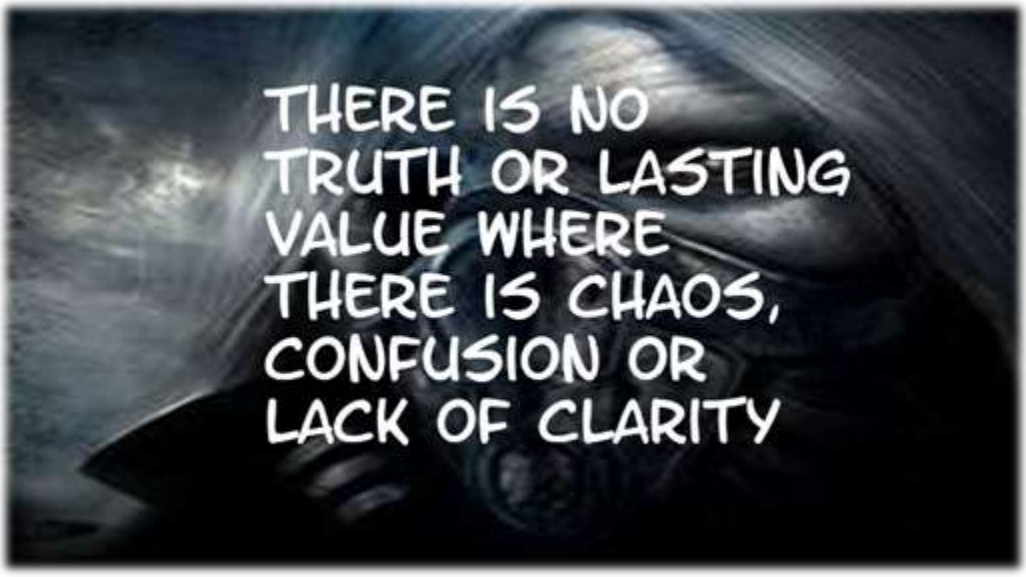
Truth and Value



Truth and Value are two concepts that we use daily, but in different ways by different people.

This article attempts to show that, despite differences in interpretations, there could be only one possible definition for the truth behind any given set of events, even when these events are experienced differently by many. It also attempts to show that a universal Truth reveals itself in very practical ways. And that the way to recognize a universal truth is by the lasting benefits or values that it confers on society. It concludes, therefore, that Truth is not just an esoteric, philosophical or mystical concept.

We shall first use examples from the physical science to make the points in this article. Then we shall apply the same logic to examine the contending thoughts on the factors that govern outcomes in our lives. That is, is it destiny, chance, or one's own efforts/actions?

Hopefully the keen reader will, after following the arguments put forward, be able to draw similar conclusions from their own objective observations in other areas of life that are more familiar to them. In doing so, perhaps they too will come to their own conviction that, indeed, there are absolute Truths, which, when they guide our lives and activities, yield lasting benefits.

The concept of value includes the notion of something that a person likes, or would like to have, and the concept of Truth includes the notion of “that which is factual, correct or proper”.

What each person likes, or would like to have is very different, and also, likes and dislikes can change for the same person over time. That which is factual, correct or proper is also colored by one’s interpretation or understanding of the events. Yet, many still operate under the notion or belief that Truth and Value should be absolute and unchanging. That is, they should have the same meaning for everyone, all the time.

Indeed, this belief is strictly held in some aspects of our lives. For example, developments in the physical sciences have been remarkably successful because practitioners in the field sooner or later give the same interpretation to observed phenomena in our natural environment. Although, these common interpretations are arrived at after detailed observations, record keeping and vigorous testing of contending interpretations (theories), until the one that offers the best explanation is finally identified and accepted. The accepted interpretation then becomes incorporated into the body of laws for that scientific discipline. For example the laws of Physics or the Laws of Chemistry.

Another notable phenomenon is that the viability, or longevity of any law is very closely related to its effectiveness in being put into practical applications, or in expanding investigations in the field of study. Thus for example, Isaac Newton’s observations and explanations for the forces at work during the interaction between bodies at rest or in motion gave rise to his laws of motion. The factoring of these laws into the construction of machines have confirmed their value, and contributed, in no small measure, to progress in human existence and experience on earth, since Newton formulated those laws.

One could just as well describe the Newtonian laws of motion as “that which always occurs when bodies at rest or in motion interact”. And, if something always occurs, it means that thing is “a certainty”, it is inevitable, or “it is what it is”, when the conditions are right. In some quarters, this alternate definition for the word “Law”, is used to describe “Truth”. In other words, Truth is that which is inevitable and always automatically leads to the same events/results when the same conditions are met.

The close relationship between Laws and their practical applications, which lead to progress, can be seen in all fields of physical scientific endeavors, which suggests that one leads to the other.

Therefore, if we translate these physical laws to be Truths and the progress associated with them as Values, it means that Truth, when applied, gives Value. The failures and disasters that follow when development is built upon faulty scientific theories supports this relationship between Truth and Value.

The foregoing illustration of the common acceptance of laws (truths) in the physical sciences should raise questions in the mind of any objective thinker as to why the same is not evident in other areas of our endeavors. Instead of the notions of relative truths and relative values that are becoming very entrenched in many minds regarding experiences and interpretations in these other fields of human experience and activities.

Yet, the strong existence of absolutes, as well as its successful application in the fields of natural science offer compelling arguments against this notion of relative truths. This argument is even more compelling when one can easily see the confusion that the existence of many relative truths and values introduce into society.

But then, an objective person cannot ignore the fact that we all see things differently.

But, does that mean we must have different interpretations or meanings for the common things that we observe or experience? For example, we see and experience the sun differently. Does that mean that the "meaning" of the sun must be different for each person? Should a person whose skin is sensitive to the rays of the sun interpret the meaning of the sun based strictly on their sensitivity to the sun's rays? What would one think of such a person who, because of their skin condition, refuses to acknowledge any other ideas surrounding the sun, except what he or she has experienced of its effect on him or her?

Couldn't the same analogy apply to many who, under today's notion of relative truths, want to be governed only by their own experiences?

Going by the foregoing logic, perhaps, Truth should not be defined as our individual experience of an event. Instead, a better definition may be that Truth is "the interpretation derived from various individual experiences. An interpretation that sheds light and always leads to a consistent understanding for everybody". Just as is the case with the laws of science, where many experience their own observations, and out of these emerge theories, or attempts at interpretation. The various theories are then put to test. And finally, the one that consistently gives explanation to all, or most, observations becomes accepted as the law, or the Truth, that governs/explains that activity.

What this process tells us is that the march towards uncovering Truth must invariably include a timeframe during which there will be multiple interpretations of personal experiences of common observations. Although these theories may differ, they expose society to the variety of individual experiences that need to be taken into account, as we try to identify the inevitable that lies behind these multiple experiences, i.e. the Truth!

When seen from this perspective, it would be wrong to ignore or to condemn divergent experiences during the process of information gathering.

History shows that no sooner is a theory popular than attempts are made to find ways of putting the new understanding to use. And, with that, the benefits, if any, of the newly discovered theory also begin to emerge. History also shows that incomplete or faulty interpretations (theories) have been promulgated as laws, and the erroneous conclusions soon become evident when the developments based on them create other problems of their own. Whereas, developments or progress based on the correct interpretations (theories i.e. real Truth) are everlasting. Thus, for example, all developments that are based on the Newtonian laws of motion (which reflect the truth governing the interactions of the forces between objects at rest or in motion) have always produced beneficial results. Whereas, developments based on incomplete or faulty interpretations sooner or later collapse.

The foregoing should lead the keen thinker to the conclusion that, indeed, Truth should be easily recognized by the nature, quality and consistency of value that its application confers on society. And that Truth has nothing to do with being esoteric, philosophical or mystical.

Another conclusion that a keen reader may draw is that the confusion in society today is perhaps not due to relativity of experiencing, but to dogmatic clinging to personal or group interpretations, regardless of the outcomes (benefits or chaos) that these interpretations are effecting on society.

A little bit of reflection will show that the same confusion existed in the past in the discipline of science, until modern scientific methods were adopted, starting around the seventeenth century. Prior to this development, studies in the fields of alchemistry and metaphysics, for example, were rife with competing and confusing theories and explanations of observed events. Many of these theories or explanations bordered on the esoteric, superstitious or mystical, and stifled progressive developments in the field. This is quite similar to what we see today in the many theories and explanations in the fields of study that are closely associated, in many people's mind, with the search for Truth, these being Religion, Spirituality and Philosophy.

Maybe the logical question to ask is "how to break out of the current impasse among contending relative truths, especially in the field of Spiritual investigation?" So that humanity can continue on its match towards uncovering the universal Truths behind our individual experiences in this arena.

It is logical to think that perhaps the simplest solution would be to adopt the same scientific approach of assessing any teaching/explanation in this arena by the lasting benefit it confers on society. And that if this were done, much of the hype, hope and hysteria surrounding religious and spiritual fervor would disappear, since focus will turn to putting these interpretations to objective tests, and judging by the results. Through this approach, it should become easy to recognize the explanations that have the most lasting values for society.

Were we able to do this, we would already be putting into practice the biblical injunction “by their works ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:16). Their works being the use to which explanations have been put into practice.

No doubt, this approach would quickly resolve conflicting explanations that are the causes of many religious/spiritual conflicts that we see manifest in society today.

For this to happen, we have to accept a common frame work for testing explanations and hypothesis in the religious and spiritual fields. Similar to how all modern scientific hypothesis must comply with given characteristics, and tests are conducted following accepted methodologies.

For those who wonder if this is possible, the answer is yes.

But the tools required for this process, in the religious and spiritual spheres of investigation, are different from the tools used in science.

The fundamental requirement is that the testers must become intimately familiar with the true nature of spiritual life, based on knowledge of the fundamental governing principles of life. Next, they must be able to use the tools appropriately suited to their investigation. It will also require the willingness to be objective.

Perhaps the following will help to demonstrate the point being made here:

Today, as in the past, mankind has debated what governs a person's fate. Is it destiny, chance, or one’s own effort? Any objective observation of the life of practically any person will give evidence of some or all of these elements. Which makes it a vexing question as to which of these is the universal truth of what determines a person's fate?

Now, let us apply the same logic discussed earlier to see if we cannot arrive at a universal answer.

When the average observer cannot see any evident interconnection between cause and effect, their most likely answer would be "destiny", if he or she believes in a supernatural power that pre-determines all outcomes. Otherwise, the observer would ascribe the outcome to "chance" or "luck".

When the observer can see a possible interconnection between cause and effect, they are more likely to attribute the result to the effort that was first put in.

However, we are all familiar with situations where effort was put in under the right conditions, and yet the outcome was different than one would have expected. A believer in the supernatural would describe this situation as destiny, while the unbeliever is more likely to attribute it to good or bad luck.

We can see in this example that none of the answers can leave anyone with a sense of certainty about a future occurrence. Not even those who believe in destiny. Yet, the average person would prefer to have reliable answers to guide them into the future. Answers that we can describe as "the truth about something".

Now, assuming we approached the same question with an awareness of the fundamental principle of life that "whatever a person sows, is what he or she will reap". Then the objective person would make every effort to look beyond the obvious and seen, for possible causes that may be contributing to the visible outcome.

This effort to look beyond the obvious and the seen will require the person to use tools that are best suited to this effort. This may require application of inference logical thinking, or reference to resources that can "see" beyond the visible.

It should be quickly added that just because a resource is described as having the ability to see or infer beyond the visible does not mean that such seeing is arbitrary. Again, there are principles of life that govern such abilities. And with knowledge of these other governing principle, one can confidently assess the quality of information provided by such resource. Thus even here, a kind of logic applies.

Now, is it not logical to expect that if people knew and became convinced of the truth governing the outcome of events, there would be less activities based on ignorance, and therefore less unhappy results due to ignorance of the truth? Is it also not arguable that less unhappy results would translate to a greater and lasting benefit for society?

There are many sacred writings that point to these fundamental principles of life. Unfortunately, modern man has become too sophisticated to understand or to accept the simplicity of language used to deliver the teachings in these sacred writings. But, along with this increased level of intellectual sophistication has come a lower level of Spiritual awareness and maturity, which is clear to any objective observer.

The clearest evidence of this immaturity is the inability to maintain personal or group harmony, or to live in peaceful co-existence. Yet it goes without saying that group progress can never be attained and sustained without cooperative harmony.

But, cooperative harmony requires each person to learn to appreciate the perspectives offered by multiple experiences on any matter. Because, even limited perspectives help to identify factors that need to be taken into consideration as we strive to undercover the truth behind the event being studied. Contentious and dogmatic clinging to one's experience or understanding alone belie a level of immaturity that will make it difficult to see and grasp Truth.

In GOD's grace, the governing principles of life are again given to mankind in the book "In the Light of Truth" (The Grail Message), by Abdrushin. This book is written in language and style that can be easily understood by modern man.

Therefore, when the final reckoning comes, no one who is serious about seeking Truth can claim that they never had an opportunity to find their way out of the fog caused by conflicting and contending teachings and beliefs. Neither can anyone claim that they never had the opportunity to learn to recognize true value, from a spiritual perspective.