

About Truth Matters

Because **truth** is self-contained, the vehicle through which this information is extended is not the center-piece. Actually, we choose not to focus on ourselves but on the issue at hand. Let us illustrate through a true story - one that took place years ago while we were visiting Reed College in Portland, Oregon one sunny fall day. We had posted Plato's famous dialogue between Socrates and Protagoras on the issue of relative, subjective truth. (If you have not read this, you should!) Due to the setting, we were trying to help these intellectual giants see an internal contradiction in embracing holistic relativism. While a few were willing to discuss the point at hand, we had more come up and make comments or ask related questions, but ones which were beside the point. For example, one asked, "Do you have a copy of this in its original [language]?" After apologizing that we did not, the student left. Another stated as she pointed to the handout, "This is excellent. It's even better in the Greek!" But in similar fashion, turned and walked off. WAIT! Let's talk about the real thing, that which really matters here!

We simply don't want to get sidetracked on unimportant, secondary issues. The concern of truth is what matters, and because this is the sincere intent of this site, let's begin our journey. Dr. Ed Miller (in his introduction to philosophy text titled *Questions That Matter*) states the theme of this site in a simple, common-sense, easy-to-understand manner:

"It is true that our answers to the questions of reality will largely determine our answers to many other questions. But we cannot really answer any question at all, not even the question of reality, until we have become clear on the still prior question of knowledge. Think about this until you see it: Judgments about reality, morality, art, society, religion, politics, science, or anything else, presuppose judgments about knowledge itself - whether we can know, how we can know, and what we can know. Take for example, your knowledge that 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue.' How did you arrive at this piece of knowledge? In your claim to 'know' this there are surely contained many implicit judgments about epistemological issues such as the limits of reason, the role of sense experience, the relevance of intuition, the assurances of historical investigation, the nature and criterion of truth, the nature and certainty of 'facts,' the possibility of certainty, and degrees of certainty. If such a welter of considerations is necessarily involved in such a harmless claim as 'In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue,' then how much more attention must we give the epistemological underpinnings of claims about reality, value, moral responsibility, society, and God?" (pp. 179,180)

There is one *big* word in this quote. "Epistemology" is one of the major branches of philosophy. It is the inquiry which poses the question, "How do we know what we (think we) know?" Webster's New World Dictionary (Second Collegiate Edition) defines this most fundamental-toward-the-building-of-one's-worldview term in this way: "The study or theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge." [Note: this dictionary definition correctly points to a plurality of knowledge methods and sources. This is crucial but not always the case in every dictionary definition. Some are exclusive, but we cannot be if our starting point is to be fair and holistic]

If this is, as Dr. Miller and others have claimed, the most rock-bottom foundational concern in our search for truth, if it is the prerequisite to everything else under the sun, wisdom would direct us to fairly consider all methods of truth as potential sources worthy of consideration if our journey is indeed going to be all-inclusive!

Using Webster's definition, an important observation is offered. Each method of knowledge has its own origin or source, nature, and set of limitations. No wonder some philosophers refer to this topic as one bearing "absolute presuppositions." Proof or absolute certainty is not possible given who we are - finite, limited beings. But we must start somewhere if this fascinating journey is to begin, and genuinely fascinating it is! So here again, we are faced with related questions. Because we are not used to thinking about this crucial matter, we are going to phrase it slightly different than we did on the home page (so as to be sure we're on the same page). Bear with one more attempt on our part to state the concern as clear as possible. It's important.

Truth matters, does it not? It's important. Don't we all start somewhere as we begin a journey? As we search for truth, where do we begin the investigation? Fair questions!

(continued)

In pursuit of truth, have we discerned the initial suppositions inherent in the way we look at what we accept as true premises? These (often hidden) assumptions directly influence the outcome! But do we recognize these key determinants? Most of the time, many do not. 1) Have we identified the sources or methods of information we rely upon to bring us to truth? 2) How good are these things upon which we depend - are they reliable? Of what quality are they, really? 3) Do we understand that these very sources of knowledge serve as authority voices? and, 4) What if we are wrong about the credibility or truth of these influential sources in which we vest varying degrees of authority to come to any perspective on anything under the sun? These are both fair and crucial questions! So, once again, we ask, don't we all start somewhere? Indeed we do!

Truth Matters is an educational service that simply calls the genuine seeker of truth to look more closely at some of the crucial rock-bottom assumptions that exist at the beginning of the inquiry in order to allow for a search for truth that minimizes the biases, as much as possible. This service helps expose our need for further thought on this matter. If one begins a long ocean journey slightly off course, the consequences could be great. If we walk through the journey of life slightly off course at the very beginning as a result of erroneous and/or incomplete tools (i.e., truth foundations), even greater consequences may lie before us! And that they do because the whole journey of life is of much greater significance than simply an ocean voyage, a geographical trek across a state or continent, or, a global tour.

Join us as we seek to uncover and think more thoroughly about the most basic, yet absolutely essential *concept* tied to all search-for-truth inquiries. Joy and freedom in your journey.

[Return to Truth Matter's home page](#) ; [On to our "Conceptual Concern" page](#)