

1.1 Principle of Honesty

Although honesty is not always an objective in everyday activities, it affects practically everything that a person does and has an inordinate influence on the quality of life, or happiness and success in life. The objectives of achieving happiness and success are the driving forces behind the writing of this article. Honesty is not just a matter of telling the truth; it is a difficult and complex discipline because it is knowledge based. In the real world, the moral intent of honesty is not enough because in *thinking* that you are honestly trying to be honest, the brain can be fooled into dishonesty in any number of ways, as we shall see. So we immediately come to the conclusion that the Principle Of Honesty (POH) has two components, the Moral Intent to be honest (MPOH) and the Actual degree of honesty achieved (APOH).

Is there a fundamental reason why truth should lead to happiness and success? The theoretical answer is that truths are in agreement with god, not the god of the religions, but god of reality and the cosmos – the ultimate truth of reality. This is why POH is knowledge based. Religion is mentioned here because, as we shall see, honesty is intimately related to human evolution and social development. Because religions (including what are called superstitions) have been the main political forces behind human evolutionary success for the last million years or more, it is extremely educational and rewarding to examine how each religion teaches honesty in the light of universal truth. In fact, until the recent developments in science and technology, religious institutions (including early medicine men, etc.) were the main depositories of all human knowledge and in that sense, truly represented god. Thus the study of religion is an integral part of the study of POH. Another reason for the intimate relationship between religion and honesty is that over half of the human population believes in some type of religion; thus there will inevitably be conflicts between universal truth and the differing synthetic rules of truth mandated by each different religion. How should we deal with such conflicts?

It is clear that a 100% honest POH is neither optimum nor always possible. If you are captured by an enemy and is subjected to interrogation, you want to be as dishonest as you can get away with. Thus humans evolved to be born with a certain amount of dishonesty optimized for the survival of the species. As modern society and legal systems, etc., developed, the need for dishonesty decreased to values smaller than the “natural” value dictated by evolution. Thus in principle, more developed societies require more honesty, which, unfortunately, goes against our natural evolutionary instinct. This instinct is most visible in early childhood before the environment and education adjusts it to values appropriate for that society. Thus, although POH, in principle, must shoot for 100% honesty, in reality, it is a process of optimization; this adds another dimension of complexity to POH.

Let's start with moral intent, MPOH. In principle, morality is easy – simply tell the truth. But things get complicated as soon as you examine real life examples. Suppose that person A asks person B a question. How B answers the question depends on how B evaluates the act of answering. There are two main types of B. The first type asks “which answer will help or harm me?” The second type asks “what is the truthful answer?” Clearly, the second type is more helpful and follows POH, but in many societies, especially those with strong traditional or etiquette based social rules, the first type may predominate (rules of etiquette are generally designed to protect society, such as traditional Japanese mannerisms). People living under primitive conditions on the edge of survival will also tend to be the first type. Thus few people will be convinced to always tell the truth unless the rewards exceed the

perceived losses. For this to happen, the person must be sufficiently educated to understand the eventual outcome of any action. Thus education is the most important element in achieving POH. Thus although it would seem that MPOH is sufficient, in reality it alone accomplishes very little; it is only a beginning to POH, and must be followed up by a lot of education.

My own childhood is an example of this. Until I was about 10 years old, I was a crybaby (to “protect” myself from bullies – it didn't help, because crybabies were viewed as lower class members of society) and lied and stole whenever I thought that it was advantageous. As a result, everybody around me knew all my tendencies and always questioned or distrusted my statements. Not only that but , if I told one lie, I would forever be saddled with the fear that someone would discover my lie (which most adults did with alarming frequency). By age 10, I understood the difference between good and bad, and acting badly has this nasty tendency of nagging your conscience, which made me feel like an inferior person. At around age 10, I woke up to these negatives and decided to follow POH. *It was amazing – the main reason why I am writing this article.* I immediately felt like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders (I never had to look over my shoulders to see if someone might expose my lies), I gained self esteem (some think that self esteem is given to you by others because unless others respect you, you can't have self esteem, but self esteem is something you give yourself), and my success rate increased. This last item was a surprise bonus and needs explaining.

POH clearly defines reality vs your imaginary world. Therefore, you become very interested in reality, and in education in particular. POH may be the main reason why I decided to study science because in science, everything is either proven, unknown, or admittedly speculative: it is 100% POH. Without POH, you tend to give the wrong answers which you then need to defend –a very difficult task that frequently leads to conflicts. With POH, when someone discovers your mistake, that mistake is immediately recognized and corrected – there are no difficulties, conflicts or even shame of having made a mistake because you just learned something new, which helps your POH.

Thus in addition to confidence, happiness, and self esteem, I was having more successes in whatever I did.

This article is far from finished; I plan to keep adding to it as my time allows (honest!).

Return to [Wisdom World](#)