

Seeking Eternal Truths: A Personal Exploration

I have embarked on a journey to uncover eternal, significant, and meaningful truths about reality, and I write in the first person as a fellow truth-seeker. There is a sense of wonder and responsibility in approaching this task. I remind myself to be fearless and introspective, as true understanding requires both courage and humility. Throughout history, sages and teachers have emphasized the liberating power of truth—*“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* ¹. This timeless advice inspires me to seek truth not just as cold hard fact, but as a path to freedom, love, and higher consciousness.

Understanding Truth

What do we mean by “truth”? At one level, truth can be thought of as objective reality – the facts of the world that remain true whether or not we believe in them. For example, it is true that the Earth orbits the Sun, and that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. Such truths are grounded in evidence and consistency. They often feel solid and enduring. Yet one of the paradoxes I’ve discovered is that even some of our most established truths can evolve. New discoveries can refine what we thought we knew. In science, every answer tends to spark new questions. Even a statement like the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus’s famous observation – **“The only constant in life is change”** – carries a profound truth about the dynamic nature of reality ². In other words, one eternal truth may be that nothing stays the same; change itself is an enduring principle.

Truth is not only about external facts, however. It also has a deeply personal and ethical dimension. Different philosophical and spiritual traditions have conceived of truth in richer ways than mere factual accuracy. In the Western philosophical tradition, **truth** has often been defined as correspondence between a statement and reality – telling it like it is. But even in the West, there have always been undercurrents that see truth as something *lived* and *embodied* rather than just stated. For instance, early Western philosophers described their pursuit as *philosophia* – literally, the **love of wisdom** – indicating that seeking truth was a way of life motivated by love ³. Meanwhile, in the Hebrew tradition, the word for truth (*emeth*) primarily connotes faithfulness and reliability rather than just factual correctness ⁴. To be “true” in that sense is to be steadfast and faithful, fulfilling one’s promises. This view suggests that truth is deeply intertwined with **integrity** and **trust**. I find this inspiring: truth isn’t just about what we **know**, but also about how we **are** – how faithfully we live and relate to others.

Because of this, I’ve come to see that truth has an **inner** quality as well as an outer one. It’s not only about having correct information in our minds; it’s also about authenticity in our hearts. Being truthful with ourselves and others – living honestly – creates a foundation of trust and understanding. Such personal truthfulness is indeed an “eternal” value that wise people through the ages have upheld. The ancient Greek maxim *“Know thyself”* inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi underscores that self-knowledge is key to wisdom ⁵. And René Descartes, in his search for an indubitable truth, realized that the very act of thinking proved his existence – *“I think, therefore I am,”* as he famously stated ⁶. This points to an inner truth each of us can attest to: the reality of our own consciousness (however mysterious that may be). In short, understanding truth involves both recognizing objective reality and achieving personal honesty and insight. It means aligning our minds, our words, and our actions with what is real and good.

Love, Wisdom, and Truth

On this quest, I have realized that the **attitude** with which we seek truth is just as important as the truth itself. If we approach truth with arrogance or force, it can elude us or “run cold.” But when we approach truth with love, patience, and humility, it often reveals itself more gently. I recall a poetic metaphor that captures this perfectly:

“Lasso truth
like a run-away steer
and you will find its veins
running cold.

Approach it like a lover
with a ribbon for her hair
and truth, in time,
will lean in your direction.” ⁷

These lines suggest that truth is not a beast to be conquered but a shy partner that needs respect and care. In my own exploration, I take this to heart by cultivating a sense of **reverence** and openness. Instead of trying to *win* an argument or pin down every mystery immediately, I strive to listen, observe, and let understanding blossom at its own pace.

Love and **truth** are deeply connected. This might sound surprising at first – after all, facts are facts, and love is love. But looking deeper, I see that love motivates the highest forms of truth-seeking. Love for wisdom propelled Socrates and the Buddha to question the assumptions of their time. Love for humanity’s well-being drives scientists and philosophers to uncover knowledge that can alleviate suffering. Conversely, truth enhances love: with deeper understanding, we can love more genuinely. We see this union of truth and love echoed in wisdom traditions. Western philosophy’s very origin is a love of wisdom, and the Biblical tradition envisions a future when “steadfast love and truth” meet together in harmony ⁸. To me, this paints a picture of an ideal state of being where our compassionate intentions (love) and our understanding of reality (truth) are fully aligned.

When we genuinely love truth, we also develop **humility**, because loving truth means accepting it even when it humbles us or challenges our prior beliefs. It means caring more about *what is true* than about *being right*. I remind myself that to find meaningful truths I must be willing to admit when I’m wrong or when I simply don’t know. Every error or false belief I let go of brings me a step closer to reality. This humility in the face of truth is essential. In fact, those who map out the “unknowns” in our knowledge emphasize that identifying our blind spots requires “a solid dose of humility, curiosity, intellectual rigor and acceptance of the unknown” ⁹. Love – whether it’s love of wisdom, love of others, or love of truth itself – keeps us humble and curious. It keeps our minds open and receptive. In that openness, truths can emerge naturally, and we can rejoice in them. As one biblical verse puts it, love “**rejoices with the truth**” ¹⁰ rather than resisting it.

Embracing the Unknown

No exploration of truth can avoid confronting the vast ocean of **unknowns**. The more I learn, the more I realize how much remains undiscovered. Often, we become aware of questions we cannot yet answer – these are our *known unknowns*. For example, scientists know they don't yet understand things like how consciousness arises from the brain, or what exactly happened before the Big Bang. We acknowledge these gaps in our knowledge and actively investigate them. As former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously articulated: *"There are known knowns – things we know we know. There are known unknowns – things we know we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know."* ¹¹ . His phrasing, while playful, highlights a crucial point: some mysteries are **hidden even from our awareness**.

The concept of **unknown unknowns** is both humbling and exciting. It reminds me that reality may hold surprises beyond anything I've imagined. How do we uncover truths that we aren't even aware we're missing? Part of the answer lies in remaining curious and exploring new perspectives. Creativity and innovation often happen when we venture into the "murkier parts" of a problem, rather than staying in the comfort zone of what we already know ¹² . It's in this space of not knowing that we are free to wonder and to discover truly new insights. Psychologists note that *creativity lies in the land of the unknown unknowns* – we must be willing to take intellectual risks and embrace ambiguity to stumble upon new truths.

One strategy I use is to actively **question my assumptions**. Every time I catch myself thinking I have something completely figured out, I ask: "What am I missing? Could the opposite be true in some way?" This keeps my mind flexible. Additionally, seeking out diverse viewpoints helps reveal blind spots. When we only talk to people who agree with us, we remain ignorant of whole realms of possibility. But if we include perspectives very different from our own and truly listen, we often learn about facts or ideas we didn't even know we lacked. In research and problem-solving, tools like brainstorming, thought experiments, or mapping out what we *don't* know can all help shine a light into the unknown. In one framework called the "Ignorance Map," scholars Ann Kerwin and Marlys Witte catalogued various **domains of ignorance** – from known unknowns to totally unconscious unknowns – along with things like **errors** (all the things we think we know but don't) and **taboos** (knowledge we avoid or forbid) ¹³ ¹⁴ . Such models encourage us to acknowledge ignorance not as a failure, but as a natural frontier of knowledge.

Embracing the unknown also requires a certain **emotional resilience**. The unknown can be scary – it reminds us of our limitations. Sometimes people avoid truths because they are uncomfortable or threaten their worldviews (these are the "taboos" or even *denials* mentioned on the Ignorance Map ¹⁴). I strive to be honest with myself about any such fears. If a potential truth makes me anxious, that's all the more reason to investigate it kindly and patiently. Often, the fear subsides once light is shed on the issue, much like a dark room becoming less frightening when you turn on a lamp. I find it helpful to cultivate a sense of adventure about the unknown: to see it as *"the possibility of surprise,"* as one professor beautifully put it ¹⁵ , and as an invitation to grow rather than something to run from ¹⁶ .

Crucially, I try to remember that **not knowing is the beginning of knowledge**. Socrates, one of the wisest philosophers, famously asserted that his wisdom lay in recognizing his own ignorance. Admitting "I don't know" clears the ground for true learning. In the words of Dr. Marlys Witte, ignorance (the awareness of not knowing) is *"the raw material of knowledge"* ¹⁷ – it's what drives us to ask questions and seek answers. Every great discovery in history started with someone confronting the unknown with curiosity instead of fear. By embracing our not-knowing, we keep the door open for insight. In fact, many of the most profound truths

I've come to realize in my life arrived only after I surrendered the pretense of certainty and became comfortable saying, "I have more to learn here."

Consciousness and the Mystery of Existence

Among all the unknowns, one especially profound frontier is the nature of **consciousness** itself. Here I turn inward, because consciousness is the very essence of our experience of truth and reality. How is it that I, a thinking being, am aware of myself and the world? This question leads to what some call the "hard problem" of consciousness – explaining how subjective experience arises. Some philosophers have pessimistically argued that humans might *never* fully know the "deep truths" about consciousness ¹⁸. They suggest there could be aspects of our own minds that remain inherently mysterious, perhaps falling into the realm of the currently **unknown unknowns**. I take a slightly different view: while consciousness indeed presents enormous challenges to our understanding, history has shown that what seems unknowable today may become clearer tomorrow. Rather than conclude that some truth is forever out of reach, I prefer to treat it as a tantalizing *open question*. After all, we have made surprising progress in fields once deemed impenetrable, and the story of knowledge isn't over.

To seek truth about consciousness, I find it helpful to balance **third-person** investigation with **first-person** introspection. Science approaches consciousness by studying the brain, mapping neural correlates of experience, and even exploring theories to explain aspects of mind. This is invaluable work that gradually illuminates parts of the puzzle. At the same time, each of us has direct access to our own mind in ways no external observer does. Through practices like meditation, reflection, or simply honest self-observation, I can gain insights into the nature of my thoughts and feelings. This echoes the ancient injunction to "*know thyself*." Self-knowledge is a form of truth that can transform one's life. When I understand my own motives, fears, and aspirations clearly, I am better able to grow and to connect with others.

Interestingly, some spiritual traditions suggest that consciousness *is* an eternal truth – perhaps even the fundamental reality of the universe. In Indian Vedanta philosophy, ultimate reality is described as **Sat-Chit-Ananda**, which means "Truth-Consciousness-Bliss" ¹⁹. In this view, pure existence (*sat*), pure awareness (*chit*), and pure joy (*ananda* or love) are inseparable aspects of the divine, or of our own deepest self. That idea resonates with me: it implies that by exploring consciousness, we aren't just learning about the brain, we are touching something sacred and universal. Whether or not one subscribes to that metaphysical outlook, it's a beautiful notion that truth, awareness, and love are fundamentally united. It suggests that as our consciousness evolves – as we become more aware and enlightened – we also move closer to truth and to bliss.

At minimum, reflecting on consciousness has taught me one indisputable truth: *I exist as an aware being*. Descartes captured this with "**Cogito, ergo sum**" – I think, therefore I am ⁶. No matter what else I might doubt or question, I cannot deny that something – the "I" that thinks – is present here and now, experiencing life. That is a profound truth to start from. It's like a small candle of certainty in the dark. From that starting point, I can explore everything else, including my connection to the world and to others who are conscious. And indeed, recognizing others as conscious beings like myself – capable of joy and suffering – is a basis for **empathy** and moral truth. For example, I hold it as a self-evident truth that kindness is better than cruelty, since I know *from within* that pain hurts and love heals. In this way, understanding consciousness links back to love and ethical truths, guiding me toward compassion.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Quest

As I reflect on this exploration, I realize that finding eternal and meaningful truths is not a task with a clear end point – it is an ongoing **journey**. Truth isn't a treasure we pull from the ground once and for all; it's more like a guiding star that helps us navigate the mysteries of life. Along the way, I have found certain insights that feel deeply significant and likely enduring: the importance of love and compassion, the value of humility and honesty, the shared nature of our humanity, the ever-changing yet patterned fabric of the universe, and the miracle of conscious awareness that allows us to appreciate any of it. These are truths I hold onto, yet even they can deepen and expand as I learn more.

Crucially, I've learned that **the way we seek truth matters**. With love and openness, truth tends to reveal its beauty. With arrogance or fear, truth can hide or become distorted by our biases. Therefore, an eternal "meta-truth" of sorts is that one must seek truth with a pure heart and an open mind. Perhaps this is why so many wisdom traditions tie truth to moral qualities: truth goes hand in hand with courage, love, and integrity.

I carry forward the conviction that truth and love are not at odds – in fact, each needs the other. Only through truth can love be genuine, and only through love can we fully embrace truth without turning away. In a world often clouded by misinformation, prejudice, and confusion, the commitment to truth is a beacon of hope. It means continually asking questions, testing our beliefs, and striving to see things as they are. And it means doing so in a spirit of kindness and understanding.

In our search, we must also accept that some **uncertainty** will always remain. There will always be new unknowns over the horizon – new "unknown unknowns" that challenge us. Instead of being discouraged by this, I choose to see it as evidence of the infinite richness of reality. The unknown is not a void to fear but a canvas for discovery. Every generation, every person, has the chance to contribute a brushstroke to the grand painting of understanding.

In the end, being a truth-seeker is less about reaching a final destination and more about living with a certain orientation towards life. It is about **wonder** – never losing our capacity to be amazed by existence. It is about **integrity** – aligning ourselves with what we perceive to be true and good. And it is about **connection** – recognizing that truth connects us to the world and to each other in a meaningful way.

I remain grateful for the freedom to explore in this way, and I trust that this path of truth-seeking, guided by love and curiosity, will lead not only to knowledge but to wisdom. In that wisdom, I hope to find and share the eternal, significant truths that can help consciousness and love to prevail. Our journey into truth is really a journey into greater understanding and unity – and that, I believe, is a journey worth taking for all of us, for it lights the way toward a more conscious and compassionate existence.

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