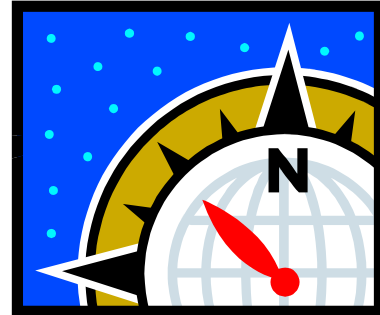


## WHAT ABOUT THE STARS?

The heavenly bodies have intrigued and captivated us since recorded time. Navigation depended the fixed points for direction; and some developed Astrology as a science or philosophy for guiding (and predicting) our lives. The stars have never been reached (to my knowledge) yet science enables us to determine the distance as well as the certainty that there are more than are visible with or without assistance. **What do we make of all of it; how do we use the information?**



As we embark on "GETTING YOUR BEARINGS", an understanding of this idiom is that it means: to feel sure of your abilities (based on the literal meaning of your position in relation to other things). Obviously, the source or origin of this saying is in navigation; which is the reason for discussion of the celestial bodies as "fixed" points from which to determine location, direction...

There are points that are not-fixed; these points are sometimes called "relative" points. This concept of "relative" means: in relation to another location or base. Fixed points are certain, reliable and absolute; relative points are illusive, uncertain, and sometimes unreliable.

Putting aside the actual stars, consider these two terms (absolute and relative) in application to the matters of living. A relative matter could be someone's opinion or expressed perception – in contrast to a fact that is proven and confirmed. If something is opinion, it is not necessarily fact; yes, someone may claim it to be fact; yet, if not proven or confirmed, it is only opinion. **The problem with opinion posing as a fact is that it can be misleading** – just as any relative point, assumed to be fixed or absolute point, can mislead or misdirect the traveler.

Consider the possibility that you are on a trip and, at the moment, you are lost...or, at least, aren't sure where you are...or if you are going in the right direction. After some personal effort of "getting your bearings", you stop and ask someone for directions or help. The person can do one of three things assuming they know the area:

1. They can provide accurate, factual information based on their knowledge-experience of travel; in other words, provide facts
2. They can provide some presumed-to-be facts – not based on their experience or confirmed – but on speculation or even hearsay
3. They can decline...on the admission that they just aren't sure

One other option that I did not list is the possible but unlikely reply of deliberate erroneous information; or other words, they lie. This last option may seem unthinkable, but experience will teach us that it is still possible. To accept a lie as truth might be like setting your direction on a relevant star thought to be fixed...

The stars have served mankind in plotting and directing a course in navigation; but I do not believe that the stars hold some mystic ability to predict our future. Fixed stars – as with facts – have some described benefit because the location or base has been proven or confirmed; relative stars – like opinion or perception – are not of equal benefit because the proof or certainty remains incomplete.

In the movie, **Luther**, the character (of Luther) describes himself as a "roving star" – to suggest that he had no firm base or sense of firmness in his life. The context of this statement being a national outbreak of violence of anarchy, the comment was seemingly the result of his guilt and anguish over the rebellion...spurred by his own public outcry and rejection of the Roman Catholic doctrine.

How do we lock-on to a fixed point – facts rather than opinion or hearsay? Well, not that such effort is easy, but we find and verify such points or information; we search diligently, ask questions, and reason through the results. Yes, we may not always choose wisely but, if we are learning, than wisdom is well on the way.