

A Meditation on Internet Bullshit, Avoiding It, and Finding Truth

“Falsehood is halfway around the world before truth has its boots on.”

This is sad but true. Also sad but true is that this proverb existed **before** the Internet.

At this rate, bullshit is all the way to Mars before truth gets out of bed. It’s surprising to me that “fake news” has only gotten a name this year.

The internet is not an easy place to find truth. Truth and nuanced reporting is at a distinct disadvantage in a world of viral sharing. Bullshit is far more appealing, far more polarizing, and far more lucrative – in the short term – than reality.

If you want to steer clear of the herd avoid stepping in its bullshit, you’ll have to do some counterintuitive things when you log on next.

If you want to find the truth, listen to the still, small voices.

If you want to find the truth, watch the actions, not the speech.

If you want to find the truth, ask who benefits and remember incentives.

If you want to find the truth, take your time. The fastest-growing narrative is not always the right one.

If you want to find the truth, remember human nature. It’s not cartoonishly evil, and it’s not cartoonishly good. There are few true villains and superheroes in the world.

If you want to find the truth, use Ockham’s razor. Make no more assumptions than necessary when crafting your story of reality.

If you want to find the truth, follow the principle of charitable interpretation. Judge the truth of accusations against others with the same care you would hope someone would judge the truth of accusations against you.

If you want to find the truth, look at the big picture, use a longer timeframe, and draw on stable references. History > news. *HT to Bryan Caplan’s advice here.*

Or better yet, don’t read the news at all. Watch, listen, and learn to the things in your circle of control. Expand that circle of control to create a reality worth living in.