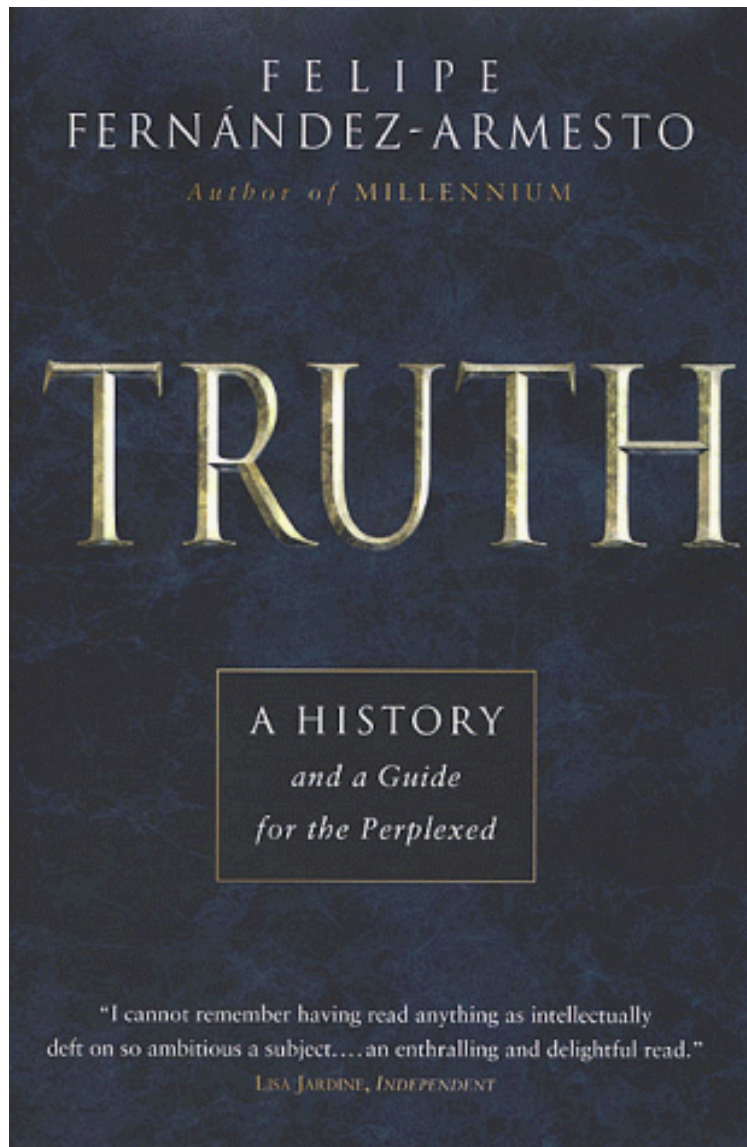


(Download free pdf) Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed

Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto
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Felipe Fernandez-Armesto : Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Truth: A History and a Guide for the Perplexed:

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those who seek the facts about truth)..0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Best of TimesBy John HenriksonHave you ever taken a stroll on a beautiful day with a perfect companion and emerged exhilarated? Read this book and you will have that experience.0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. never read!By sararoeI was required to read this book before entering a PhD program. I have never stumbled through a book that engaged me less, and left me wondering simply..." what the heck is the truth?"While I know based on my degree and its heavy bend on Philosophy in the first year, that I should have found this quite interesting, instead is simply left me feeling that I may have mashed potatoes for brains.

"Fernandez-Armesto shows how - at different times, in different societies - people have tried to distinguish truth from falsehood; he also exposes the basic human assumptions about truth that have informed and determined these truth-telling strategies. All truth-finding can be reduced, he argues, to a few basic types, which have always been available, but which have been combined in varying proportions. These types are still useful. They can help us survive contemporary uncertainty and rebuild life after doubt."--BOOK JACKET.

.com The pursuit of truth, says Felipe Fernndez-Armesto, is "the quest for language that can match reality." He believes that the nature of that quest has never quite been fully understood; Truth aims to fill the void. He identifies four key methods of determining the truth--what we feel, what we are told, what we figure out, and what we observe--which are given poetic names such as "the hairy ball--teeth optional" and "the cage of wild birds." These four methods always exist together in every culture, although each one may be differently valued in different places at different times. But Western philosophy after Descartes, in Fernndez-Armesto's assessment, has been largely hostile to these ways of knowledge, and has steadily come to question the very existence of truth. His summation of post-Cartesian philosophy is a largely negative one, which veers dangerously close to ad hominem assaults. Nietzsche, for example, who "was praised too much in his youth for his superior powers of mind and never achieved prowess or position to match," is dismissed as "a sexually inexperienced invalid" whose philosophy was "warped and mangled out of his own lonely, sickly self-hatred." Pragmatism and existentialism, two of the 20th century's most important philosophical movements, are found inadequate; the former is "the philosophy of lovers of technology," while the latter "represents the retreat of Luddites and pessimists into the security of self-contemplation." But even though "philosophical subjectivisms, scientific uncertainties, and dumbing, numbing linguistics" have served to undermine the notion of truth, Fernndez-Armesto believes, they cannot destroy it thoroughly. It seems that even in the face of relativism, truth will win out.From Publishers WeeklyAn idiosyncratic exploration of "the quest for language that can match reality," Oxford historian Fern ndez-Armesto's essay is a highly personal stroll through human history and various cultures' notions of truth. Fern ndez-Armesto (Millennium, etc.) examines four distinct approaches to truthA "the truth you feel," "the truth you are told," "the truth of reason" and sense perceptionAin separate chapters. His goal, he reveals in a preface, is to rescue discussions about truth from the polarizing dead-ends of absolutism and relativism, "to reassure readers that the search for truth is still on and leave relativists and fundamentalists where they belongAon the margins of history." His book is far too anecdotal and unsystematic to achieve that stated goal, but it nevertheless makes for provocative, often illuminating reading, particularly since he includes Chinese, Indian, Polynesian and other traditions in his excavation of how different cultures in different times apprehended the idea of truth. Writing with an interdisciplinarian's lack of, well, discipline, he stumbles badly on such topics as pragmatism, quantum mechanics, chaos theory and G?del's Incompleteness Theorem, repeating or even adding to common misperceptions, rather than dispelling them. Yet he also writes with the confidence and clarityAneither of which is to be confused with accuracy or depthAof a top-notch lecturer. In the end, what he has to say about how language cannot be conceived as separate from the world it tries to describe is not just an interesting philosophical comment but also a moving perspective on what happens whenever one person speaks to another. (Nov.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistNo title ever announced greater auctorial confidence! And Fernandez-Armesto delivers. With remarkable aplomb, he surveys the centuries to limn four distinct conceptions of truth: the primal emotional truth of tribal peoples; the magisterial truth of oracular authority; the rational truth of logic; and the empirical truth of sense perception. All four of these conceptions come to life in vivid historical anecdotes: we join, for instance, a fourth-century Chinese monk in his perilous trek across mountain glaciers in search of a genuinely authentic sutra; later, we shudder with a nineteenth-century German philosopher contemplating the possibility that mathematics might disintegrate in self-contradiction. But no interpretation of past versions of truth will generate as much debate as the judgment that contemporary searchers of the truth have been cruelly ambushed by fundamentalists on one side and sophists on the other. Fernandez-Armesto inspires hope that we may yet extricate ourselves from our cultural crisis of doubt by renewing our collective quest for truth. Bryce Christensen