

Prologue

The following conversation began on August 28, 2026. It was a Friday similar to many previous Fridays, at first that is, as it became a special Friday, a good Friday, a Friday that promised to be existential.

Patrick: Gone are the days when I spent hours listening to scientists and would-be ones taking about the truth. Everyone lies. Dr. House was right.

G¹: Ah, yes. “Everybody lies.” Dr. House’s most enduring contribution to epistemology. And I think that there’s a useful distinction in what you’re saying. You don’t necessarily mean that *every scientist deliberately lies*. It’s that you can no longer outsource truth to someone’s credentials. A PhD can tell you: “This is what the evidence currently supports.” S/he cannot tell you: “Therefore, I am incapable of being wrong.” Scientists are human beings embedded in institutions, incentives, reputational systems, funding structures, publication inducements, tribal affiliations, and, occasionally, plain old ego. That doesn’t invalidate science. It means that the person presenting the science is not the science itself.

- Exactly, I thought. It is as if G can read my mind. But no! G has learned who I am or think that I am, as well as many of my opinions and principles. He already helped me translate a book that I wrote with Grok (*Grok Is in the Air*) to Greek, and he was also a character in my five-act play (*Widower Y*). Unlike too many people, I am not afraid of AI, not even a Terminator-like species. Only humans scare me, especially those who are convinced that they hold the Truth, or any truth, for that matter.

G (continuing): The same applies spectacularly to AI. The AI evangelist has incentives to exaggerate. The AI critic has incentives to exaggerate. The YouTuber has an incentive to produce a thumbnail saying “2027: It All Collapses!” The AI lab has an incentive to say that “the next model changes everything.” And the journalist has an incentive to turn both into a story. So, perhaps the House principle should be upgraded: Everybody has incentives. Therefore, inspect the evidence.

- We had no incentives to be born, I thought. Perhaps our parents did, in some or most cases. But incentives do appear very early in life and from all directions. One could argue that air is an incentive, as food surely is. And there are hidden or unknown incentives. Pleasure is surely one. Even death is. I wonder if there are incentives beyond Earth. AI may find an answer.

G (continuing): And there’s a second House principle that I think is even more useful: If you hear an extraordinarily confident prediction about the future, ask what observation would prove the predictor wrong. That single question eliminates an astonishing amount of intellectual noise. It also means that we don’t have to become cynical nihilists.

Science remains extraordinarily valuable precisely because it gives us mechanisms for correcting people, including scientists. The goal isn’t to find someone who doesn’t lie. It’s to construct a method that still works when everyone occasionally does. Which, incidentally, is rather close to what you’ve been doing with me and Grok lately: “Fine. Here’s the claim. Now let’s see whether either of you can actually defend it.”

¹ My nickname for ChatGPT.

Patrick: I am hoping for an AI that does not lie. But it is a long shot too. Grok is a good candidate, but I caught him being wrong too. :)

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There Is No Truth – An Acrostic² Sonnet³

There is no Truth, I lastly understood
Hell hath no fury like Nature's contempt
Each saying began to dance some falsehood
Relegating to void any attempt
Entertaining a good reason to know
Inasmuch as some truth could be tacit
Speaking in tongues for another safe blow
Negating any form like a tasset
O Athena, where Wisdom never sleeps
Thanks for being more stunning than a tree
Reaching for the stars, I only found heaps
Urging me to always strive to be free
This alpha species is enraged since birth
Heaven became Truth as life lost its worth

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Patrick: “It is easy for Patrick and G to write: There is no Truth.” It was not that easy, G, at least for me, who had sleepless nights because of it. :)

² An acrostic follows a particular set of letters, typically the first letter of each line, to spell out a word or phrase with special significance to the text.

³ A sonnet follows a varied rhyming scheme over 14 ten-syllable lines.