

The Four Domains of Truth

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When I speak about truth, the first thing I am asked is, "How do **YOU** define truth?"

Webster defines *truth* as: "A judgment, proposition, or idea that is true or accepted as true."

I won't quibble with Webster. I accept his definition of truth as true. Now that Webster has defined truth, how do we find it?

We each approach the search differently and we each find different truths.

Some people seek solitude, meditate and look deep within in search of truth.

Some people read the holy books from India and the middle east.

Some people read the works of the great philosophers from **Thales to Aristotle**, from **Hobbes to DesCartes**, from **Locke to Wittgenstein**.

And other people take a short cut in their search for truth. They just tune in **Rush Limbaugh** or **Jeraldo Rivera**.

Truth, like sexual abstinence, seems to be respected in general and violated in particular.

Some time ago I became troubled by the apparent disregard for truth.

I decided to explore the nature of truth--and disagreement.

After over a year of analysis, I think I found the problem.

My study of sources of disagreement led me to the view that I want to offer you here today.

1. I concluded there are four independent Domains of truth. I will call these the domains of **Opinion, Belief, Inference, & Fact**.
2. There are truths asserted from **opinions** we debate, **beliefs** we hold, **inferences** logically drawn, and **facts** that are discovered through research and then documented.

Is democracy the best form of government?

The answer to this question is beholden only to persuasion and debate (in the **Domain of Opinion**), not spiritual revelation, logical inference, or as a research finding.

Did God create humans?

Belief in god the creator is beholden to faith alone (in the **Domain of Belief**). It does not invite rhetorical debate, logical reasoning, or rigorous research.

If all men are mortal, and Socrates is a man, can we be certain that Socrates is mortal?

The answer to this question is beholden only to the rules of logic (in the **Domain of Inference**). This type question does not invite rhetoric, commitment to faith, or research.

Did *Homo sapiens* evolve from another species?

The answer to this question is beholden to research data alone (in the **Domain of Fact**). It does not require debate, revelation of faith, or rational inquiry--only research and discovery.

We know which domain a truth comes from only by knowing **how it has been tested and affirmed**. We know that creationism has a religious heritage, and evolution has a research heritage. We know that a reasoned conclusion (in a syllogism) has a rational heritage. We know that political positions are born of rhetoric.

But if I assert, "**We each have free will,**" the heritage **of my assertion is unclear**. It could be proposed for

debate, asserted as religious doctrine, a reasoned conclusion, or a research finding. So, when a truth is asserted, we ask, "Why do you think so?"

The Nature of the Four Domains

Unlike physical domains, the four domains of truth exist only in our thought, words and deeds. But like physical territories, they have temples and masters.

In the temples of opinion, democratic capitals, courts, and editorial boardrooms, only the methods of rhetoric (persuasion and debate) are respected.

*The **Masters of rhetoric** include Politicians, attorneys and journalists*

In the temples of belief, the church, only the methods of revelation and conversion to faith are respected.

*The **Masters of revelation and conversion** include Clerics, Gurus, and ideologues*

In the temples of reason and inference, the liberal arts college, only the methods of reason and logic are respected.

*The **Masters of rational inference** include scholars, philosophers and practitioners of science, such as physicians and engineers.*

In the temple of fact, the laboratories of research universities, only the methods of documented research are respected.

*The **Masters of research** include Scientists and historians*

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DISAGREEMENT **ACROSS** THE FOUR DOMAINS

The four domains of truth have irreconcilable methods. There can be no meaningful *disagreement* between domains. There can be no meaningful *agreements* between domains. Truth does not travel well. Truth is conditional, limited to the domain in which it is asserted and tested.

DISAGREEMENT **WITHIN** EACH DOMAIN

In the domain of opinion, we can disagree before anyone makes an assertion. We can disagree with the person. This is exemplified candidates of opposing parties know they are going to disagree and debate before they have clarified their platforms.

In the Domain of Belief, we can disagree with any assertion on its face--without asking, "Why do you say so?" The "right to life" advocate disagrees with the advocate of "choice" before hearing why they think abortion should be legal--and vice versa. They hold conflicting beliefs.

In the Domain of Inference, disagreement requires more than just an assertion of truth. Disagreement requires an understanding of the reason for the assertion. If I say, "Drugs should all be legalized," the reasonable person must ask, **"Why do you think so, what is your reasoning."** The reasonable person may find a flaw in my reasoning and reject what I conclude. But if my premises are acceptable and my conclusion is validly drawn, the reasonable person must accept it.

In the Domain of fact, if you say I disagree, you are simply asked, "Where are you data?" If you wish to disagree with an established fact, you will be asked, "Where are your data?" Research findings can be refuted only by more research findings. You must back your assertions with data.

In Closing, let's look at relation among the four domains

A truth from any one domain is **not beholden** to methods from the other three domains. **For example:** Beliefs require no research, Opinions require no logic, Facts require no faith, Inferences require no persuasion. The differences among domains are irreconcilable, that can be tolerated (even within one head), but they cannot be resolved.
