

Issues & Ethics Chapter 2 Truth

The goal of Journalism: the communication of truth

- Often considered a stable commodity
- Facts in a face-to-face interaction are subject to different interpretations
- Idea once accepted is open to debate

Greeks

Aletha: what humans recall from memory; considered truth

What we see, we consider reality

Lethe: the river of forgetfulness

Plato

- The first to link truth to human rationality and intellect
- Seeing and believing
- Truth is knowable only to human intellect; it could not be touched or verified

Milton

- Competing components of the truth should co-exist with the actual truth ultimately appearing

Enlightenment

- Correspondence Theory: truth should correspond to external facts or observations
- Truth requires substance
- Truth is tied to what is written down
- Compatible with democracy, people come together and reason

Objectivity: a way of knowing that connects human perception with facts and then knowledge

In Journalism, all facts & people are seen as equal

In the 1800s, newspapers were considered the realms of truth (yeah right!)

Pragmatism

- Founded by Pierce and Will James
- Truth depends on how the issue is investigated and who does the investigating
- Truth, like matter, is relative

Postmodern Philosophy

- Truth is devoid of meaning
- An outgrowth of pragmatism
- Truth does not exist
- Solipsism: impossible to know anything outside of one's own thoughts and perceptions

Convergence Journalism: uses sounds, images, and words to cover stories

- Professional response to truth and technological possibilities of the Internet/computer
- Requires an active audience

Additional Facts

- Journalists are better paid and smarter than the average person
- News is about middle-class Caucasians
- Objectivity excuses lazy reporting

Six Cultural Values of News

1. Ethnocentrism
2. Altruistic democracy
3. Responsible capitalism
4. Individualism
5. Emphasis on the need for and maintenance of social order
6. Leadership

Framing: reporting designed to the goals above

More Facts

- News is manufactured for each day
- Focus is on a narrative
- Narratives are memorable whereas pure facts are not
- Slow on-set disasters are not reported because of their nature
 - They take time to develop whereas news does not
- Facts have a relationship to another, forming a bigger whole
- Journalists think about deception on a continuum
- Lies of omission: withholding info

Considered less problematic than fabricating facts

-Lying is a way to get power, especially over an interview subject, ex: false flattery

Note: facts can be lost from converting information via foreign languages (lost/missing words, misinterpreted phrases)

Ethical News Values

1. Accuracy: using the right facts and the right words, putting things in context
2. Confirmation: writing articles that can withstand scrutiny, both in and out of the newsroom
 - a. Discipline of confirmation: reflects how hard it can be to capture some of the truth in complex news scenarios
3. Tenacity: knowing when a story is important enough to require additional effort
 - a. Drives journalists to provide all the depth they can find
4. Dignity: leaving the subject of a story as much self-respect as amicable
 - a. Values each person of a story regardless of the part they play
5. Reciprocity: treating others as you wish to be treated
 - a. Demands respect for the reader
6. Sufficiency: allocating adequate resources to important matters
7. Equity: seeking justice for all involved in controversial matters and treating all sources/subjects equally
 - a. Demands all POVs to be considered
 - b. Does not mean each one is equally compelling
8. Community: valuing social cohesion
 - a. Organizational level: media outlets and corporations
 - b. Individual level: eye first to social good
9. Diversity: covering all segments of the audience fairly and accurately