the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 18, no. 11 (2006).

13 Annual meeting of the American Physical Society held in California, ~1980.

Human beings are often more tribal than truthful. In previous eras, rejection by one's tribe was a death sentence, but not so today. However, people still tend to accept ideas of their own tribe or group as true and reject ideas or factual evidence from other sources. Independent thought and evaluation of facts is far less common than one would expect based on our level of technology and “intelligence.”

It is important that we be honest with ourselves first. Most of the time, we had an inkling, a gut feeling, that our spouse was unhappy, that the story about our ancestry was questionable, or that a food wasn't good for us. We had some evidence—a fleeting facial expression, a logical flaw, a pain after eating.

We ignored our gut feelings and our evidence because we **wanted** to believe in our cozy fallacy. We wanted to **feel** comfortable, safe and secure. We wanted things to stay the same. Change is inherently frightening and can be difficult. Some people find it easier to pretend that a fantasy is real—until reality hits them between the eyes and they have to work much harder and more quickly, with more stress.

In our insecure world where injury, illness and death can arrive without warning, human beings have an innate psychological need for security—to feel safe, whether we actually are or not. To satisfy this mental need, we make up reasons and imagine we are secure—and then we believe it!

People also have a need to believe that their decisions and whatever they have done in the past are “right.” It's painful to realize that one made foolish mistakes or caused harm unintentionally. Many people choose illusion rather than admit to being wrong.

False security though it be, belief in our security and “being right” satisfies a psychological need. It would be nice if we had all grown up being taught the great spiritual truths about life, death, and the nature of existence, for then we wouldn't fear. Until we become aware of these great truths, it actually serves the human mind to temporarily believe in some measure of false security.

However, we can waste a lot of our time, energy, heart, and desiring by going down paths with a critical untruth in hand. In the end, it's not worth it. Instead of rushing headlong toward a fantasy and falling flat on a diverted path, we're better off taking time to make adjustments as soon as we realize they're needed—and actually reach our goal.

**Truth can carry us across
the troubled sea of life.
Untruth never can.**



When truth dawns on us, it's like the sunrise: darkness disappears, ignorance disappears. Without truth, fear abounds—we're not sure which direction to go or how to proceed. When we see the truth of a situation, fear recedes, even if it doesn't disappear, because we can at least see our way and aim toward a real solution.

**When all be told,
Truth is more comfortable than fiction.
Truth is more secure than fiction.
Truth is safer than fiction.**



Truth doesn't have to make effort—it just shines like the Sun in all its glory, for all who are willing to see.

Truth stands on its own.

People can temporarily hide truth, or hide from truth, but eventually it reveals itself.

Truth alone triumphs.

Truth and Imagination

Imagination is one of humanity's most valuable abilities. We create by using our imagination first. As de St. Exupéry wrote, "A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral."¹⁴

We can influence our moods and mental states, our performance, and our biology—including our heart rate, blood pressure, pain level and healing—by using our imagination.

¹⁴ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *Flight to Arras* (1942).

Our physical reality can be affected by our imagination and beliefs—but just imagining or believing something does not automatically make it true. It is vital that we continue to be grounded in three-dimensional, factual reality as we explore with imagination and decide what we really wish to create. One advantage of our slow, three-dimensional world is that every thought we have does not manifest automatically! We must diligently discipline our minds before we are ready to enter a realm where what we imagine appears instantly.



Such realms exist, we are told. However, we don't enter them by ignoring or denying truth in our three-dimensional world. We don't approach expanded consciousness when we are routinely—or occasionally—dishonest, or if we are unclear about the difference between fact and fiction, between reality, perception, and imagination.

Every day, we imagine that things are true—without really knowing—and act accordingly. We assume shops will be open, cars will stay in their lanes and stop at red lights, everyone will show up as planned, the bank will keep our money and give it to us when we want it. We do this hundreds of times per day. We have to.

We often act—and feel—as though what we imagined were true. We forget that we have assumed so much; we take our imaginings as truth, rather than as possibilities. This doesn't seem to be a problem, since most of our assumptions are correct, day after day.

Also we often presume that it was Johnny who robbed the bank; that Mary is angry; that our spouse is happy; that our favorite politician is telling the truth; that the government wouldn't do that horrible thing so it couldn't have happened. We believe in our wishful fantasies, which make us feel good and safe. We accept evidence that supports our opinions and beliefs, and reject or ignore other evidence.



A businessman asks an engineer, “What’s two plus two?” The engineer uses his slide rule and answers, “four.” The businessman then asks a broker the same question. The broker replies, “Buying or selling?” Then the businessman asks his accountant. The accountant shuts the door, closes the drapes and whispers, “What do you want it to be?”

The problem with accepting evidence only if it aligns with what we want is that we end up living in a fantasy world **that we don't realize is imaginary**, because we ignored all evidence to the contrary. **We forget that our assumptions were assumptions. We forget that we ignored what we didn't want to see.**

In order to **feel** safe, we accepted only evidence that confirmed our beliefs and desires. Then we believed in our imaginary “reality,” “my truth.” Then we became even more entrenched in our beliefs, which were built more and more upon imagination and selected facts, rather than truth—all of the facts. Stopping the cycle is painful, and most people don't do it voluntarily.



When untoward events eventually occur, we're shocked and unprepared: our spouse wants to divorce, our social support system collapses when we question religious beliefs; we get sick from food that's not good for us; our bank won't give us our money; our favorite politician turns out to be corrupt; our government really did do that horrible thing. It's difficult and humbling to admit that what we thought was true wasn't.

When we have made assumptions that were incorrect, and then our expectations don't materialize, we tend to blame others. This results in misunderstandings, hard feelings, wasted time and resources, and much misery. Our anger at others dissipates when we realize that we ourselves made an incorrect assumption, and we had no right to expect them to fulfill it.

It's so important to remember the difference between imagination and assumptions, and actual fact.



Looking at an elephant from the front, we see a trunk. The trunk is a fact, reality. When we look from far away, the elephant looks very different from just a trunk. If we watch it over time, we will gather an even more complete picture of the elephant.

The trunk is not the whole elephant—but the trunk is still real. From a limited perspective we can only see part of the truth, but it's still part of the truth. It's not false, it's just not whole.

We do not proceed to “other realities” until we are “grounded” in this one. We enter “higher” realms not by denying facts or truth in this one, but by accepting reality here on Earth, and then **turning our attention** toward another way of looking at things. We then view everything from another perspective, from which reality indeed looks quite different. But it doesn't negate what we see when we look from our previous perspective within this realm.

After seeing things from a new perspective, we realize that our three-dimensional world is not “real” in the same way as we thought before. But when we look with three-dimensional perspective, we still see a trunk, apples still fall down from trees, and two plus three still equals five.

People who speak with intelligence and integrity about “other realities” are people who have first accepted the physical reality of Earth space and time. It may not be the final reality, but it is temporary reality on Earth, and they have accomplished real things in it. They know the difference between truth, perception, and imagination—and the importance of all three.



The success of quantum physics in explaining sub-atomic phenomena is no excuse to deny the reality that a bank robbery actually occurred. With quantum physics, two plus three still equals five—however, our notion of discreet objects disappears. We can’t distinguish where—or when—one “thing” begins or ends. In one type of experiment, the “thing” appears to be a certain size, or within a particular region during a certain period of time, but in another experiment the same type of “thing” appears to extend infinitely. We can’t catch a subatomic “thing” the way we can hold an apple. So “two” and “three” can’t be used to count sub-atomic “things” the way we can reliably count apples.

Sometimes people jump to unwarranted conclusions or use scientific-sounding arguments, without understanding the science, to escape, avoid or deny facts they wish weren’t true. There is much evidence that reality isn’t quite what we thought, that some laws of physics aren’t quite correct, that many things most of us believe aren’t possible really are possible. Many events we can’t explain do occur; some of them are called “miracles.” The more we discover, the more we realize we don’t understand.

Some people who claim to have experience in secret technology programs say that gravity is actually electro-magnetic in nature. Numerous people, some with high credentials, claim that humanity has vehicles and technology that can go faster than the speed of light, and reach other star systems. However, when we stand on the ground and throw an apple upward, it still comes down.



Beyond the Five¹⁵

With all said about the importance of staying “grounded” in our three-dimensional, physical reality, the truth of the matter is that truth cannot be garnered from our physical senses alone. As the Little Prince said,

“But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart ...”¹⁶

We sense with our gut, we feel in our bones, we perceive with our heart, we detect in our conscience, we “pick things up” with intuition.

Animals know from a distance whether another animal is friendly or threatening by its body language—and so can we. Attitudes and feelings are essential to good relationships, and we primarily communicate them nonverbally. The “music” of someone’s voice—intonation, volume, tempo, cadence—is even more important than the words.

We learn to distinguish sensory input from our five physical senses when we are babies: we detect the difference between Mother’s touch and Father’s, between one face and another, between one voice and another. We hear whether footsteps are Mother’s, Father’s, or the pet’s. Our senses don’t come automatically programmed like the sensors in cars or homes. We learn to interpret signals from our bodily senses by accumulating data and matching it with actual events.

It is the same with our other senses—we gather data, and when we pay attention to the data and to subsequent events, our interpretation of our sensations becomes more accurate. We can fine-tune all of our senses. It’s not automatic; it requires that we pay attention, not jump to conclusions, and be honest with ourselves.

None of our senses, from eyesight to intuition, is infallible or a hundred percent reliable—all are vulnerable to errors in perception and interpretation, illusion and bias. We need to evaluate and weigh all of our sense perceptions. We need to **know ourselves**—and be honest with ourselves—about which of our sensations are more accurate in which situations, and what our weak areas and biases are.

¹⁵ We actually have nine officially recognized senses, including: orientation in space (proprioception), temperature (thermoception), balance (equilibrioception), and physiological condition (interoception).

¹⁶ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (1943), p. 33.

To arrive at truth, even in mundane affairs, we have to incorporate more than our five basic senses. To protect ourselves, we have to pay attention to gut feelings that someone nearby might assault us, or that a car might cut right in front of us. To hire a good employee or employer, we have to pay attention to our feelings during an interview, not just reputation or scores on paper.

Decades ago, bankers with a “banker’s nose” were more successful predictors of who would pay back loans than any set of checkboxes. The most successful executives—and scientists—look at data and information, combine it with their knowledge and experience, and then decide based on intuition and gut instinct.

“Sixth” senses are not magical or special. Everyone has them. They become refined when we pay attention to them **and** to facts revealed later, adding two and three to get five, and being honest with ourselves about all of it.

Intuition comes with subtle bodily sensations. Subtle feelings are easily overwhelmed by strong physical feelings or emotions, but they can be recalled later. It is wise to take note of all of our feelings. They are the first stage of our inner guidance system and help us to communicate with and know what is unseen but nonetheless real.

Thousands of years ago, sages told us that this world isn’t real. More and more people today are exploring consciousness and telling us the same message. What is real? And what does “real” mean? (Definitions are crucial.)

By “real,” the sages meant “unchanging.” Anything that changes is ephemeral—not real, according to that wise definition. Remember, humans have a natural need for certainty, security, safety. One would expect sages to seek what is “real,” what doesn’t change—the ultimate and only real security. This unchanging reality is also the **real Truth**.



Ultimate Truth

When we accept facts, what is true and “real” in three-dimensional space and time—elephants have a trunk, apples fall down, two plus three equals five—we can still be open to other perspectives. When we have understood the difference between perceptions, impressions, imagination, and factual reality; when we are willing to bear with discomforts, big and small, in favor of what is really true rather than what we wish were true; then we might be able to perceive ultimate **Truth**.

**“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret:
It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”¹⁷**

It doesn't have to take long ... but it usually does. There is no requirement to have a teacher ... but it helps, *if* the teacher is truly able. The stronger one's intellect, the greater the hurdles, the greater the work required—and usually the greater the pride of knowledge or accomplishment that must be relinquished. Intellect can help, but it must be guided constantly by the reins of our soul.

There is a reason that spiritual enlightenment is called “en-light-en-ment.” Truth, like light, dispels darkness, ignorance and fear—effortlessly, just by its nature. In the course of spiritual enlightenment, the light of truth shines on aspects of our selves that were dark, crude, hidden. The light of intellect illumines our emotions and instincts, and we are moved to act truly human: humane, intelligent, compassionate, wise, balancing short-term benefits with long-term.

Truth shows us that in the long term, immorality of any kind isn't worth it. Evil is actually extremely foolish. It prevents us from seeing mundane truth, and it prevents us from realizing ultimate **Truth**. **Truth** does indeed set us free¹⁸—first from delusion, then from immorality, and finally from illusion itself.

Once one decides to seek ultimate **Truth**, one discovers that the journey becomes easier and faster by eliminating baggage of resentment, condemnation, noxious habits of thought and body, beliefs, attachments, and unnecessary desires.

Ultimate **Truth** is beyond the intellect. It can be expressed in poetry, but any series of words falls short and becomes so lengthy that it's practically useless. The more we try to understand it intellectually, the less we do—because it cannot be “understood.” It can only be “inner-stood.”

My nature is the bliss of pure consciousness.

—Shankarāchārya, *Song of Nirvāna*

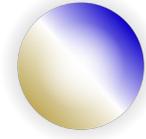
The boy reached through to the Soul of the World,
and saw that it was a part of the Soul of God. And
he saw that the Soul of God was his own soul.
And that he, a boy, could perform miracles.

—Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*

¹⁷ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (1943), p. 29.

¹⁸ John 8:32.

In our progress toward ultimate Truth, all sets of duality dissolve. We see that each set of seeming opposites—I and not-I, light and dark, up and down, good and bad, yin and yang—dissolve, or resolve, into only one.



There is neither creation nor destruction
Neither destiny nor free will
Neither path nor achievement.
This is the final truth.

—Ramana Maharshi

The ultimate Truth of oneness, non-duality, is only expressed with integrity when the speaker is actually in this state of consciousness. Jesus was clearly in this state of consciousness when he said, “I and the Father are one.”¹⁹ Mystics in a state of oneness write poetry and dance in ecstasy. Kṛṣṇa was in this state when he told a reluctant warrior to fight against evil-doers, because the soul (ātmā) is eternal and cannot be killed.²⁰ But most people who read about this state of consciousness have not experienced it.

In our three-dimensional space-time, opposites exist. We need them and work with them. It is at a higher level of awareness where they dissolve, a level that is beyond the mind and intellect, but which is reachable in consciousness.

Believing in this non-duality, or even having experienced it temporarily, does not justify mis-application of higher Truth to earthly life:

“We are all one, so I really didn’t do anything to you. I’m not responsible.”



“There’s no good or bad, right or wrong. Everything is good. It doesn’t matter what we do or don’t do.”



“There’s no such thing as truth. So I can completely ignore that information.”



“No one really owns anything, so it’s impossible to steal. Besides —things aren’t real.”



“There is no do-er and no deed, and thus no karma or law of karma. There are no consequences and there should be no punishments.”



Duality exists in our three-dimensional realm, and oneness, non-duality, exists in others.

¹⁹ John 10:30, 14:9-10. "Jesus" is the English translation of the name in the original language.

²⁰ Bhagavadgita 2:12-30.

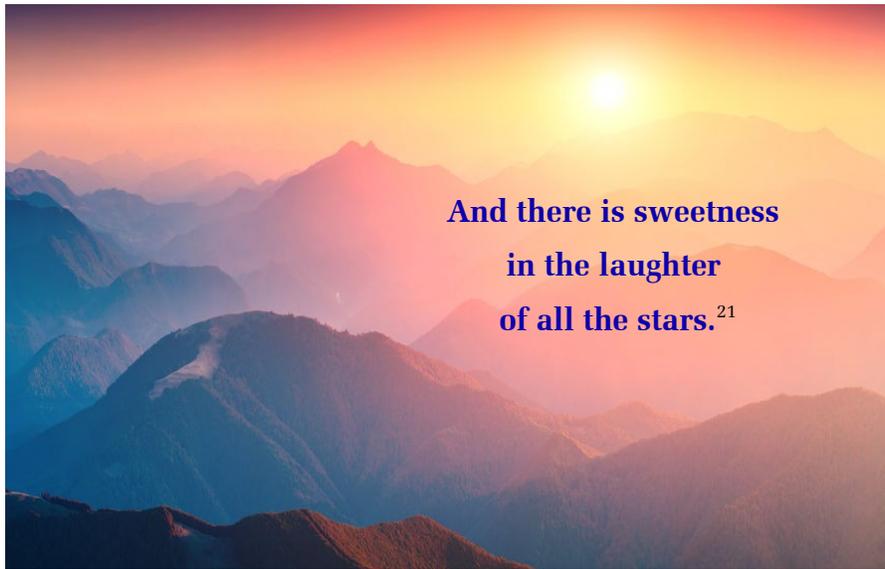
Seemingly separate from You
I perceive all around, the world
consisting of You
filled with Your beloved.

—Upamanyu, *Śivastotram*

And the truth shall set you free.

—John 8:32

Seeking ultimate **T**ruth is optional. But if we do want to perceive it, it's always there, all the time. It doesn't hide. We only need to eliminate our baggage, and there it stands, shining in full glory like the Sun.



**And there is sweetness
in the laughter
of all the stars.²¹**

²¹ Antione de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince* (1943), p. 27.

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