

ABOUT TRUTH AND BIAS

Robert Campbell, 2007

Introduction to the Nature of Truth:

When we speak of truth, we imply that there is a transcending reality that somehow embraces all possible varieties of phenomenal experience. We imply that there is a truth that is valid for all people for all time. Even if we believe that there is no such truth, that truth is a completely arbitrary affair that the individual alone is free to decide as they wish, we implicitly believe that this is true for all people for all time. Even if we believe that when we die it is the absolute end of sentient experience of any kind, then we believe that everyone who has ever lived faces this same psychic annihilation at death. We believe this is true for any intelligent creature living anywhere in the universe. There is an inescapable contradiction in terms involved here, because the denial of a transcending truth is implicitly claimed as universally true. No reasonable person chooses to believe that they alone face utter extinction. We all believe in a cosmic reality, even if it is absurd.

There is a fundamentally important point here. There is both a universal and a particular aspect to the very nature of truth. This has been a prevailing theme throughout the history of both Eastern and Western philosophy. Although it may be expressed in different words - One and Many, Self and Other, Unity in Diversity, Universal and Particular - the same prevalent theme applies. We share in a universally common world of sensory experience that is not uniquely closed unto ourselves, even though the qualities of experience may be focused through us and interpreted in uniquely particular ways. Each human being is both the same and different. We are One and Many.

Truth Requires Confirmation in Phenomenal Experience:

We generally agree that truth must allow of confirmation in phenomenal experience of some kind, whether privately or publicly perceived. We are free to believe that the moon is made of cheese, but the phenomenal experience of moon missions proves otherwise. The phenomenal experience may itself be private and transient, even unique in quality, but if it reveals some facet of truth, it must have universal aspects that are enduring. It must have a capacity to enhance one's perceptions with respect to better integrating one's overall experience of living. It must find private validation in phenomenal experience.

Truth Must Have Integrative Power by Spanning Space and Time:

Spiritual, religious, humanist, and scientific endeavors all seek to better integrate our experience of living. They seek to enhance the quality of life, to make it better by finding a more unified perspective in some way. They seek to integrate our history, to span space and time, in anticipation of a better socially, emotionally and spiritually integrated future. All our various efforts at understanding phenomena seek a unified perspective, despite our cultural diversity and our different personal abilities. We all seek this feeling

of unity, this feeling of being integrated - this feeling of being whole. We seek it in our identification with our culture, with our religion or lack of it, with our personal beliefs, with our faith in science, with our lifestyle. We seek it in love by bridging the separation between Self and Other. We long for union. In general, we seek it in our framework of understanding

The Dark Side:

There is a dark side to all this of course. We can also seek that feeling of unity in hate. We can find it in being united against a common enemy. We can seek unity in pursuing the supremacy of Self to the exclusion of Other than Self. The tragedies of our human history attest to this. We can find that glorious feeling of unity in many ways. Some of them move us toward a more universally valid framework of understanding. Some of them move us in the opposite direction, toward separation and fragmentation. We can see the negative tendencies in others more easily than in ourselves and this perception is generally in polar contrast to our own implicitly accepted framework of understanding. Our views and opinions are easily biased without our being aware of it.

Biases and Value Judgments:

Whatever the circumstances, we are continually required to choose between alternatives and accept, modify, or reject a variety of Other influences on us. We have to make value judgments all the time to live. This puts us in quite a fix. Can we be sure that the Other is the One who is biased? The influences may seem foreign and may threaten our sense of unity that we see as proper. Can we be sure that We are not the One who is biased? Is our framework of understanding and our associated feeling of Unity better? Or can we be sure that both are biased, that one is not more right than the other? Or can we be sure that there is not a more fundamental framework in which neither is completely biased? And if the other is biased in a way that oppresses or threatens us how are we to respond? How are we to expose bias without implicating an alternate bias? Is anyone omniscient? Can anyone claim to be all-knowing about anything? Or can anyone really claim they are not omniscient when whatever we believe we believe it to be universally true? Even if we say that no one is omniscient we believe this to be a universal truth. And we cannot get along with believing nothing. Universal qualities keep intruding into particular beliefs.

Language, Reason, & Intuitive Insight:

We all depend upon personal intuitive insights, whether they are socially conditioned or not, to integrate and guide our behavior in some coherent way. We are social creatures who are largely dependent upon language to mutually communicate and understand. With language comes a related capacity for left brain reason. We can deal with experience in abstraction to integrate past and future into a coherent plan of behavior or thought. And there are several thousand languages in the world offering a variety of ways to do this.

Our mute right brain intuitive capacities tend to be influenced accordingly, either enhanced or restricted, by our personal history. Our right intuitive hemisphere is characterized by holistic perceptions, aesthetics, propriety, integrating themes, that sort of thing. It tends to seek Unity but is limited by a left hemisphere need to find a degree of social consistency. We tend to become subject to biases, both behaviorally and intuitively, according to our cultural conditioning.

In a larger sense language has brought with it the bipolar organization of the right and left hemispheres of our brain. It allows us to span space and time seemingly without limit, but it has also opened us to intuitively wonder about the nature of beginnings and ends. We are faced with an intuitive quest into the nature of the creation itself. Every culture has reflected on this and has derived its own story of creation. The Garden of Eden and the Big Bang are just two of many creation stories.

Assessing Biases and a Universal Framework of Understanding:

So, what is the measure of assessing biases in a global arena. How can we identify them? Is one person's social conditioning better than that of another? Can biases even be determined relative to our terrestrial circumstance without taking account of the cosmic context within which our planet, solar system and galaxy exists? Is there a way to open perceptions to a truly universal perspective that allows of unlimited diversity of unbiased expression? Is a universal framework of understanding possible that can redeem the biases of cultural conditioning without eroding the historic foundations and wealth of our cultural diversity?

If we all behaved in a kind of socially conditioned lockstep, we would be robots. So, there can be no acceptable behavioral model that will work for all. If there is an answer, it is not to be found in idealized behavioral models or blind belief systems incorporating assumptions implicit in the use of language. There may be any number of generally acceptable behavioral responses to any given situation.

This leaves us presented with only one other possible avenue to explore if we hope to find universally acceptable solutions. This avenue requires direct intuitive insight into the structural dynamics of the creative process as it universally applies in any situation. The creative process is the cosmic order at work. The cosmic order is a dynamic evolving process. So, we need to gain insight into how it is at work within us as we relate to the world around us and learn.

To be an acceptable insight it must be universally valid. It must be able to find confirmation in every facet of phenomenal experience, both in the private and public domains. It must relate to the structure and related dynamics of the cosmic order and to all creation. This means that there must be a common structure to the creative process that recurs in every area of phenomenal experience. It is a tall order. We are talking about direct insight into the cosmic order in a way that transcends our own birth and death. It must also transcend and subsume the use of language. It must prescribe the roots of meaning implicit in any language.

The Cosmic Order, Integrating History, Religious and Scientific Bias:

The cosmic order must transcend and subsume the whole of space and time, the whole of history. Traditional religions have found answers in creation myths handed down from antiquity. We have always been bound by this need to integrate history in order to formulate an acceptable framework of understanding. Generally speaking creation myths draw upon a creator God who created the universe. They start with an omnipotent and omniscient Unity that created the diversity of experience through miracle. These beliefs do not worry too much about the mechanics of the creative process. Is this a bias? Was the world really created in six days? Can this be confirmed in phenomenal experience of any kind? How could there be days before there was a sun that our planet could rotate its face toward? It may have helped to get us over some rough spots, but blind belief is clearly a kind of bias.

Modern science has reached in the opposite direction. It reaches back into the past by drawing upon the accumulated complexity of empirical evidence. It confirms its assumed truths by relying upon this evidence in an effort to integrate all the pieces of the puzzle to establish a singular Unified beginning. As with religious creation myths, there is a contradiction about the nature of time here. How can time have a beginning in time? Science shares with religion the need for Unity but it denies that the Unity of creation is intelligent in any way. The clock of time was only wound up in the initial Big Bang and it has been running down ever since. There was nothing before that. This entire vast universe sprang into existence from absolutely nothing. That singular event has predetermined the spatial evolution of galaxies, stars and planets ever since. And it follows that biological evolution on the planet is a random process without intelligent planning and utterly without purpose. There is no transcending basis to reality or truth apart from blind fortuitous chance.

That being the case no creature in this vast universe has any reason to hope for any kind of psychic continuity beyond the grave. This universal truth is claimed for all brings for all time. Anyone who may believe to the contrary is afflicted with a religious bias. But if that is so then this truth constitutes a transcending reality that a scientist can know. It is a claim of omniscient insight into the cosmic order based on extrapolating empirical evidence back to a beginning of time and space. This belief clearly transcends one's own birth and death. The whole argument constitutes a contradiction in terms. Empirical evidence drawn from phenomenal experience is extrapolated to explain the origins of phenomenal experience from nothing. The origin negates the evidence it is based upon. It is a kind of bootstrapping and absurdism. It can never find direct confirmation in phenomenal experience. It too can only be a blind belief. It too is a bias.

Objective Science and Subjective Religion:

Are we to be forever impaled on the cross of one perspective opposed to the other? Are we to be forever faced with irreconcilable biases about the nature of Unity? Science musters powerful arguments based on solid empirical facts. It may be shaky about the interpretation of those facts when it comes to Grand Unified Theories of Everything, but it is certainly successful in providing us with cars, airplanes, TV sets, and other

technological advances. It has shrunk the world into a common arena of discourse through advances in transport and communications. It has made us all aware that we live in a common global community and in doing so has brought our diverse biases to the fore.

Religions on the other hand have traditionally provided us with a moral basis of social behavior, albeit culturally biased to various degrees. This is absent in the physical and biological sciences. Science has traditionally rejected subjectivity in its realm. Science claims to be morally neutral in its material pursuits. This tends to make it an amoral belief system subject to being hijacked into any perverse cause.

Some curious observations can be made here. Religions generally deal with the subjective or private domain that we experience inside. Science generally deals with the objective public domain of our common experience outside. Since we are implicitly required to make value judgments, we can not avoid moral considerations implicit in the way experience is presented to us. If we are to avoid blind religious bias that may get off track, and if science provides no moral guidance, where are we to turn? We may have innate subjective intuitive feelings about the nature of right and wrong but history confirms that these can be subverted by identification with this or that biased cause. Identification with explicit material objectives can suppress or color subjective human conscience. Capitalism, communism, nationalism, fundamentalism are just a few examples. Is a universal bridge possible that can Unity these two arenas of phenomenal experience, one subjective and the other objective? Is there a way that we can be loosed from the bonds of bias?

Unity and Universal Wholeness:

Let us take a closer look at the concept of Unity. Can there be such thing as undifferentiated Unity? There would be no phenomena in experience to differentiate so obviously there is more to it. Oneness must allow of Many-ness.

Science seeks to unify the observed complexity of many-ness by causal processes of various kinds. There are structures and there are processes that together can be consistent with a unified perspective, at least to some practical degree. We can understand how a ball moves in reaction to being hit by a bat. The structures require a presumption of a spatial context. The processes require a presumption of a temporal context. So, space and time are prerequisites for science.

Can there be a Unity to the Universe in space and time? This implies a boundary in either space or time or both. If there is a boundary in space then the question arises what is beyond that. We are faced with a contradiction, a two-ness, not oneness. And if space is infinite we can not find knowable Unity either. If there is a beginning or end in time then the question arises what is before or after that? The same contradictions arise. And if space and time together form a continuum as general relativity theory assumes, then we are back to the contradictions implicit in Big Bang Theory, that spacetime itself began from nothing. It is noteworthy that Einstein questioned the spacetime continuum foundations of his own work late in life.

So, looking objectively outside at the universe does not resolve the question of Unity. Can looking subjectively inside do any better? Religious disciplines, or rather spiritual pursuits in general, offer the advantage that it is possible for an individual to find a transcending sense of Unity in their private experience that need not be in conflict with the objective world of our common experience. The knowing of Unity must be universal to be complete. And it need not require the conversion of others if it is a mute realization that is not dependent upon the objective assumptions of language.

This however is not consistent with the scientific basis of the technologies we have come to depend upon. The most fundamental assumptions of science must be privately renounced, ignored, or else regarded as deficient in some way that may be correctable in future. One can become a forest monk and withdraw from social participation in our technological age. And there may be some merit in this for rare individuals who may be able to provide a light in the forest. Otherwise, the individual concerned remains embroiled in worldly affairs and is faced with a schism in their subjective experience of Unity. Consequently, for most of us there are certain boundary conditions implicit in the nature of Unity that need to be resolved from both an objective perspective and a subjective perspective. That word BOTH indicates an avenue of investigation that has never been properly explored before.

Boundary Conditions Between Inside and Outside:

There is a boundary that we experience between our private subjective experience and objective sensory experience accessible to all. We are implicitly aware of having an inside distinct from an outside. Moreover, we are aware that all things have an inside distinct from an outside, all the way down to atoms. This boundary cannot be rigidly closed without communication of some kind across it, or Unity would not be possible. Everything would forever be isolated from everything else and thus unknowable. We would be doomed to an infinitely fragmented world without possibility of coherent meaning. This is the opposite end of the spectrum from undifferentiated Oneness that also does not allow of recognizing different phenomena. Between these two extremes we can find a new approach to understanding the structural dynamics of the cosmic order and the Unifying perspective that we seek. We seek to know universal wholeness in phenomenal experience.

The Characteristics of Universal Wholeness and the System of Representation:

The basic characteristics of Universal Wholeness can be summarized in brief. Everything must share a universal inside as well as a universal outside. It is generally acknowledged that we share a universal outside in what we call objective reality. We sense the universal outside as things outside of us in space.

The universal inside is intuitively sensed. it is a universal source of knowing inside distinct from what is known outside. It is a prerequisite for the self-similar perception of wholeness. Whatever anyone believes about the nature of universal truth they believe it is true for everyone. If I become totally extinct at death it MUST be true for everyone. No

one is foolish enough to believe that they alone face extinction. If there is an option why would they choose this option?

The universal inside constitutes a universal Center. The universal outside constitutes a universal Periphery. Neither the inside nor the outside can be known to the exclusion of the other. They are mutually defined by active processes occurring across the boundary or interface between them. The universal inside thus has an active relationship to the universal outside across one or more active interfaces between them. The active interface that we normally experience is the surface of our body that defines inside from outside. Sensory input actively crosses this active interface from outside and we make motor responses from inside to outside.

There is a way to develop a comprehensive System of exploring all possible relationships of inside to outside between a specific number of active interfaces between them. This One System results in an open-ended set of nested sub-Systems within it that progressively elaborate on the nature of universal wholeness. It is called simply the System. This works in such a way that the lower Systems, with a lower number of active interfaces, transcend and subsume the discrete higher sub-Systems that elaborate on them. In this way it remains One System of representing universal wholeness.

Even each higher sub-System, identified as System 2, 3, or 4, etc., is holistic and complete unto itself. As an elaboration of System 1 it must be. The System is a structural approach that embraces all possible structural varieties of phenomena. It prescribes the structures and processes of how the cosmic order works as a dynamic whole. More details of the System are introduced in articles on the website.

This System of representing the cosmic order is not dependent upon language, but rather vice versa. There is meaning implicit in the way that it works. This allows meanings in language to be fine-tuned to more accurately relate to phenomena when the System is applied as a method of investigation. The System enhances intuitive insight into how the creative process works in any circumstance.