

3. Any true grand narrative/story about our world will be internally consistent, coherent, and will account for the full scope of human experience and all that has been observed throughout history.

Worldviews/belief systems need to account for the full scope of human experience and all observations of the cosmos (all that is known of the physical sciences, social sciences, religion, and aesthetics). Every detail of our universe sheds light on the origin and ultimate nature of our world, which is the foundational worldview element.

Ultimately, there can be only one explanation that accounts for all the evidence with no conflict: the *real* one, the truth. People use truth measures called *criteria* to help us decide which explanation lines up with reality and which conflict with reality. Criteria are tools that we instinctively reach for in our minds to determine whether something is true or not. Some criteria are reliable while *many* are not. Consider the following criteria:

Instinct — believing something because it *seems* true

Feelings — believing based on strong emotional appeal

Custom or Tradition — simply accepting the beliefs handed down from one's parents or culture

Popularity — believing a certain way because the majority do

Pragmatism — believing in something because it promises to result in a good outcome or to serve “the greater good”

These measures produce wildly inconsistent results. Clearly, such measures cannot be relied upon to point to the single accurate explanation. Logic is the science that keys us into reliable criteria—criteria that can be relied upon to lead to correct answers, regardless of who is carrying out the search. Logical consistency, coherency, and external correspondence are three such criteria. All three of these are hardwired into human thinking and behavior. On the basis of these, we recognize that:

1. Contradictory truth claims cannot both be true at the same time.
2. The elements of a truthful claim will be interconnected/cohesive.
3. A truthful claim will elucidate and integrate relevant evidence.

"IF YOU TELL THE TRUTH, YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMEMBER ANYTHING."

Mark Twain

The breadth of evidence encompasses general facets of life, such as pain, pleasure, instincts, communication, aging, death, intelligence, sleep, humor, emotions, philosophy, aesthetics, war, morality, ethics, self-consciousness, etc. Additionally, reports of religious and psychic phenomenon are forms of evidence, regardless what such evidence ultimately points to.

When evaluating the evidence, distinguish the following, measuring the strength and reliability of each against the facts (as defined in point #2):

TESTIMONY: Testimony consists of written or spoken statements recounting personal experiences or observations. Eyewitness accounts, personal reports, and oral traditions fall into this category.

INFERENCE and INTERPRETATION: Inferences are attempted explanations that move *beyond* what can be directly observed. When a person's fore-drawn conclusions may influence his inferences, these explanations are called interpretations. Inferences and interpretations are useful for generating ideas about the facts.

THEORY: In the context of an investigation (as opposed to science), a theory is an idea or system of ideas that is intended to explain a set of facts as they relate to one another. When a theory

is formed, it may influence the interpretation of new data, leading to confirmation bias. To avoid this error, all new data should be interpreted carefully and objectively, with a willingness to revise or abandon the theory if necessary.