

Enchanted

義心頤情

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Yee Hong Centre

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Self Awareness

first step in protecting yourself from false information.

US President Abraham Lincoln, who is accredited for liberating the black slaves, once said, "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time."

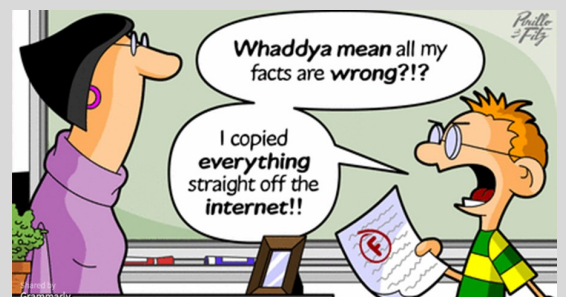
The statement has become the motto for many, as it would alert a person not to lie out of short-term convenience. Nonetheless, some scholars are now questioning if Lincoln actually made that statement, and use evidences from various sources to prove the point.

To me, whether Lincoln actually said that is not as important. What is important is the long-lasting impact the saying has on many people. An issue that is more relevant is distinguishing truth from fabrication, and the ways to differentiate them. This is particularly important in this age of excessive false information. Whether something actually happens can be verified with historical documents. However history has its own biases, often restrained by political and other elements. The resulting account could be partial, biased, and even contradictory. With each side holding firm on its points, the dispute is

often left unresolved.

I remember my son working on a high school project on distinguishing between facts and opinions, though I could barely recall what subject it was. This shows that the local education puts much emphasis on students' dialectical ability. By instilling the concept early, the student will have more chances to apply and practice the skills so he will be more ready to analyze and deal with complex issues in the future.

Let's use the following two scenarios as examples to differentiate truth and falsehood:



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Incident A happened two days ago - some people believe it did happen, others don't.

Drug B is effective in treating a certain disease – some people believe it, others don't

In Scenario I, if the incident really happens, saying it has happened is telling the truth, and denying it would be false. Media reports, official announcements and witness accounts will help assess if the incident did happen. In Scenario II, whether the drug is effective for the disease can be supported by research and clinical data. In both cases, there are bound to be people that would not accept it as true. Often, opinions carry more weight than facts in people's judgment, as is apparent in politics, justice, consumption, aesthetic and other categories of perception.

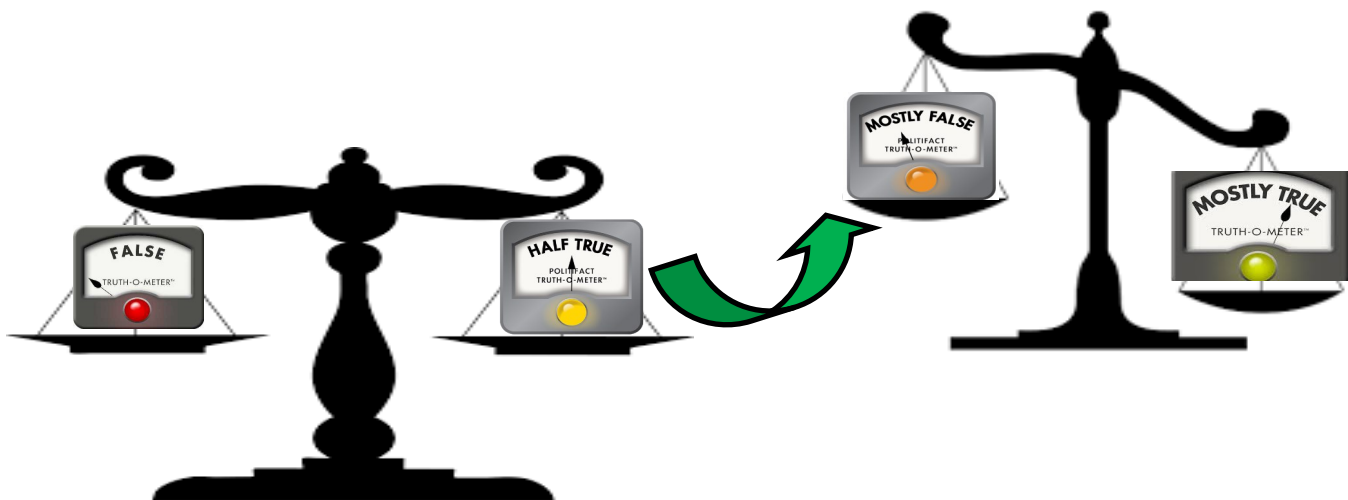
A person's opinions are rooted in his belief system, which is shaped over time from the indi-

vidual's life experience and environment. This includes such things as culture, family, education, faith, habits, career and overall exposure. However it is not something permanent. Encounters and changes in life will likely shift one's belief system. Belief system by and large is subconscious, yet it will affect deeply our behaviours and the ways we perceive things. There are many blind spots in the belief system. If we can unearth it and analyze it, biases in our perspectives will likely be reduced.

Some people would espouse a scientific attitude to differentiate truth from falsehood. Science emphasizes evidence and applies standardized methodology to prove. This of course is more accurate than relying on one's belief. Yet science has its own limitations, and there is hardly any absolute. Research on the same topic can often generate contradictory results. The recent exclusion of Pluto from the solar system is a good example of the ongoing evolution of sci-

ence. Neil deGrasse Tyson, a NASA scientist, once said, "If you cherry-pick science so that it resonates with your *belief system*, you are not understanding how science works". He sees his most vital role as a scientist is to arouse creativity, and not to spoon-feed people with information, as only creativity will bring new knowledge.

A popular brain teaser goes like this: There are two neighbouring villages. The natives of one village only tell the truth while those of the other village tell only lies. A traveler intends to visit one of the villages but he is allowed to ask one question at the entry to one village only. We can use logical deduction to find the answer, as this is simply a theoretical deduction. In the real world, things are much more complicated and a lot depends much on your mental power. With a widened perspective, curiosity for new knowledge, and an open mind, the chance of you being tricked by falsehood will be greatly reduced.



辨証真假 始於自我認識

解放黑奴的美國總統林肯的一句話：「你可以愚弄所有人一時，也可以永遠愚弄某些人，但是你不能永遠愚弄所有的人。」

(“You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”)，成為了許多人的座右銘，提醒自己

不要貪一時方便撒謊。然而，近年有學者質疑這句話是否真的出自

林肯的口，並從多方面引証，支持其論點。對筆者來說，林肯有沒有說過這句話已不太重要，重要的是這句話對一般人影響之深遠。不過這裏卻引出了另一個問題，那就是真實和虛假的分野和辨証。這在這個資訊氾濫的年代尤其重要。一件事情曾否發生，可從歷史文獻去辨証。但歷史資料始終有其主觀性；加上政治和其他因素牽制，難免會出現片面、偏頗、矛盾等弊處，爭論到某一地步，多以各執己見為終。

兒子讀中學時做過一份有關分辨事實和意見的習作，已記不起是屬哪一科目的功課，卻可見本地教育對辨証能力相當重視，希望趁一個人年紀尚輕時開始貫輸，得以自小開始

應用和鍛鍊，待他日面對複雜的問題時，能從容分析和處理。

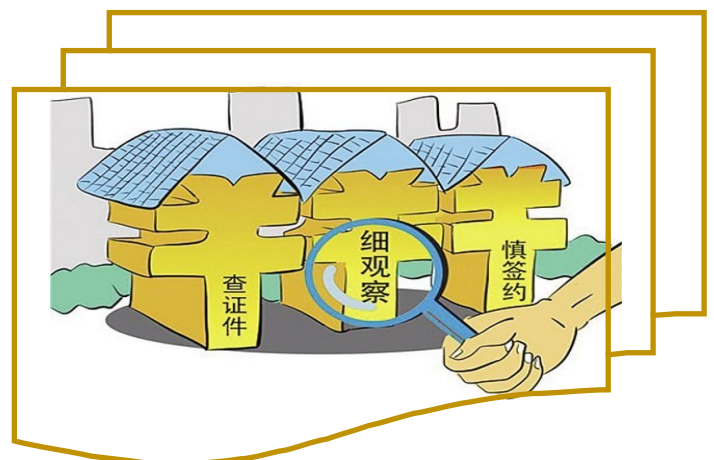
讓我們藉以下兩個情境來體驗如何分辨事實：

事情 A 兩天前發生，有人相信，有人不信

藥物 B 對某一疾病有效，有人相信，有人不信
第一情



境：若這件事真的發生了，說它有發生是真實，說它沒有發生是虛假；反之亦然。其真實性可從媒體報道、官方發佈和目擊者等驗證。第二情境：其可靠性可從科研、臨床數據等驗證。但兩個情境都會有不相信的人。很多情況下，一個人或一個群體受意見影響之比重可能比事實更高。這可從政選、司法、消費、審美等各類範疇中觀察得到。



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假的真不了 真的假不了



難分真與假

一個人的意見源於他的信任體系 (Belief System)。信任體系是由個人生活中不同的經歷和長久的環境影響形成，包

括文化、家境、教育、信仰、嗜好、職業、見聞等，但它並不是永恆不變的東西。生活的際遇或生命的轉捩點，都可以觸發改變。信任體系多是潛意識的，卻對我們的行為和對事物的觀點影響極深，亦埋著不少盲點。若能把自己的信任體系挖掘出來，加以剖析，對事物看法的片面性就可能減低了。

有些人借用科學的態度去辨別事情之真假。科學講求證據，且有標準的步驟去驗證，當然比單靠信念去定斷來得實際。唯科學亦有它自己的局限，沒有絕對，針對同一問題的研究會產生對立的結論。最近冥王星被剔除行星之列，顯示科學

發展有其漸進性。美國太空總署 (NASA) 科學家 Neil deGrasse Tyson 就這樣說過，「如果你挑選科學，只因它與你的信任體系共鳴，那你就完全不明白科學是怎麼一回事。」(If you cherry-pick science so that it resonates with your *belief system*, you are not understanding how science works.) 作為一個科學家，他認為自己的責任是去刺激好奇心，而不是填鴨式的把資訊硬塞入人的腦子，因為只有好奇會帶來知識。

有個智力遊戲，說某地有兩個村落，其中一個的所有村民只說真話，另一個則只說謊話。一個遊客想到其中一村落，他怎樣才能通過一個問題就分辨出兩者呢？這遊戲可用簡單的邏輯解碼，因為它是純理論的。在現實生活中，情況就複雜得多，一定要靠自己的實力。能擴闊視野、渴求新知、並把持開放態度，那麼被假像愚弄的機會自然會減少。

For more information, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at the appropriate Yee Hong Centre or visit us online at http://www.yeehong.com/volunteer_intro.php

如對義工工作有興趣，請與以下職員聯絡或報名參加每月舉辦之義工簡介例會：

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