

Obiter Dicta on Truth

Beliefs may be justified and still not be true, even as beliefs may be true even though they are not justified. But if you want true beliefs, you'll look for justified beliefs. And if you don't look for justified beliefs, you don't want true beliefs.

So tight is the connection between belief and truth that you don't even count as believing something unless you take it to be true. To believe and to take as true are one and the same.

We can pursue true beliefs only indirectly, by pursuing evidence that points to their truth, although if we didn't care about their truth, we wouldn't give a hoot about evidence for them. We recognize what is true or false only indirectly, by recognizing its *signs*: the presence or absence of evidence, argumentative as well as experiential.

Although we do not have *direct* control over what we believe, and therefore cannot believe on demand, we certainly do have *indirect* control—for example, by putting ourselves in certain situations and avoiding others, by paying careful attention to evidence, both experiential and argumentative, by giving and asking for reasons, by doing adequate research, by remaining open-minded, and so on.