

TRUTH

"Bear in mind that in this life we proceed by way of metaphors and images"

Nicholas de Cusa

What is truth then? A mobile army of metaphors, metonomies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations that are elevated, transmitted, beautified in a poetic or rhetoric manner, and that appear to the people after a long usage as fixed, canonical and binding: truths are illusions of which one has forgotten they are illusions, metaphors that are worn out and literally became powerless, coins that lost their images and are now metal and no longer coins.

"On Truth and Lie in the Extramoral Sense" Frederick Nietzsche

"We have a situation in which human beings, who must deal with each other, have vastly different views as to the nature of reality yet each one believes his or her own view to be the correct one since it is based on the microcosm of personal experience. And to make matters worse, most of us are not even aware of our own world views, much less the uniqueness of the experience from which they are arrived."

"We are indeed like the proverbial blind men, each in touch with only his particular piece of the elephant yet each claiming to know the nature of the whole beast. So we squabble over our different microcosmic world views, and all wars are holy wars."

The Road Less Travelled, M. Scott Peck

"Truth is like water, you cannot hold much of it in your hands"

Hindu Proverb

The simple truth is that we cannot know *The Truth*; we can no only a *truth*: that truth which arises from our own experience, perception and cultural values. Yet, like children, as Scott Peck writes, we hold on the illusion that we are the centre of the universe and that those who do not share our perceptions are mistaken or evil. Much human misery arises from mistaking the subjective for the objective and reducing of reality to fixed and inflexible models, rather than the living, breathing relations of which it consists.

We *can* only know the world from the limitation of our own viewpoint and experience:

We understand outer-objects only insofar as we are able to re-discover in them the categories of our own thought. All 'measuring' of objects arises, fundamentally, only from the mind's singular desire to arrive at the measure of itself and its powers."

Richard Falckenberg, Grundzüge der Philosophie des Nicolaus Cusanus mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehre vom Erkennen

Limitation is the necessity of form: without rules and a grammar of expression, there can be no communication, no evolution of ideas, no articulation of experience, no culture. To say these worlds are not absolute is not to deny their value; they are the expression of subjective experience at a certain point of time and space, embodying a relationship between external reality and a perception caught in cultural values, expectations and education. Culture gives rise to a language of expression without which there could be no form. Each world is a unique and valuable creation.

Thus human life is caught in the dialectic between the partial and the whole: between experience and the articulation of experience.

Yet, if we are absorbed entirely with the individual narrative, we circumscribe the world to this limitation. We believe that one form of expression is more 'true' than another. That our religion is more 'true' than another or that science is more 'true' than religion for example. Further, insecurity and fear: the need for power and control remain primary motivations in human behaviour as we attempt to find stability and certainty in the flux and uncertainty of life.

However, the capacity for transcendence is integrated into our nature: a perception that can free us from our myopic vision: an emotional and spiritual connection and a creative leap of imagination that takes us beyond ourselves. Awareness or Mindfulness, as expressed in Buddhist teaching, helps us to view experience in relation to our reaction to it, thus allowing us a distance that avoids judgement.

The path of Love, of true religion, is that of transcendence: of moving from an egocentric perception to embrace the whole of reality, to become one with the Other and the Universe. This is by nature mystic, since the individual is consumed into the whole. The first step may be when another's wellbeing: our partner or our children, becomes more important than our own.

The simple truth is that if we are willing to accept the nature of our limitation, then we are open to others and treat them with respect and tolerance. Research shows that it is a sense of not being respected that leads to conflict and violence on an individual and global level (James Gilligan, 2001). Knowing that our ideas, beliefs and feelings are not absolutes, but part of a complex interactive dance, should teach us this respect and tolerance for others. Each person we meet can give us a new insight into Reality and into ourselves.

"The order that our minds imagine is like a net, or a ladder, built to attain something. But afterwards you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless".
Umberto Ecco, 'The Name of the Rose'