

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Christ" shines the light on this question: Pilate asks the question that mankind longs to discover; the quest has led many to a priceless conclusion. The journey has helped to contemplate whether truth is actually subjective or objective. The question leads us to ask, "Is truth universal – is it the same for everyone? Is it objective or subjective? Does it change? Is truth relative? Does it reflect characteristics of a Creator?"

Sextus, Empiricus, a philosopher from the third century summarized the skeptical philosophers by stating that "if we say there is no truth, then in that at least we are liars: if we cannot find the truth, what right have we to say we can't?"¹

There exist two categories of truth: Truth that concerns itself with matters of fact; and truth that concerns itself with moral actions. The first relating to fact, has existed since the dawn of creation, and thus since the beginning of space, time, matter and energy; the second, has been with us since man first walked the earth, making moral decisions.

Moral Truth

Issues pertaining to morality are more complex than those relating to matters of fact. They are thus intangible – you can't touch them. Moral Truths are actions that we deem to be either good or evil. We can deny the existence of this type of truth in theory, however most rational people would accept that certain types of actions exist that are fundamentally good or evil, for example, giving to the poor would be classed by most as a good

action, while murder or rape on the other hand would be viewed by most to be an evil action.

Taking the example of the 'gang rape' punishment meted out to a woman in Afghanistan in 2002, most people would know this gross violation of the woman was wrong – even if any court said it was OK. This is what we call a moral truth.

Can truth change? The simple answer is, no. The morality of these actions does not change over time, for example murder was wrong 5,000 years, 2,000, 500, and 50 years ago – it is still wrong today. Truth does not change, and has not changed, but people's perception of truth does.

Relativism

The theory of relativism claims that truth is subjective: "Whatever is true for you, may not be true for me." CS Lewis explains the flaw of this theory:

*The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, measuring them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other...You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as real Right, independent of what people think, and some people's ideas get nearer to that real Right than others.*²

Furthermore if relativism was true then you could never learn anything, because this involves moving from a false belief to a true one.

Truth and Sacred Scripture

Jesus said to him, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

Therefore Jesus in fact claims to be truth. Just like in the passion, Pilate’s search, and thus our search is for the truth. We do not have to look far for this truth. In fact, we may see and thus clasp

onto it from watching a movie – The Passion of the Christ.

1. Anthony Kenny, *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1994, 8
2. C.S Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1943, 25

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