

PHOTOGRAPHS. Photographs do not tell the truth. Look at a photograph showing a tranquil, peaceful scene of a house. It doesn't convey the violence perpetrated inside, since it just shows the outside. Where is the truth? Look at another picture. **I**t is taken inside the house, depicting a scene of aggression. Our sympathies are with the victim. But who is the victim? Is it the individual who - apparently - is being assaulted? Or is that an intruder being apprehended? What is the truth? **E**ven good photographers only present a certain point of view, not the absolute truth; they can't, it is not available to them. Furthermore, looking at a photograph you have your own sense of truth - which may be opposite to that of the photographer. **I**s there truth? Look at two photographs of the same tree. The one is taken from under the tree, looking up. The other one is taken from the top of a building, looking down. The one shows the tree as tall - the other one shows it as small. **N**ow, is the tree tall or small? Don't worry about it; it's just a tree.

The American documentary photographer Walker Evans, renowned for his precise, literal and naturalistic style, was asked when a photograph lies. His answer: "Always."

PRECIPICE. In his book *The Precipice* Toby Ord talks about the existential risk we are facing and he quotes Barak Obama: "The very spark that marks us as a species - our imagination and our tool-making - also give us the capacity for destruction. **T**echnological progress without an equivalent progress in human institutions can doom us. The scientific revolution that led to the splitting of an atom requires a moral revolution as well." **T**oby Ord: "We need to gain this wisdom; to have this moral revolution, because we cannot come back from extinction. And because gaining wisdom or starting a moral revolution takes time ... we need to start now." Humanity stands at a precipice. **I**t is human action that brought us here, which shows us human action can address the challenges before us. It must be our principal aim to end neglecting the existential risk facing humanity."

Toby Ord is a senior research fellow in philosophy at Oxford Uni

prec-i-pice

- 1. An overhanging or extremely steep face of a cliff*
- 2. The brink of a dangerous or disastrous situation*

ex-is-ten-tial risk

Any event that could cause human extinction; they include anthropogenic risks, caused by humans (climate change, nuclear war, hostile artificial intelligence, destructive bio- or nanotechnology) and non-anthropogenic, external risks (asteroid collision, lethal gamma-ray burst, hostile extraterrestrial life).

*see also KRISHNAMURTI, THE FUTURE 2
THREE THOUSAND and my blog 1001 in the appendix*