

## There is No Truth?

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*. . .but at least fifteen things have to be true before this statement can even be uttered in English. What are they?*

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Recently, I was asked a question that I get asked a lot. It's a common challenge on the campus. It was offered as I spoke in the lecture hall at Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. Though it was primarily a Christian group who came from the outside, this was the facility they used. The question is one that is asked all the time on campus.

I was reflecting on that question as I flew back this morning. I started jotting some notes down and was quite surprised at what I came up with in response to this question. They were things I'd been aware of before, but it was interesting the way it all fell together. The question was this, how to deal with somebody who says there is no truth.

Now this is very popular on campus, with deconstructionism and postmodernism, this radical skepticism that's swept the academy. It's this idea that you can't know anything for sure, nothing is set in concrete; everything is influenced by our culture, our upbringing and our suppositions, so it's impossible to get at any objective truth.

I flatly reject such a thing. I think there are a number of things we can count on as being true simply because the opposite is not possible. If we can even utter the sentence, "There is no truth"-- and, of course, we must at least utter the sentence to make the claim-- then several things must be objectively true.

First of all, if someone holds that there is no truth, then there's at least one thing that's true: the statement they just uttered that there is no truth. It's one of those awkward situations for a person making a claim, because there's no way their claim can be true. If it's true, it's false, and if it's false, it's false. Obviously, if the statement "There is no truth" is false, then it's false. But even if it's true that there is no truth, then it's also false, because that becomes a true statement, which nullifies it.

It's called a self-refuting statement. It's as if I said, "I can't speak a word of English." If I said it in English, of course that would be self-refuting. This is one of those statements. Even to utter the statement itself is a statement of truth, and so the statement that there is no truth can't stand. It defeats itself.

But there's more. In order to state the phrase "There is no truth," an individual must exist to ponder the truths of existence. Remember Descartes, sitting around in his oven back in the 17th Century, or thereabouts? He said, "I can doubt everything, but the one thing I can't doubt is the fact that I am doubting." He came up with a dictum: Cogito, ergo sum, or "I think, therefore I am." I must exist if I'm pondering my existence. Someone who states that there is no truth must exist, and so it's true that at least one individual, the one uttering the statement, must exist.

Time must also exist, by the way. Time must exist to express a sequence of words, the sequence being "There is no truth." The word "is" must come after the word "there," and the word "no" after both of them, and one can only come after the other if there's time, with present, past and future. So time must exist as an objectively true thing, because this statement was uttered with words in temporal sequence.

The statement itself is a proposition, so propositions must exist. That's a truth. It contains tokens, words that are tokens of ideas. The concept of truth, the concept of negation expressed in the word "no," must exist as ideas and be true as existents, things that exist.

There has to be the concept of unity, the idea that the four words work together in a sentence, and plurality, the distinction of the four different words. Space must exist to differentiate one word from another, separating the units.

If the statement itself that there is no truth is true, then its opposite must be false. If there is no truth, then it is not the case that there is truth. Therefore, the law of non-contradiction must exist and be true. That statement is also distinguished from all of its contradictions, so the law of identity must be true.

There's at least one sentence that exists, because the person just uttered it. That must be true. There are English words, and grammatical relationships between the words-- subject and predicate. That must be true.

The numbers one through four must exist because there are four different words. So addition must be true, because

you add those units up and get the number four. The alphabet exists. Parts of speech exist, like nouns and verbs.

Do you see the point? In order to object by saying "There is no truth," there must be at least 14 things that are true before you can even make the statement. They must, in fact, be necessarily true, given the statement itself. When I say necessarily true, I mean there's no way they can be false, given the statement, "There is no truth," uttered in English. If there's such a statement uttered in English, then all these other things must be true. It's impossible for them not to be true.

That's why radical skepticism like this is not justified. As one thinker put it-- Dallas Willard, a Christian philosopher at U.S.C.-- "If we want to be intellectually honest skeptics, we must be as skeptical about our skepticism as we are about our knowledge." We should take the burden of proof to defend our skepticism instead of simply asserting our skepticism. Anyone can assert skepticism. Whether they can make sense out of their skepticism is a different thing.

That's why just uttering the statement "There is no truth," in itself establishes the truth of many different things. And if we can establish their truth just by uttering such a statement, then it seems to me there are a whole lot of other things we can determine to be true as well, and be certain about.

Therefore, radical skepticism is unjustified.

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