

Countdown to Infinity : The Truth Shall Set You Free?

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It is an irony that we human beings trust and believe in what we alone see, hear, and touch, but not necessarily in what we know. Knowledge, which is the fuel that now drives our information-based economy and society, seems to have lost its significance, becoming secondary to our own personal experience.

How can I say this with any sense of certainty? Just look at the growing interest in conspiracy theories, cynical 'post-modern' academics, and revisionist historians. In all of these cases, the perennial question of "What if?" has been taken to such a degree that we are taught to no longer trust everything we read, everything we are told in the news, or even everything we are told by our closest associates. We are implicitly told to 'trust no one,' and simply research to the best of our ability, to find what we think to be the truth, or the most correct.

Of course, this assertion alone is an irony in itself. After all, the growing popularity of conspiracy theories, cynicism, and revisionism does not necessarily translate into an absolute increase in the long run. These things could easily become marginalized given certain circumstances and become a topic of study rather than a source.

The interesting thing is, this 'double irony' contains the solution to the problem of a lack of trust and faith in the abilities of others. Whether there is or is not a growing distrust in knowledge and information, if we are to avoid the extremes of distrusting everything, except what we alone come to hold as 'the truth,' we must be able to see things with a truly open and objective mindset.

Objectivity and open-mindedness do not mean putting aside one's experience, or simply 'tolerating' another's. Rather, it is a constant 'dialogue' between what one believes to be true with those of others. It is an exploration of particular perspectives that serves to find an understanding that incorporates the other into one's own worldview. It is a means to discovering one's purpose in life and one's intrinsic value.

Such a dialogue, exploration, and discovery is undoubtedly difficult to do, but if one's future is important, then it cannot be neglected by the burdens of the present. In fact, such burdens could be seen as steps toward attaining one's desired future. A boring and 'useless' course could be seen as one less course required to graduate. A dead-end job could be a stop-off before finding your desired career. A difficult relationship could be a learning experience to find your perfect partner.

Whatever the case may be, the present situations of others and yourself are in some ways inter-related, and such associations and relationships will have an effect on your future. The knowledge and experience of others are just as important if you, as a person, and society, as a whole, are expected to develop and flourish.