

“Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened.”

-Winston Churchill

Some Classical/Relevant sources

“If, then, you are speaking the truth and mean what you say...” (Book XV)
-Homer, *Iliad*

“Without subtle ingenuity of mind, one cannot make certain of the truth of their reports.” (XIII.XVII)
- Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*

“The Master said, At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning.
At thirty, I stood firm.
At forty, I had no doubts.
At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.
At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth.”
- Confucius, *The Analects*

“Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, and the truth.”
- Hindu Prince Gautama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism

“Theirs is a cloud morality, not truth to live by on earth.”
- Isocrates, *Against the Sophists*

“But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with these studies. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbors whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon matters of this sort...You hear their answer. And from what they say of this you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.”
- Socrates, *Apology*

“*Socrates*. And the same holds of the relation of rhetoric to all the other arts; the rhetorician need not know the truth about things; he has only to discover some way of persuading the ignorant that he has more knowledge than those who know?”

Gorgias. Yes, Socrates, and is not this a great comfort?-not to have learned the other arts, but the art of rhetoric only, and yet to be in no way inferior to the professors of them?"

- Plato, *Gorgias*.

Chorus Leader. Helen, do not suppose that stranger who came here, whoever he was, has spoken the whole truth.

Helen. And yet he said very clearly that my husband was dead.

Chorus Leader. Many words might be said in falsehood also.

Helen. And the opposite of falsehood is clear in its truth."

- Euripides, *Helen*

“The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but every one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed. Therefore, since the truth seems to be like the proverbial door, which no one can fail to hit, in this respect it must be easy, but the fact that we can have a whole truth and not the particular part we aim at shows the difficulty of it.

“It is right also that philosophy should be called knowledge of the truth. For the end of theoretical knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action (for even if they consider how things are, practical men do not study the eternal, but what is relative and in the present). Now we do not know a truth without its cause; and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things as well (e.g. fire is the hottest of things; for it is the cause of the heat of all other things); so that that causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Hence the principles of eternal things must be always most true (for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things), so that as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth.” (II.i)

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

“Again, however much all things may be 'so and not so', still there is a more and a less in the nature of things; for we should not say that two and three are equally even, nor is he who thinks four things are five equally wrong with him who thinks they are a thousand. If then they are not equally wrong, obviously one is less wrong and therefore more right. If then that which has more of any quality is nearer the norm, there must be some truth to which the more true is nearer. And even if there is not, still there is already something better founded and liker the truth, and we shall have got rid of the unqualified doctrine which would prevent us from determining anything in our thought.” (IV.iv)

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

“And similarly the theory that there is truth in appearances has come to some people from an observation of sensible things. They think that the truth should not be judged by the number or fewness ... that either there is no truth or we cannot discover it. And in general ... for if those who have the clearest vision of such truth as is possible (and these are they who seek...) hold such opinions and make these pronouncements about the truth, surely those who are trying to be philosophers may well despair; for the pursuit of truth will be "chasing birds in the air.” (IV)

-Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

“If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any immediate perception of the mind, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief and so you will be rejecting the standard of truth altogether. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be maintaining complete ambiguity whenever it is a case of judging between right and wrong opinion.” (1.24.)

-Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines*

“Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” (Psalms 119:160)

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18)

-The Bible, King James Version

“If thou findest in human life anything better than justice, truth, temperance, fortitude, and, in a word, anything better than thy own mind's self-satisfaction in the things which it enables thee to do according to right reason, and in the condition that is assigned to thee without thy own choice; if, I say, thou seest anything better than this, turn to it with all thy soul, and enjoy that which thou hast found to be the best. But if nothing appears to be better than the deity which is planted in thee, which has subjected to itself all thy appetites, and carefully examines all the impressions, and, as Socrates said, has detached itself from the persuasions of sense, and has submitted itself to the gods, and cares for mankind; if thou findest everything else smaller and of less value than this, give place to nothing else, for if thou dost once diverge and incline to it, thou wilt no longer without distraction be able to give the preference to that good thing which is thy proper possession and thy own; for it is not right that anything of any other kind, such as praise from the many, or power, or enjoyment of pleasure, should come into competition with that which is rationally and politically or practically good. All these things, even though they may seem to adapt themselves to the better things in a small degree, obtain the superiority all at once, and carry us away. But do thou, I say, simply and freely choose the better, and hold to it. - But that which is useful is the better. - Well then, if it is useful to thee as a rational being, keep to it; but if it is only useful to thee as an animal, say so, and maintain thy judgment without arrogance: only take care that thou makest the inquiry by a sure method.” (Book 3)

-Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

“If any man is able to convince me and show me that I do not think or act right, I will gladly change; for I seek the truth by which no man was ever injured. But he is injured who abides in his error and ignorance.” (Book 6)

-Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

“He who acts unjustly acts impiously. For since the universal nature has made rational animals for the sake of one another to help one another according to their deserts, but in no way to injure one another, he who transgresses her will, is clearly guilty of impiety towards the highest divinity. And he too who lies is guilty of impiety to the same divinity; for the universal nature is the nature of things that are; and things that are have a relation to all things that come into existence. And further, this universal nature is named truth, and is the prime cause of all things that are true. He then who lies intentionally is guilty of impiety inasmuch as he acts unjustly by deceiving; and he also who lies unintentionally, inasmuch as he is at variance with the universal nature, and inasmuch as he disturbs the order by fighting against the nature of the world; for he fights against it, who is moved of himself to that which is contrary to truth, for he had received powers from nature through the neglect of which he is not able now to distinguish falsehood from truth. And indeed he who pursues pleasure as good, and avoids pain as evil, is guilty of impiety. For of necessity such a man must often find fault with the universal nature, alleging that it assigns things to the bad and the good contrary to their deserts, because frequently the bad are in the enjoyment of pleasure and possess the things which procure pleasure, but the good have pain for their share and the things which cause pain. And further, he who is afraid of pain will sometimes also be afraid of some of the things which will happen in the world, and even this is impiety. And he who pursues pleasure will not abstain from injustice, and this is plainly impiety. Now with respect to the things towards which the universal nature is equally affected- for it would not have made both, unless it was equally affected towards both- towards these they who wish to follow nature should be of the same mind with it, and equally affected. With respect to pain, then, and pleasure, or death and life, or honour and dishonour, which the universal nature employs equally, whoever is not equally affected is manifestly acting impiously. And I say that the universal nature employs them equally, instead of saying that they happen alike to those who are produced in continuous series and to those who come after them by virtue of a certain original movement of Providence, according to which it moved from a certain beginning to this ordering of things, having conceived certain principles of the things which were to be, and having determined powers productive of beings and of changes and of such like successions.” Book 9.

-Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*

“A natural thing, being placed between two intellects, is called *true* insofar as it conforms to either. It is said to be true with respect to its conformity with the divine intellect insofar as it fulfills the end to which it was ordained by the divine intellect... With respect to its conformity with a human intellect, a thing is said to be true insofar as it is such as to cause a true estimate about itself.”

- Aquinas. *Disputed Questions on Truth*, 1, 2, c, reply to Obj. 1

“If we say that we have no sin
We deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.”
- Christopher Marlowe, *Faustus*, V.i

“But truth is truth.”
- William Shakespeare, *King John*, I.i.

“This figure [Asphalia] or forme of speaking is most apt and forcible to ad courage in dreadfull adventures, and to give comfort and assurance in doubtfull causes, which is a singular vertue of speech and worthy of great praise, namely if it be used in certaintie and truth.”
- Henry Peacham. *The Garden of Eloquence*.

“However convincing the foregoing arguments may appear, we must not rest contented with them, but must turn the subject on every side, in order to find some new points of view, from which we may illustrate and confirm such extraordinary, and such fundamental principles. A scrupulous hesitation to receive any new hypothesis is so laudable a disposition in philosophers, and so necessary to the examination of truth, that it deserves to be complied [sic] with, and requires that every argument be produced, which may tend to their satisfaction, and every objection removed, which may stop them in their reasoning.”
- David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Sect. IX.

“A right joining or separating of signs, i.e. either ideas or words. Truth, then, seems to me, in the proper import of the word, to signify nothing but the joining or separating of Signs, as the Things signified by them do agree or disagree one with another. The joining or separating of signs here meant, is what by another name we call proposition. So that truth properly belongs only to propositions: whereof there are two sorts, viz. mental and verbal; as there are two sorts of signs commonly made use of, viz. ideas and words.”
-John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 2

“Truth is said to consist in the agreement of knowledge with the object. According to this mere verbal definition, then, my knowledge, in order to be true, must agree with the object. Now, I can only compare the object with my knowledge by this means, namely, by taking knowledge of it. My knowledge, then, is to be verified by itself, which is far from being sufficient for truth. For as the object is external to me, and the knowledge is in me, I can only judge whether my knowledge of the object agrees with my knowledge of the object. Such a circle in explanation was called by the ancients *Diallelos*. And the logicians were accused of this fallacy by the sceptics, who remarked that this account of truth was as if a man before a judicial tribunal should make a statement, and appeal in support of it to a witness whom no one knows, but who defends his own credibility by saying that the man who had called him as a witness is an honourable man.”

-Kant, Immanuel, *Introduction to Logic*

THE DIVISION OF GENERAL LOGIC INTO ANALYTIC AND DIALECTIC

“The question, famed of old, by which logicians were supposed to be driven into a corner, obliged either to have recourse to a pitiful sophism, or to confess their ignorance and consequently the emptiness of their whole art, is the question: What is truth? The nominal definition of truth, that it is the agreement of knowledge with its object, is assumed as granted; the question asked is as to what is the general and sure criterion of the truth of any and every knowledge.

“To know what questions may reasonably be asked is already a great and necessary proof of sagacity and insight. or if a question is absurd in itself and calls for an answer where none is required, it not only brings shame on the pro-pounder of the question, but may betray an incautious listener into absurd answers, thus presenting, as the ancients said, the ludicrous spectacle of one man milking a he-goat and the other holding a sieve underneath.

“If truth consists in the agreement of knowledge with its object, that object must thereby be distinguished from other objects; for knowledge is false, if it does not agree with the object to which it is related, even although it contains something which may be valid of other objects. Now a general criterion of truth must be such as would be valid in each and every instance of knowledge, however their objects may vary. It is obvious, however, that such a criterion [being general] cannot take account of the [varying] content of knowledge (relation to its [specific] object). But since truth concerns just this very content, it is quite impossible, and indeed absurd, to ask for a general test of the truth of such content. A sufficient and at the same time general criterion of truth cannot possibly be given.

“Since we have already entitled the content of knowledge its matter, we must be prepared to recognise [sic] that of the truth of knowledge, so far as its matter is concerned, no general criterion can be demanded. Such a criterion would by its very nature be self-contradictory.

“But, on the other hand, as regards knowledge in respect of its mere form (leaving aside all content), it is evident that logic, in so far as it expounds the universal and necessary rules of the understanding, must in these rules furnish criteria of truth. Whatever contradicts these rules is false. For the understanding would thereby be made to contradict its own general rules of thought, and so to contradict itself. These criteria, however, concern only the form of truth, that is, of thought in general; and in so far they are quite correct, but are not by themselves sufficient. For although our knowledge may be in complete accordance with logical demands, that is, may not contradict itself, it is still possible that it may be in contradiction with its object. The purely logical criterion of truth, namely, the agreement of knowledge with the general and formal laws of the understanding and reason, is a *condition sine qua non*, and is therefore the negative condition of all truth. But further than this logic cannot go. It has no touchstone for the discovery of such error as concerns not the form but the content. General logic resolves the whole formal procedure of the understanding and reason into its elements, and exhibits them as principles of all logical criticism of our knowledge. This part of logic, which may therefore be entitled *analytic*, yields what is at least the negative touchstone of truth. Its rules must be applied in the examination and appraising of the form of all knowledge before we proceed to determine whether their content contains positive truth in respect to their object.”

-Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Section III

“...a judgment is a combination or separation of two or more concepts. If a judgment is to be an expression of knowledge, it must have a sufficient reason or ground by which the judgment could be called true. *Truth is the reference of a judgment to something different from itself which is its sufficient reason (ground)*. Judgments can have material, formal, transcendental, or metalogical truth. A judgment has *material* truth if its concepts are based on intuitive perceptions that are generated from sensations. If a judgment has its reason (ground) in another judgment, its truth is called logical or *formal*. If a judgment, of, for example, pure mathematics or pure science, is based on the forms (space, time, causality) of intuitive, empirical knowledge, then the judgment has *transcendental* truth.”

- Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, §§29–33

“Yet this problem had been seen and solved long before; first, it appears, by Xenophanes, and then by Democritus, and by Socrates (the Socrates of the *Apology* rather than of the *Meno*). The solution lies in the realization that all of us may and often do err, singly and collectively, but that this very idea of error and human fallibility involves another one—the idea of *objective truth*: the standard which we may fall short of. Thus the doctrine of fallibility should not be regarded as part of a pessimistic epistemology. This doctrine implies that we may seek for truth, the objective truth, though more often than not we may miss it by a wide margin. And it implies that if we respect truth, we must search for it by persistently searching for our errors: by indefatigable rational criticism, and self-criticism.”

-Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*