

Saving Private Truth

The truth will set you free. (John 8:31)

Is honesty the best policy, *always*? Is it even the *best* policy?

Broad questions with little or no context are of marginal use; perhaps only for children to be inculcated with another of society's idealized norms. With the passage of time, and the acquisition of knowledge plus experience, though, all adults come, or should come to an everyday conclusion: truth is good but it must be used wisely. That is to say, *wisdom* is required to decide when truth should be revealed and shared.

Of course, truth is a much abused item throughout history with many public examples by the famous and the infamous. No need to mention any names - there are way too many - except for one, a recent ascendant individual: Donald J Trump, now president of the largest economy and most powerful military on this planet. Heed how, on TV, he keeps intoning, "I'll be honest with you..." or "*Let* me be honest with you...". And note what Trump sometimes does as he speaks: inadvertently, and perhaps innocently, a right-hand index finger is extended vertically, actively copying - if not implicitly supporting - the iconic digital display of all jihadist insurgents of Da'esh we occasionally see.

Somebody should warn Trump, don't you think?

Anyway, it's no great revelation or admission to accept that Trump abuses truth. That's no endorsement of his character or philosophy, of course: merely a statement of present and future fact. Many media pundits have already analyzed much of Trump's abuse of truth. Unhappily, though, the famous and the infamous are not alone: every functioning adult on the planet does the same, more or less as part of daily life. I think that is well known and only the incorrigible would deny the claim.

By saying 'truth is a much abused item', I'm not implying telling lies is the norm; or even favoured by most. Although there are exceptions; hard core liars *do* exist, as you know. But I think all people play with truth. In other words: we stretch truth, we colour truth, we shade truth, we evade truth and ... we *hide* it.

So, what is it about humanity which insistently compels us to behave in such a manner? I may as well ask: how long is a piece of string? Unfortunately, I think, the strings of truth with which we weave our every day tend to strangle, undermine or corrupt our relationships with others and, generally, have the most impact on family and friends. In this, I'm *not* referring to the many banalities of life e.g. white lies about a person's looks, hair, age, skills, education and so on....

(As an aside, although the term 'white lies' does exist in online dictionaries, its colour opposite - 'black lies' - does not. Curious, no?)

No ... I'm referring to hopes which we keep hidden inside, the emotions we smother, the unvoiced ideas, the silent anger or happiness we feel, the doubts we all have, the consuming jealousies, the unrequited friendship or even love, and much more. Perhaps the initial inhibitor is fear: the fear that if I tell these truths about myself or another, I render myself totally vulnerable. The overarching aspect, though, is trust; because without complete trust, there can never be categorical truth.

To be sure, I continue to play with truth with outsiders and even among the people I know, admire and love. When the occasion demands, however, in my core private life I work hardest to maintain the unvarnished - sometimes hurtful - truth, come what may. I don't always succeed, though I never stop trying.

But remember: While truth is indeed the first casualty of war, the first truth of all wars is casualties. Truth *is* a minefield. Tread carefully.

By the way, for what it's worth, one of my personal maxims in life is to avoid *anybody* who continually begins with: "I'll be honest with you...."

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