

Curates Curiosities



'Truth is not truth', said former New York mayor and Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, recently. What was that about?

Yesterday I read that people in different cultures, speaking different languages, perceived colour differently. Two green colour wheels were shown: 11 blocks of the same colour while one was different. The first wheel looked all the same to me — but to a member of the Himba from Namibia one block was obviously different. In the second, one was clearly blue-green and the rest green — yet a Himba would have difficulty seeing it. The striking conclusion was that language can literally alter your perception!

There are things we see clearly — like our views on politics, education, and health — that make no sense to others. We build an opinion that accounts for our knowledge, experience and values — and yet other people sometimes don't agree with us! Similarly, their views may seem like lunacy to us, but make complete sense to them. Like the colour wheels, there are times that we just cannot see what others see, and vice versa!

So it is not much use digging in our heels and telling each other we are wrong — real disagreements happen not because of faulty logic, but because of different perceptions, values and emotions. We shouldn't just agree not to talk about it either — because that robs each of us of a wider point of view. If I really try, perhaps I can learn to see the shade of green that I couldn't see before.

I have friend — a priest called Rob — with whom I disagree about lots, including faith issues! We have argued back and forth, but we disagree well, trying to understand each other's perspectives. We still disagree, but by trying to understand each other our friendship has become stronger, and — hopefully — we have become wiser.

Truth is truth, but we don't always see all the evidence from the same angle. We may agree, or disagree, but if we try to understand each other, we will get closer to the truth — and true friendship.

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