

Alternative Facts, Fake News and the Search for Truth

**The Bible and Belief:
Truth, Authority, and
Religious Commitment in
the 21st Century**

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Definition of a fact

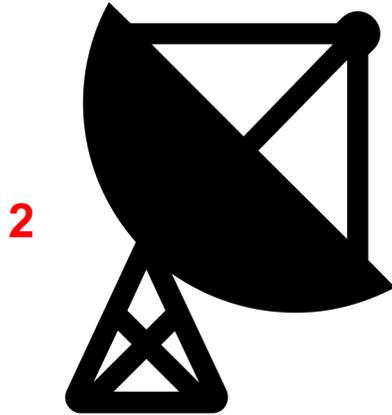
“A thing that is known or proved to be true.” (OED)

How do we know what is true?

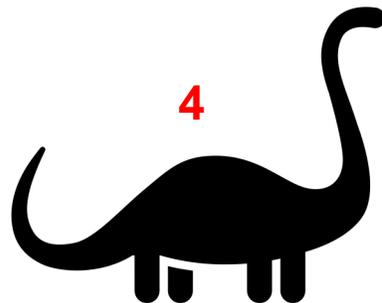
1.1 'What's out there' is the really real and we can name it.

1 Truth as the
correspondence of words
and things

Exercise: Connect the pictures with the words:



- a. Satellite dish
- b. Coke bottle
- c. Ice-cream
- d. Dinosaur
- e. Gift from the gods



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9VCHSv0poU>

A fact is a fact (isn't it?)



What is it, *really*?

Which understanding
is *true*?



Exercise: “Looking for the plain meaning of Scripture”

1 Timothy 2:11-15 New International Version (NIV)

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Matthew 5:30 New International Version (NIV)

And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Galatians 3:28 New International Version (NIV)

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Work in groups to read each passage plainly in light of the others

1 Truth as the
correspondence of words
and things

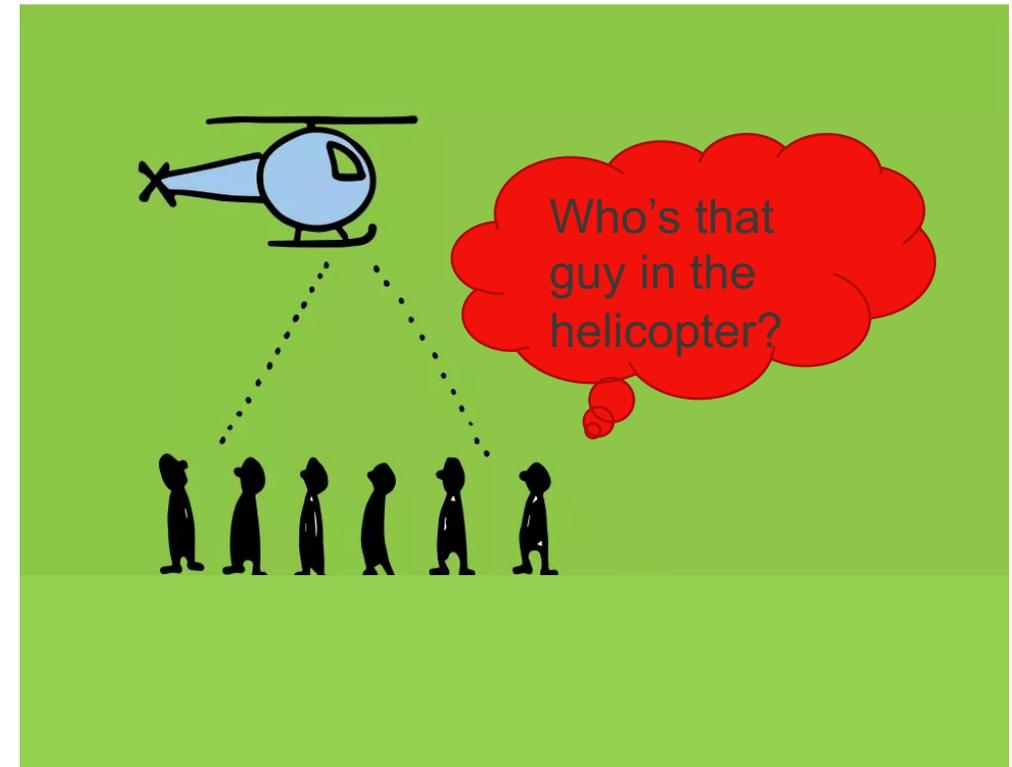
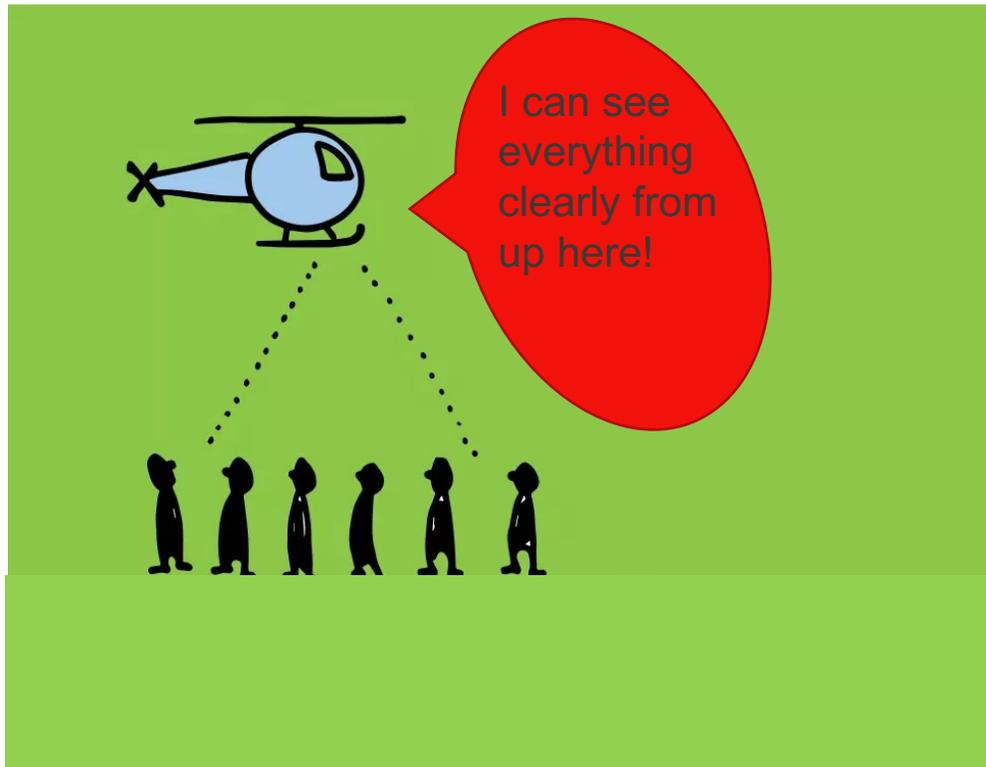
1.2 We can get at the
whole picture

Do astronauts
really leave the
world?



The Hermeneutic Circle

We are always and already situated in a world of significance



1 Truth as the correspondence of words and things

1.3 Everything fits into a
system....

Jean-François Lyotard

(1924-1998, France)

“The Postmodern”

The End of Master (meta) Narratives

- Metanarratives are used to provide a comprehensive 'explanation' of the state of affairs
- Aim to be neutral, value-free, helicopter-view, rational
- Inevitably perspectival, interested, hegemonic
- There is always a victim, someone excluded from the narrative
- Christianity is sometimes used as a metanarrative

2 Truth as disclosure

2. Truth as revealing, unveiling, un-concealment

Martin Heidegger: *aletheia*

“To let be — that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are — means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself.”

Martin Heidegger, *On the Essence of Truth*, trans. John Sallis.
<https://media.aphelis.net/wp-content/.../Martin-Heidegger-On-the-Essence-of-Truth.pdf>

What is
disclosed in
a poem?



3 Truth as personal

3.1 Truth as that to which we are drawn in love (or repelled from in hate)

Jean-Luc Marion (following Augustine)

- Truth as erotic, as that which arouses love or hatred in us.
- Truth as *personal*.

Jean-Luc Marion, *In the Self's Place: The Approach of Saint Augustine*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012) 129,115.

Augustine

“But why does truth engender hatred? Why does your servant meet with hostility when he preaches the truth, although men love happiness, which is simply the enjoyment of truth? It can only be that man’s love of truth is such that when he loves something that is not the truth, he pretends to himself that what he loves is the truth, and because he hates to be proved wrong, he will not allow himself to be convinced that he is deceiving himself. So he hates the real truth for the sake of what he takes to his heart in its place. Men love the truth when it bathes them in its light: they hate it when it reveals that they are wrong. Because they hate to be deceived themselves, they are glad if they can deceive others, they love the truth when it is revealed to them but hate it when it reveals that they are wrong.”

Augustine, *Confessions*,
trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin
(Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, UK: Penguin,
1961) X.23 (34).

Heidegger and Marion reading Augustine

Heidegger: human beings “hate truth when it presses them forcefully. When it concerns them themselves, and when it shakes them up and questions their own facticity and existence, then it is better to close one’s eyes just in time....”

Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenology of the Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010) 148.

Marion: one rejects the truth by “attempting not to see oneself illuminated by it; repressing the light [which] does not mean casting a shadow on it (with what shadow?) nor hiding from it (in what night?) but hiding from oneself the fact that one cannot hide from it....”

“If ... I love myself, however deformed, more than the light that accuses me [i.e. the light that brings everything about me to light], then I will have to hate it, since it will continue to accuse me, and I will also have to love myself as deformed. And in this way I will end up hating myself as much as I hate the truth.”

Marion, *In the Self's Place*, 110, 113.

3 Truth as personal

3.2 Truth as self-evident

3.2 Truth as self-evidence

Jean-Yves Lacoste reading Augustine

When it comes to God, we do not come to love what we first know, but come to know what we first love.

Receiving phenomena insofar as they appear only to our freedom: phenomena appearing as credible rather than indubitable, and so open to our acceptance or rejection.

“Someone who admits belief has experience of a truth, and we are bound to speak of a ‘self-evidence.’ But that self-evidence is only for those who assent to what it offers as deserving belief. Assent constitutes a self-evidence that, we are bound to say, was not present before.”

Lacoste, Jean-Yves. 2008 *The Appearing of God*, trans. Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

What does it all mean?

Discuss in groups of three

1. Clarify three different senses in which truth has been considered tonight
2. What are the implications for reading the Bible of each of these senses of truth?