



'Let's Talk About Truth, Love & Understanding'

Now here's the thing!

Never have we lived in a time when we have so much information — And so much misinformation!

F Scott Fitzgerald, author of the 1925 novel *'The Great Gatsby'* wrote, "*The test of a first rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function*"

However, today's world is many removes from Fitzgerald's *Jazz Age* — And our modern *1st rate minds* are often having to contend & wrestle with way more than two opposing ideas at any one time.

We now live in an age of 24/7 news, fake news, fact as fiction, fiction as fact, half truths & post truth.

Reality is Perception

And perception is reality — If you choose to perceive something that denies the literal reality of the situation, or sits at complete odds with how others perceive things, then who's right and who's wrong?

The legendary Hollywood film producer **Robert Evans**, famously said, "*There are three sides to every story — Your side, My side, & the Truth!!*" [Tweet This]

But is this anything new?

Certainly the language we employ to describe, define, and label it all is pretty modern, and In my book, '[Uncovering Mindfulness: In Search of a Life More Meaningful](#)' I talk a lot about language and the brain.

For instance, we are born with the mental scaffolding in place to hear and make every sound in every language in the world — & if you're asking that's around 6800.

We are also primed by language from the get-go. Then as we mature we are subject to programming by *linguistic frames* operating outside our conscious awareness.

These have a profound effect upon the way we both think about and perceive certain words, construct meaning and interpret language — & they are everywhere!

We rarely notice them though because our Attention is drawn to (and held) inside the frame, &, the cognitive linguist **George Lakoff** who was himself a former pupil of **Noam Chomsky**, believes that frames are in fact so powerful that they trump

facts and that “every word is defined with respect to frames”

But I would argue whether any of this is really new at all — Be they linguistic frames — Dark arts involving smoke and mirrors & deliberate acts of dissembling — Or, collective conscious or unconscious *group think*.

What history may tell us

The 5th Century BC historian **Herodotus**, known as the ‘*Father of Modern History*’, has also been described as the ‘*Father of Lies*’.

This however betrays a modernist standpoint, as in the ancient world the occasional falsehood did not vitiate a writers claim to be called a historian.

Whilst Britain’s war time prime minister **Winston Churchill** said, “*History is written by the victors*”

For me **E H Carr** nailed the evident dichotomy between truth, fiction and everything that lays between, in his 1961 book, ‘*What is History?*’

Heightened Consciousness

He recognised that society was developing a heightened consciousness about the deconstructed nature of the past as history — With doubts about representation, referentiality, the truth conditional statement, the position of agency, and the authoritative voice.

In his thinking, Carr was anticipating the post modern challenge to be clear about the distinction between fact and fiction.

However, we have moved way past *modernism and post modernism* and into an uneasy world of *faction* — With so many things disguised as truth, and perhaps this is what we really mean by post-truth?

So a question...

Does truth have a half-life?

Is truth today like some radioactive substance, with a kind of half-life ? — Is it meant to decay as it is informed, reshaped, concealed, dissembled, owned then disowned, by populist memes? [Tweet This]

Just think of all the half-truths & non-truths turned into slogans that then go viral and become the weighty currency of our conversations when we were able to congregate and commune together in the workplace, in the supermarket, around the dinner table with our extended family, in the coffee houses, or down the pub.

Funnily enough though, we may talk an awful lot about stuff - In fact we spend around 80% of our time talking - but rarely do we think about it.

Words with both their implicit and explicit meaning and the ideas they convey, carry the day. We readily parley them into a construct of reality that seems to fit what we think we know, built on — Yes, what we think we know, and around and around it goes — But as we iterate and move further and further away from the original point of origin, how can we tell when and at what point the “*polonium decays into lead?*”

Objective Distance

We now live in a world where social media ensures we are constantly interacting with things put forward as facts in a perpetual running dialogue of opinion and counter opinion.

The whole notion of what truth is has decayed and become infected by a cultural shift that sometimes seems to suggest that emotion trumps reason and that social media ‘truths’ are more powerful than objective truth.

It's almost impossible to render ourselves free and gain some objective distance — Some understanding — Strengthen our impartiality, reset our filters, separate truth from fiction, or *faction* — And spot the canard.

In fact, truth has become a floating commodity — But it's not just there bobbing around freely in an ocean of public thought and opinion is it?

There's a massive interplay — free-trading, horsetrading, hucksterism, misdirection et al going on — Millions of games of *capture the flag* are being played and we are all being played along with them too!

So, how can we recognise & know what is true?



Here are 3 things I think we all need to understand about it to make our way in today's world:

- **Choices are not binary:** *The word binary is increasingly used to describe the choices we need to make & the positions we should take — either it's this or its that — More and more this is how things are framed and presented to us, day-in and day-out — But life is not that simple & I wonder if substance and truth have become its casualties and we've unlearned how to be critical, to weigh things and to evaluate what's before us? We live in a Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous world, things cannot be certain — So, let go of that binary mindset and free yourself from those mental chains that bind you*
- **Nature abhors a vacuum:** *Life and so much that happens is still a great mystery — Beneath our world of fixed objects is uncertainty and we know this because Quantum Theory reveals how elementary particles and waves continually appear and disappear — It's impossible to predict or know with any certainty so many things in a world that **Greg Bear** describes in 'The Infinity Concerto' as being, "All waves, with nothing waving, over no distance" — But as nature abhors a vacuum, human nature abhors uncertainty — We want answers and we want them now — Without them we feel uncomfortable, ill at ease — But of course, there are far more questions than answers and we bide in that tension between the unknown and the unanswered — The American Astronomer & author, **Carl Sagan**, wrote "We are a way for the cosmos to know itself" — So, unlearn and allow yourself to trust the elemental You — Your brain, Your instincts, Your elemental truth; &*



- **Know your bias:** *“This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man” Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 3* — Accept that you have a limited perception, but also accept and understand that so does everyone and everything else, including the multiple sources you look to for reliable information, news and facts, although apparently 30% of Americans get their news from only one source - Facebook, and perhaps not coincidentally that is the same % figure of US citizens who acknowledge they have mental health issues — Accept that perception and reality aren't the same thing — And then [Embrace your beautiful imperfection](#) — “We are all works in progress, who mistakenly think we are the finished article”, as well as being the sum of our nature, nurture and our experiences — [But choice is a gift we give ourselves and it can liberate](#) — **So choose not to accept everything at face value** — **Learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable** — & **get to know your bias**

“Let’s build cathedrals with columns and arches to the stars, to let all light and hope shine within, and be of benefit to all mankind” (Anon)

And here’s to love!

I am all about making the complex less complex, the tough stuff not so tough and putting the unreachable within reach of everyone. I am author of *‘Uncovering Mindfulness: In Search Of A Life More Meaningful’* (All new freshly minted 2nd Edition coming soon in 2019) available on Amazon and www.bookboon.com; the *‘Coffee & A Cup of Mindfulness’* and the *‘Mindful Hacks For Mindful Living & Mindful Working’* series. I am also a Contributing Author to [The Huffington Post](#) and a Contributing Writer to [Thrive Global](#). You can follow the continuing journey Uncovering Mindfulness on Twitter [@TheMindfulBook](#) and at [@Paul_Mudd](#)



