

Truth is that which the
community settles to



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Pamela Aragon TOK Essay 1 February 17, 2012 " Truth is that which the community ultimately settles down. " (Charles Pierce) The human race, ever since its existence began, has been seeking truth. Living in a limited spherical space has forced us to adapt to communities. This has involved accepting laws, social contracts, morals, values, and most importantly, communal knowledge. Our pursuit of knowledge has been modeled by different groups and their accepted beliefs. Every new piece of knowledge has been built upon existing knowledge and that new piece of knowledge is the basis for the one to come so we end up with a thread of information that is too long to track. This pressures us to constantly operate under groupthink, a psychological phenomenon in which the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic exploration of alternatives; we accept beliefs as truth without having sufficient evidence or any at all to prove that they are in fact true. Not only are we automatically accepting our community's ideas as truth but we are encouraged to. The key to success is to think globally is what the world says, but are we to accept every global belief? " Truth is that which the community ultimately settles down" is what Charles Pierce concludes. Through this quote, he implies that truth is the outcome of a process. Pierce flawlessly portrays human tendency, however it is questionable whether his definition of truth is functioning. In order to reliably distinguish between true and false claims a universally working definition for truth must be adopted (This does not necessarily mean that knowers will be able to know what is true and what is false but they will, however be able to have a rational conversation about knowledge). A true statement will be true independent of what anyone believes. It is easier to take truth as a single point in a coordinate plane, there is only one of its kind and

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it will be there regardless if you see it or not. It would be impossible for one knower to test all the information he or she acquires in a completely effective way to eliminate misconceptions caused by the what the community accepts as truth but it is important to understand that a lot of what we think we know could be false. There are different sizes and types of communities but for the sake of the analysis we shall consider the great majority of the global community. Regardless of a person's cultural background there are several misconceptions that an average person is very likely to have accepted as truth at one point throughout their life. These could have been caused by ways of knowing that appear to be extremely reliable. Seeing is believing. It would be impossible to count the times we have heard that in our lives. This form of perception is generally thought to be extremely reliable to perceive truth. Most of the world community sees very similar if not the same images, however there are many misconceptions that are caused by this way of knowing and we will only uncover them by asking the right question. To what extent does perception shape what we consider to be true? When thinking back to kindergarden, what is one thing that almost all the students drew the same? The sun. In nearly every drawing the sun would be in a top corner and a bright yellow color. The reason that sun has been drawn and considered yellow for as long as we can remember is that, we perceive it to be yellow. On a regular, clear day, if one looks up at the sky we will see a yellow circle that seems to harm our eyes when we look at it directly. Regardless of a person perceiving that the sun is yellow, it is not. The sun is actually white, but it looks yellow to almost all of us on earth. Can universal perception be flawed? The reason the sun looks yellow to earth's community is that the light emitted by the sun scatters in our

atmosphere and creates an illusion of the color changing. Earth's atmosphere scatters light in blue and violet wave-lengths which makes it appear yellow. One person perceiving that the sun is yellow would not make true and when the community joins, it still not true. According to Pierce, if the whole community settles down to the belief that the sun is yellow, the truth is that the sun is yellow, but in reality the fact that the community thinks that the sun is yellow does not make it yellow. The sun's light is still white regardless of what the whole world thinks. This proves how even one of the simplest things we could be sure to know as a community not true, despite of the masses believing it is. Even when we take perception to the next level and analyze it, we are prone to accept false statements when thinking along with the community. Think logically; is what the community considers intelligent. Analyze. How, if possible, is universal logic flawed? If you've ever been to a bullfight or even heard of one, you are aware that a man, or matador, stands in a closed space called arena along with a raging bull and waves a red cape at the bull to make it try to attack the flaring piece of cloth, and it is common knowledge that the bull attacks the matador because the red color infuriates the animal. This has been a misconception that has been dragged through history due to the masses thinking 'logically'. It roots from the beginning of this spanish tradition when matadors began to use a small red cape in bullfighting around the 1700s and ever since people have perpetuated the myth that the color red makes bulls go wild. People who attended these events saw a man waving a red cape every time and logically concluded that the red color was used because it has a special physiological effect on the bull. Recently Myth Busters, a group that seeks the truth in common misconceptions as this, conducted an experiment to <https://assignbuster.com/truth-is-that-which-the-community-settles-to/>

test whether it was the color red that infuriated the bull. In this experiment they had several matadors in the arena each holding a cape of a different color, along with a bull. They found that the red, blue and white flags received the same low intensity in the bulls attacks when they were holding it still but when they began to wave the cape the bull got infuriated. They concluded that it wasn't the color red that had infuriated the bull for centuries but the movement of the cape. The universal logic that was applied to these scenario was extremely flawed, and just because the community accepted it as true didn't make the bull have a color preference when choosing its next prey. So, logic the community's way of knowing that is placed in pedestal is flawed as well, specially when used by the masses. The community uses logic to test which types of sources to accept as evidence when considering beliefs as truth, but even sources that seem logically reliable can be extremely flawed. Growing up we are all told to pay attention in classes because that is where we will receive true information through books and teachers that are all very wise and full knowledge. So students try their best, they learn facts that are presented in the books that they receive and they, for the most part, consider it true knowledge. Because the community accepts schools as a reliable source, we rarely question the validity of the information that they share with us through language. It is important to question to what extent has information that has been shared through language and accepted by the community be flawed? The history text book I used taught me that Mr. Henry Ford invented the automobile and the assembly line. Despite Ford's important contributions to both of these inventions, he was not the one to create them. It was Karl Benz that created the first modern automobile and the assembly line has existed throughout

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history. That information is continuously shared with students around the globe through language. In this case, language was extremely flawed even though it was presented by a reliable and supposedly objective source. Even though the community has accepted this type of language as a reliable way of knowing there are flaws in the information that it is portraying just as there are flaws in every other way of knowing. Does this mean that we should reject all knowledge provided by the community? Probably not. It does however encourage the knower to critically analyze the ways of knowing to avoid absorbing false information. Pierce holds a subjective perspective of truth in this quote, since there are different communities around the globe and much more the galaxy that will probably have subjective beliefs. A responsible knower must hold an objective perspective of truth in order to acquire true knowledge. Coping with what the community settles down may lead us to believe false statements such as 'sun's light is yellow', 'bulls hate red', or 'Henry Ford invented the automobile and the assembly line'. Throughout the daily life of a knower, they must learn to identify when they are being victims of group think and when they are in reality analyzing and thinking critically. An even bigger knowledge issue than the ones presented above that might never be answered is to what extent should the knower accept or reject the information provided by the community. Understanding that the community isn't always right is imperative but rejecting all information it provides would be self destructive.

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