What is Truth?

Is evolution just a process that takes place in material reality or is realism just a tool within natural selection.

Realist Definition

true = accurate factual description of reality.
Physical reality has certain characteristics, regardless if any conscious being knows about it, talks about it, wants it to be so, etc.

- Usually the utility of knowing what's going on is so high that it is worth it.
- Radical changes produce unintended consequences.
- **Possible Alignment**
  One could argue, that the more we learn about the objective world, the higher the chance that we will survive
- We have been living quite successfully as primates. And we are transforming our environment like mad.
- Has changed the world and lead to a unprecedented improvement in our quality of life
- **Materialist Rationalist**
  Reality consists of matter (protons, neutrons, electrons) that interact in time and space.
- You can not say that the speed of light is not constan, because knowing that it is could kill us all. This is just not an intelligible argument.
- A prime number is prime whether we all end up dying or not.
- You would of course have to show the causal connection.
- The only stable, logically coherent definition of truth can be the correct description of reality.
- It is ok to say that you were wrong at a deeper level.
- Because the human mind is imperfect, empirical evidence alone can be the final arbiter in what is true and what is false.
- It is more important to be right at the deeper level than at the superficial level.
- And that aggreement has to be stable and logically coherent.
- It is impractical to decide whether a statement is true or false based on how many people have died or could die in the future.
- But you still have to be able to say, that given certain assumptions and a set of facts, a statement is either true or false.
- And if no logical error was made, this evaluation has to remain unchanged.
- Else it is *not possible* to have an intelligible dialogue or a scientific enterprise.
- You could never call anything true.
- Truth is a bedrock concept. We cannot even communicate without having a clear aggreement of what it means for a statement to be true.
- We want wellbeing, but that does not change the truth about reality.
- Evolution describes the development of life, but not if a statement is true.
- Before anyone knew that there was energy trapped in an atom, the energy was still trapped inside the atom.
- People once thought that the earth is flat and at the center of the solar system.
- Its possible for everyone to be mistaken about the nature of reality. There is a horizon of cognition and we may be right or wrong about what we know and about what we don't know.
- In pragmatism there is no larger contact of truth claims in which you can say that everyone is wrong about something.
- The pragmatist can say that everybody is wrong, if the observed outcome of their actions does not match their predictions.
- But as long as it's not clear that they don't get what they want, the pragmatist can't say that their description of reality is false.
- There could be two people who hold contradictory theories. As long as both people are doing well, both theories would be true.
  logical contradiction
- If everyone believes that praying will cure their peat infection, but still they all die, then their theory was false.

desirable ≠ true

To point out that some knowledge could be bad for us, even that it could end human life, does not undermine its scientific truth value.

- There is no scientific reason to want something. Science just tells you what is true.
- You don't need a reason to want something. You just want it.
- *But we still call it the wrong sequence.* It does not all of a sudden become the right sequence, just because someone is murdering people.
- If someone went around murdering people who could not name all the presidents of the USA in sequence, but he actually had the sequence wrong in his head, then you would survive if you gave him the wrong sequence.
- If someone said that your wife was cheating on you, you'd want good evidence.
  - dream: not good evidence
  - Hi Def Video: good evidence
- The one thing you can not say is that because he ended up killing himself, it is not true, that she was having an affair.
- If one population died because they knew a certain fact and another one flourished, then the fact would be both true and false simultaneously.
  logical contradiction
- If you toss a coin and it came up heads, that fact does not change if a man threatens to kill you if it was heads up.
- You can't say: a dangerous truth. You would have to say: a falsehood.
- If our knowledge of evolution got us all killed, then evolution would still be true

Dangerous truths

- There is a correct way to build a hydrogen bomb.
- There is probably a way to successfully cross ebola with small pox

- You can not oppose the theory of relativity by stating that it might get us all killed.
- But you can oppose the claim that it is a good idea to investigate it.
- The biological facts about small pox, ebola, and viruses do not change, whether we all die or not.
- The statement that we should not artificially create new horrible diseases is more true than some facts about viruses.
- You don't know for what some knowledge will be useful. The same knowledge can be used to kill people or to save them
- You can not say that two tabs have the same theory of the small pox virus if one is trying to save people and the other trying to kill them.
- Yes, but our theory of evolution would have been false.

If it does not serve life, it is not true.

There is no higher truth than what is good for the survival of the species.

- Scientific facts are not the deepest form of truth.
- Very dangerous tools should only be used by people who have the moral wisdom to do so.
- People have been and many still do operate just fine without having a realist, materialist, empirically based notion of truth.
- The deepest truths are moral truths, truths that tell you how you should act.
- Logic is just a tool
- The superficial thing can not ground the deeper thing. It's logically impossible.
- Thus if you are wrong at the deeper level, then your statement is more accurately described as false than as true.
- It is more important to be right at the deeper level than at the local level.
- If you left something out that turned out to be of vital importance, then you were wrong at a deeper level, even if you were right locally.
- If your house is on fire, but you sit in your room and say: "This room is not on fire." It is factually true but still fatally false.
- It is not necessarily valid to use a constructed micro example to prove that a statement is true in general.
- There are different levels of truth claims. And the deeper, more fundamental levels ground the above more detailed levels.
- These assumptions pertain to the level of the search and also to all deeper levels.
- Even if we succeed in answering the specific question, the application of the result in the world may or may not be successful.
- This will depend on whether the bounding assumptions were correct.
- In order to study a certain question, we make assumptions that confine the search. We have to leave out most of reality as irrelevant, because else the search gets too complex.
- Truths are always bounded, because we can only ever know a tiny fraction of reality. So all you can ever know is that, if what you do works then it's true enough.
- Scientific models are only ever suited for making predictions about questions within a certain field of knowledge, bounded by certain assumptions.
- There are scientific models for different levels of analysis.
- Scientific theories are only considered true as long as they work. As soon as they no longer predict something correctly, they are either updated or discarded.
- The theory of aether
- This statement is foundational to the scientific method. Empirical evidence always trumps theory.
- **Pragmatist Definition**
  A theory / model is true enough if the outcome of ones actions matches ones predictions.

Darwinian Definition

true = what allows you to survive and reproduce
There is biological change and natural selection. What works allows you to survive and reproduce, and what doesn't work gets you killed.

- It is impossible for a finite organism to keep up with the infinitely complex, unpredictably changing environment
- The only known way to deal with this problem is to create a lot of quasi random variants of yourself, from which the ones that happen to fit the environment best survive and reproduce, and thus repeat the process.
- So every organism is only a suboptimal solution to an infinitely complex problem.
- If an organism could survive to reproduce, then that proves that its representation of reality was true enough.
- From a darwinian point of view, reality is that which selects.
- And our theory of evolution tries to describe that which selects.
- But our materialist realist understanding of that which selects is very insufficient.
- There is no reason to assume that our current materialist rationalist view of the world is not in flawed in some way that will prove fatal to us.
- Our cognitive faculties have not evolved to put us in error free contact with reality. We are designed by evolution to function within a very narrow band of physical parameters.
- There could be a life worse than death, where you suffer for a long time and then still die.
- The most undeniable form of consciousness is pain. No one who is in pain doubts that pain is real.
- Conscience is the one thing that you can be 100% sure that it is not an illusion.
- Materialism leaves out the subjective.
- Our materialist rationalist view of the world has shattered the traditional underpinning of our civilization and has facilitated the spread of nihilism, hopelessness, and ideological possession.
- Just immagine a nuclear war where both parties are 100% certain that god is on their side and that the other side are the forces of satan.
- Seeing the world only as a bunch of sub atomic particles could be a very dangerous thing to do.
- The materialist rationalist view of the world is a kind of ethic. It governs how people look at the world. It's a massive philosophy.
- Saing the world through a religious lense could be just as dangerous
- It's quite easy to demonize someone because they dont adhere to your (read the correct) religion.
- And once you have demonized them, its just one more step to start extinguishing them.
- "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put the evil away from among you."
- Why should you not murder 1, 10, or 100 million people if they stand in the way of your goal?
- Seing each human as having a spark of the divine, probably leads you to a different conclusion.
- Why should you care if a person (a bunch of sub atomic particles) has this state or the other?
- It influences what you see as important (tool or obstacle), meaning*what you pay attention to*.
- The way you see the world fundamentally influences how you choose to interact with it. (objects, animals, people)
- It is of no use to be right but dead.
- We have to act in order to stay alive.
- According to evolution, you can not get outside of natural selection.
- Humans are living beings, thus the world as a forum for action is a more fundamentally important level for us than the world of objects.
- We each subjectively experience the world primarily as tools and obstacles. Things that facilitate our movement towards our goal are tools and things that hinder it are obstacles. And *everything else is irrelevant to us.*
- Why do you work on crossing small pox and ebola instead of choosing to pay attention to the problem of evil and how it could be alleviated.
- But you can get outside of it. Eye glasses, medicine, excess food production, human rights instead of tribalism, etc.
- The criteria of selection have changed, but natural selection is active just the same.
- 10000 years ago good eye sight was important to survive and thus humans were strongly selected to have good eye sight.
- Today humans are no longer selected for good eye sight, because you can just wear glasses.
- All this means is that - in such cultures - human eye sight will slowly degenerate (in the course of millions of years)
- The same can be ead of medicine and our immune system
- In the irish elk sexual selection got out of control. Females floated solley on antler width as a mating criteria and soon the elk could not move through the forest anymore.
- The more a gene is similar to your own and the more your actions help to spread it, the more true your theory is.
- Species anihilation would be the worst outcome
- But anihilating another tribe and taking over their territory would be even more true than keeping peace.
- Why are Canada, the USA, and Australia western countries today?
- If the nazis had not lost the war, perhaps their representation of reality would have been true too.
- If you are a soldier in a horrible war, perhaps it would then be true that you should rape as many women as you possibly can.
- If your territory is occupied by another tribe with superior military power, perhaps it would be true, that you should become a suicide bomber in order to fight them.
- Because it would be better if people who are genetically closer relatives to you get to live in this land in the future, even if you yourself wont, than if the other tribe whipes all of you out.

Summary

We need a definition of truth that contains scientific truth as well as moral truth.

- **Scientific Truth**
  Material reality has certain characteristics. True means a correct description of those characteristics.
- Small pox is a virus, not a multicelled organism.
- **Moral Truth**
  There are certain things that one should or should not do in order to live well. True means a correct description of those things.
- You should not mess around with small pox because it might get you and many other people killed.
- **Main point**
  You need to be able to call a fact true, as long as no logical contradiction occurs. And it is not helpful to redefine words in a way that other people dont use them.
- **Main Point**
  The materialist rationalist view of the world is a kind of ethic. It governs how people look at the world. And it might be fatally dangerous to us.
- **Kind of Aggreement**
  1:05:34 - It is objectively true, as far as our scientific theories are accurate at this time, in this local context.
- **Aggreement**
  The scientific endeavor should be nested inside a moral endeavor.
- **Problem**
  Logical contradiction. You can not logically justify why the scientific endeavor should by nested inside a moral endeavor or why the statement that you should not mess around with small pox is true.
- **Possible Solution**
  If we define reality not only as the objective material world, but as the combination of the objective material world *and our experience of it* (the subjective meaning it has for each beeing) then we could define truth as the accurate description of reality.
- **Problem**
  Logical contradiction. You can not use science, facts, logic, evicence, (even evolution) to justify your own argument or to say that someones description of reality is false. Only natural selection will tell who dies and who thrives.

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