

Who do we trust and why do we trust them?

Since we don't have the resources to test everything ourselves and the vast majority of what we believe in comes from trusting other sources, how do we know who to trust? If we are Realists and committed to reality the way it really is, then who do we trust to get our real information from? Who do Realist have faith in?

I know that several of you readers are cringing at this moment. "How dare you use reality and faith in the same sentence! That is Blasphemy" Brothers and Sisters - I feel your pain.

The quest for truth is an interesting path indeed. You decide to become a Realist. So - what do you do next? Do you go to the Book of Reality, the ultimate authority on everything and start studying? Oh, if only such a book existed it would be so much easier. But unfortunately such a reference book doesn't exist. All we have is a Tree of Knowledge that contains a lot of bullshit that we have to sort through and try to figure out as best we can what is and isn't real. And all we have to work with is our biological brains, a very crude tool indeed, and whatever computers we can build to enhance our brains and store and communicate what we know. It's not much to work with - but it's all we have so we are going to have to do the best we can with what we have.

The question isn't so much a matter of who we trust, but why we trust them. It's about the reputation of the source. Is this information coming from a trusted source? What makes a trusted source trusted?

In the Church of Reality we believe trust has to be earned. To be trusted you have to be trustworthy, or worthy of trust. You get to be trustworthy by being responsible, by being dependable, and by being accountable. Everyone makes mistakes. Even the most trusted sources get it wrong sometimes. But making a mistake doesn't mean that you aren't trustworthy. It just means that you aren't perfect. We in the Church of Reality know that what we know is a small subset of what we can know and that we aren't perfect and a lot of what we know is just plain wrong. However, there is a difference between a trustworthy source getting it wrong and an untrustworthy source getting it wrong. When the trusted source gets it wrong and they find out they are wrong, they fix it. They admit they were wrong and they change to what is right. Often they even investigate the mistake to see why the mistake was made and what they can do to prevent mistakes from happening in the future. They investigate to see if there are any more mistakes that might be related. Untrustworthy sources in contrast maintain the wrong information in spite of the evidence to the contrary.

You become trustworthy by accepting scrutiny and doubt and fixing mistakes when you are wrong. In this way you earn the faith of others.

To be worthy of earned faith you first have to have a commitment to the truth. You have to be committed to reality as it really is. To be trustworthy you have to be a realist. In addition to being committed to reality, you have to be open to doubt and scrutiny. To a person who is trustworthy, doubt and scrutiny are helpful for finding errors and correcting mistakes. Thus when the trusted person gets it wrong, then other people can point out the error so it can be fixed. A person of earned faith would respond, "Oh thank you for finding my mistake, I'll fix it right away!" Doubt and scrutiny are really volunteer help. They are free assistance from a community of people who are interested in your work. A trustworthy person is thankful that other people have shown enough interest to take the time to think about their work and care enough about it that they invest the effort to help correct errors.

Earned faith comes from doubt based faith. In the Church of Reality, our faith is rooted in our doubt process. We come together as a doubt based community to assist each other in our quest for reality by scrutinizing our sources so that they can rise to the level of earned faith.