

Summary

Truthfulness versus untruthfulness

Our two primary contexts of thought are truthfulness and untruthfulness. There is no neutral point from which to decide between the two since we would decide truthfully or untruthfully and would therefore have already made our choice. Nor can we dig deeper for a more basic context since we would again be limited to digging truthfully or untruthfully and would have already made any new findings contingent on one or the other of these two most basic contexts of being.

Truthfulness is primary in that it more closely replicates reality, whereas untruthfulness is less realistic by being a distortion of truthfulness. Truthfulness is good because it offers the better chance of discovering best options within our shared reality. It is an open and self-correcting system, untruthfulness a closed and self-rationalizing system. Both are internally consistent but mutually incompatible, yet they exist side by side in our brains, each boasting eons of proven survival value.

The truthful arrive at truths by truthful process, but since the human condition is one of imperfect perceptions and evolving conceptions, they hold all truths subordinate to on-going truthfulness. The untruthful on the other hand hold truthfulness subordinate to both their lies and their chosen truths. In our internal dialogues and in dialogue with others there are no other more basic modes of being than truthfulness together with truths held open-mindedly, and deception together with truths held closed-mindedly. To be in honest error is not untruthful, but to refuse to accept correction, or to willfully remain ignorant of relevant facts and logic, is untruthful. Truthfulness is deeper than words. It is a way of life.

Truthfulness and truths held open-mindedly manifest as the ethic and governmental structure of liberalism. Deception and truths held closed-mindedly manifest as the ethic and governmental structure of authoritarianism. Our two primary contexts of thought create these two modes of social and political organization. The struggle for the future of the species is between civility and rationality on the one hand, and coercive irrationality on the other.

Under liberal constitutional government citizens are free of authoritarian oppression and therefore at liberty to converse truthfully and thus create equality of information and equality of understanding so that all can participate democratically as equals. Unlike top down systems where deceitful leaders and establishment truths are protected, liberal government is designed to facilitate truthfulness and expose untruthfulness.

Liberalism versus authoritarianism

Authoritarianism may have been unavoidable in an economy of scarcity and where the survival of one group depended on the defeat of others. However, in today's interdependent global village, authoritarianism becomes evolutionarily obsolete. Waging battles and vanquishing enemies becomes counter-productive, if not self-defeating. Solving problems to mutual advantage, and insuring our welfare by insuring that of our neighbors, becomes the way to sustainability and security.

However, to conceive of the value of truthfulness as itself a rigid truth is to abandon the context of truthfulness for the hubris of absolutism. It would assume that perfect truth is possible, even though truths cannot be contained perfectly within symbols such as words.

Firm footing versus false basis

As the generic alternative to authoritarianism, liberalism has spawned a plethora of specific isms, all of which fail without explicit commitment to truthfulness. Communism, anarchism, pragmatism and humanism fail for lack of an explicit basis for solving inevitable disputes to the mutual advantage of all parties. Without explicit basis in truthfulness even love, virtue and noble values are vulnerable to deception and thus free to degenerate into their opposites.

A reason for liberalism's present malaise is that liberal thinkers have wrongly assumed that authoritarian truths must be countered with liberal truths, when in fact the actual dichotomy is between authoritarian truthfulness-subordinate-to-truths versus liberalism's truths-subordinate-to-truthfulness.

Once free of dogma, and with basis in personal commitment to truthfulness, progressives and conservatives become two halves of the creative liberal dialectic. Without such basis, both are prone to veering into the deceptions and rigid truths of the authoritarian left and right. Both become vulnerable to the hallmarks of tyranny: might-makes-right, ends-justify-the-means, they-started-it, my-side-right-or-wrong and because-I-said-so-that's-why. Both abandon reason for force -- constructive conflict for destructive conflict -- peace for war.

Liberation versus repression

Authoritarians attempt to devise convincing basis for repressing truthfulness, but they inevitably resort to lies and rigid truths, if for no other reason that these are the only alternatives to truthfulness. Their recourse is to secrecy, curtailment of rights, control of the media, and the creation of dysfunction and want through fear of real and concocted threats. They create an environment where citizens feel obliged to become liars themselves. They protect privilege by repressing the masses in a juvenile mode of development -- the untruthful mode of being -- a mode distinguished by belief in the need, right and utility of deception. They work in league with religions that are based on delusion and maintained by an authoritarian clergy adept at inculcating absolutist dogma.

If we are afraid to tell the truth, we are not liberated, but in bondage. The answer is to grow up by opting for the adult context of truthfulness. However, this metamorphosis may require more than intellectual understanding, perhaps even a born-again or coming-of-age experience since the juvenile mode will defend itself against growing up, and will self-deceptively maintain that it is in fact the adult self.

We can aid this transition by inculcating truthfulness in the schools since truthfulness is not a subjective value but the only guard against foisting subjective values and beliefs on the young. In our evolutionary past, despotic repression has apparently been so extreme that today we have no verb of *truthing*, nor as a people are we consciously aware of its absence.

In past eras of independent cultures, deceit may have been essential to survival, but in our rapidly integrating world all the major problems faced by the species can only be solved truthfully and to mutual advantage.

Our survival in this new world requires a deep and speedy liberation or rebirth. We can no longer afford a majority of our species retarded in a juvenile mode of development.

This means renegotiating the social contract -- no more follower mentality in exchange for supposed protection. The cost of our adulthood is too high, and the threat to the earth too great. Protection from the bad was as one with a deceit and truths based civilization, but creation of the good is now as one with a truthfulness based civilization.

In effect, deception and the follower mentality were outlawed at the Nuremberg Tribunals. By condemning Nazi war criminals for blindly following criminal and immoral orders it was established that henceforth each one of us is responsible as world citizens for truthfully questioning all orders and rejecting those fomenting crimes against peace and humanity.

In our new world of the free and the brave, fear is now insufficient reason for trading liberty and adulthood for a questionable, if not an illusory, protection. Our lying and Truths-besotted "leaders" ultimately offer less protection than a truthful world citizenry.

Protest versus process

Protesting the bad -- petitioning for redress -- is insufficient to the challenges of the era. Today, only the actual solving of problems will suffice. This means a coming of age for the movement. It means an end to jeering from the fringes. It means a seizing of the debate at the centers of power. It means a renaissance of liberalism.

Notes:

Vern said there was no support system for truthfulness.

I answered that the little kid who wails, "That's not fair!" assumes such a system exists. It is hard wired.

He mentioned the fear.

I answered that when asked if he had registered to vote, the black in the south of 1960 risked having his house burned down, but enough answered "Yes" to make change.