

# Building a Proper Perspective

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## **Building A Proper Perspective**

In the pursuit of optimal human performance, how many professions are after similar outcomes? Specifically, *what* professions are after the same thing? Have you heard these statements before? Do you agree or disagree?

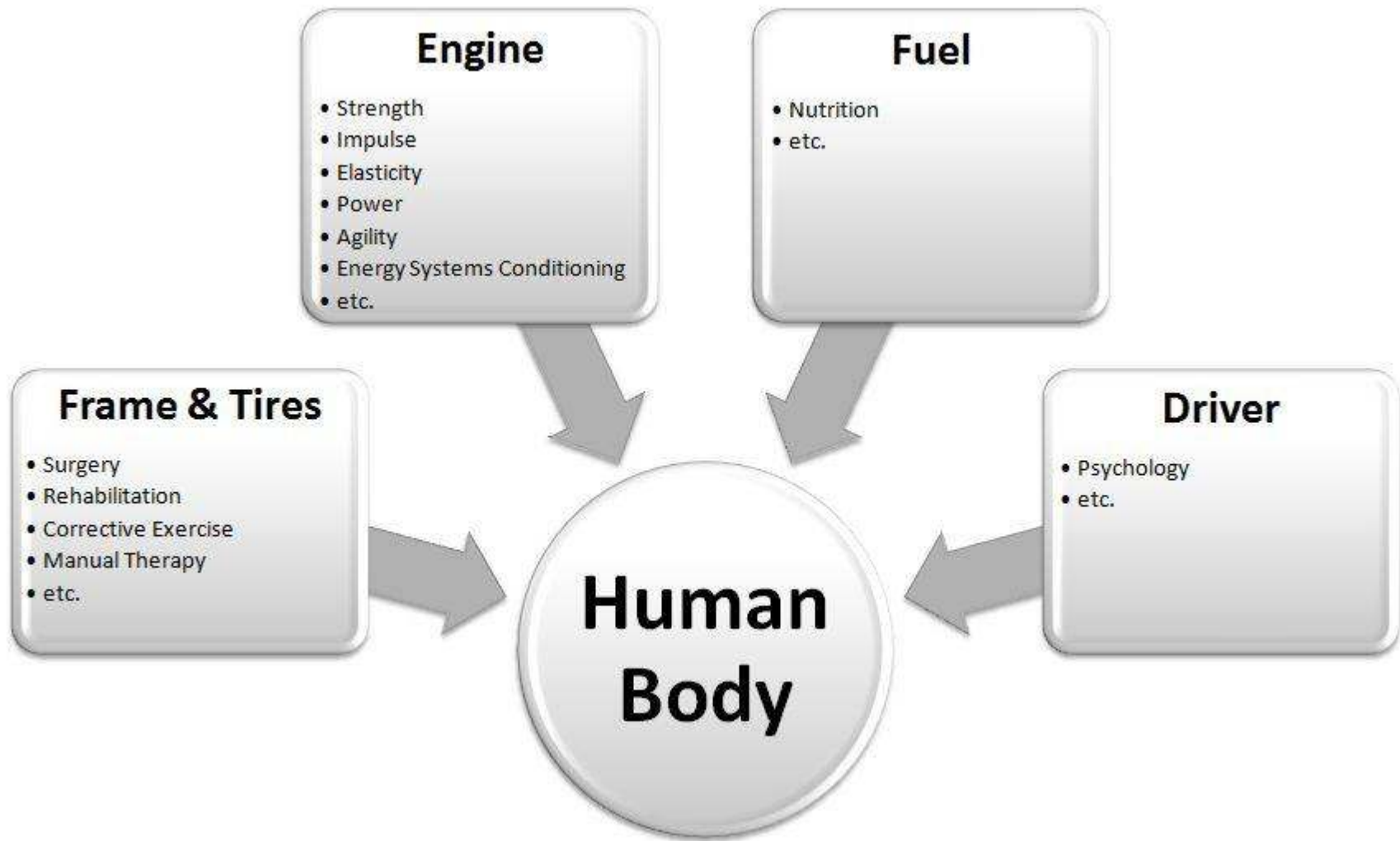
*“Your particular discipline doesn’t matter. It’s all about what you know and how you apply it.”*

*“Everyone is doing the same things, just under different titles of practice.”*

With this piece, I will attempt to elucidate the *truth* of the matter in hopes that the reader will come away with an accurate outlook on professional practice and any contentions inter-professionally can be let go once and for all. There is far too much misunderstanding amongst our colleagues. I assure you that you will either start this article in disagreement or agreement only to end with the opposite outlook, modified at least. With that said I urge you to read through the full piece for a proper perspective. Let’s go ahead now and challenge your thought process.

### **Postulations**

To begin, consider the analogy of a vehicle (car, etc.) which represents the human body. For the sake of this discussion the vehicle, or human body, is composed of primarily three parts and each part represents a certain quality or category:



There exists a myriad of further dissections. For example, “fuel injections” can represent nutritional supplements etc. However I assume you understand the central idea so no further break down is needed. Nearly every single profession out there that deals with the human body can be filtered into one of these categories. Reason being, all of those professions tend to have a formally vested emphasis or area of specialty. Let’s consider which prominent real world professions are typified in each part of the analogy.

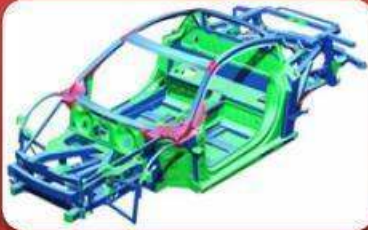


Furthermore, the essential nature of each profession lies on a continuum that spans the distance of “re-active” and “pro-active” practices. Professions on the proactive side of things attempt to take the human body to optimal performance while the concurrently utilizing prophylactic methodologies that serve to mitigate any potential negatives that would otherwise present themselves during the process of training. Their attempts at “fixing” dysfunctions are in many cases less than those of their “reactive” colleagues. Reactive

professions on the other hand, act primarily in a restorative manner and attempt to completely correct dysfunctions that present until the human body reaches what they deem “normalization”.



Now, consider the most prominent individuals in each category. Who “owns” their skill set? Notice I did not say “profession”, for this is impossible. Below is a proposal of only a small number of such elite individuals “owning” their skill set, in random order. You should know who they are. Also understand this list is *not* all inclusive and is merely an attempt at depicting an idea. It could extend forever with numerous portraits. However, again, the point is to draw various examples and not rank or include every practitioner on planet earth.

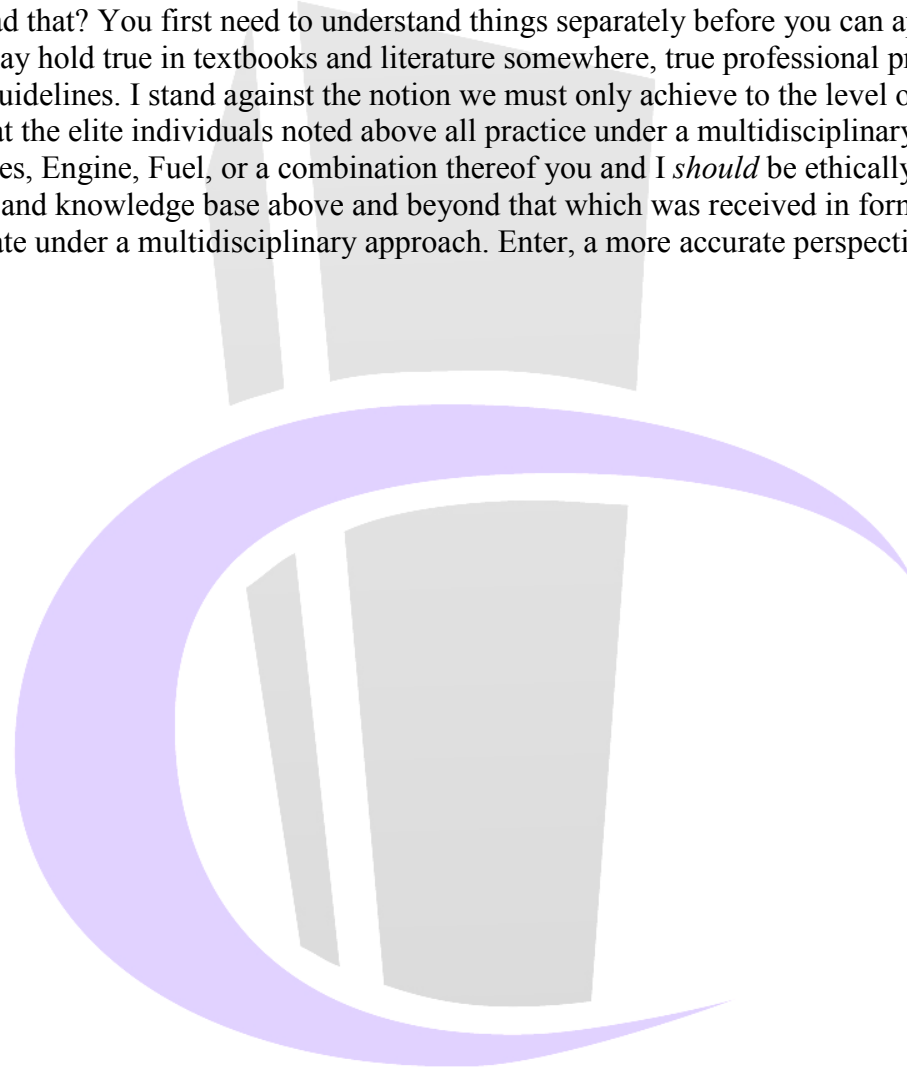


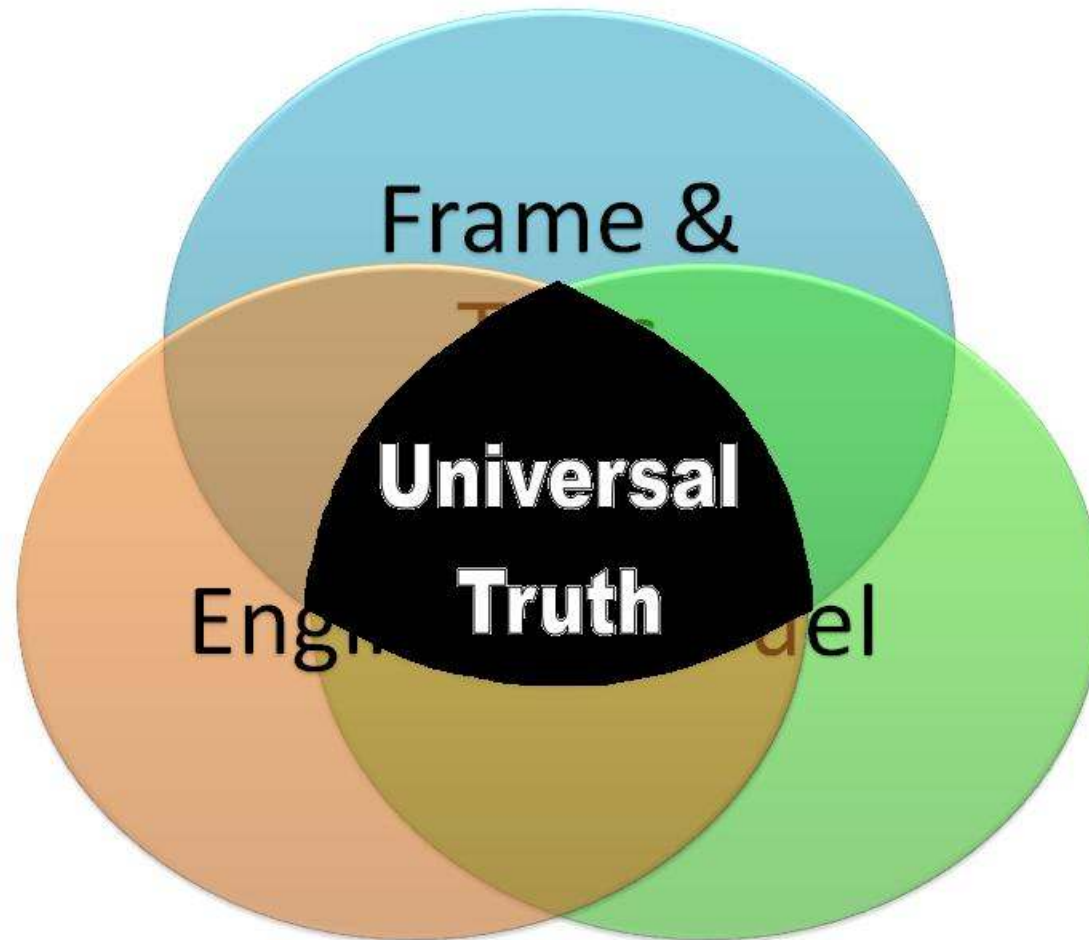
**What Is True**

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Sam Leahy - PTDC

*ATTENTION: Most everything you just read previously is an inaccurate representation of the current state of reality!*

Why then, did I have you read that? You first need to understand things separately before you can appreciate them concentrically. While the above articulations may hold true in textbooks and literature somewhere, true professional practice is not bound to such details or hedged in with such guidelines. I stand against the notion we must only achieve to the level of credential and certification. Rather, one must understand that the elite individuals noted above all practice under a multidisciplinary approach. Whether a professional of the Frame & Tires, Engine, Fuel, or a combination thereof you and I *should* be ethically bound by the pursuit of “best practice” to extend our abilities and knowledge base above and beyond that which was received in formal education. This progression will inevitably take one to operate under a multidisciplinary approach. Enter, a more accurate perspective – the “Circle of Truth”. Below is a depiction:





Take note that although the circles of influence have different appearances, the majority of each one overlaps another discipline. Furthermore a portion of that majority overlaps every other circle. Only a minority of each discipline stands alone. All the overlapping pieces from each discipline form their own shape, in which exists universal truth we all draw from. Some call this area of commonality “the Circle of Truth.”



The Circle of Truth manifests in many mediums. It shows up at conferences when speakers of different backgrounds end up discussing the same essential principles we all adhere to. It shows up when many lecturers conclude similar thoughts, though their daily full time practice is in different settings. You can read different ebooks and walk away with the sense that both merely gave different articulations of the same truths. This is all because there are indeed many universal truths every one of us can agree on. Universal truth exists.

Another point worth noting about the Circle of Truth is that it inherently lends itself to overlapping practice which was previously termed a “multidisciplinary approach.” For clarities sake, this means that people with an emphasis in the “engine” are doing various amounts of “frame and tires” work as well. Similarly, “fuel” professionals are also workers of the “engine” and “frame and tires”. Each to their own desired extent. You and I simply choose what to focus our practice on. There is nothing wrong or shamfull though about mastering the nuances of the “fuel”, “frame and tires”, or “engine” if you so choose. In this case you might be better served to team up with another professional from another category who also focuses on the nuances of his passions. This ensures that the end results are still holistically optimal. Yet even in this scenario I still content that each practitioner will end up with a good amount of carry over knowledge by default as each pursues “best practice.”

If you believe that Physical Therapist for example, typically having a larger emphasis on the frame and tires, are not training people’s engine, you are very mistaken. Conversely, if you believe that Strength&Conditioning Coaches are not practicing rehabilitation as well as other frame and tire methods, then you are wildly mistaken! Nutritionist also are coaching and rehabbing simultaneously however all parties may choose to label things differently for legalities sake, and rightfully so. It is important to understand though, that there are many acceptable modes of practice and modified terminology you can apply that still pass the legal test, red tape, and loop holes, thus keeping you from “crossing ones boundaries on paper.” Fear not!

If we only allow ourselves to achieve at the level of credential and certification we by default limit ourselves and never actualize our fullest potential as learners and practitioners.

### **The Opportune Cost of Time**

Why can’t all the circles overlap completely? Because the Opportunity Cost of Time, which helps to govern our universe, will not allow it. The Opportunity Cost of Time (OCT) suggests you only have sixty seconds in one minute, sixty minutes in an hour, twenty-four hours in a day, etc. and whatever amount of time you choose to spend on a particular something (reading, coaching, training,

massaging, listening, etc.) is the area that experiences most growth in your life. If you invest most all your hours and days into coaching you will become a good coach by deliberate practice. If you spend all your waking hours reading a certain subject, you will be well read in that topic. If you allocate all your time towards doing injury analyses you therefore become well verse in that practice.

What is key to recognize regarding the OCT is that it only allows you to do one thing at a time. Many have tried to multitask, but at the end of it all they came out superficially stimulated and were not able to lay roots with their newfound knowledge. In other words they failed. Continuing on, if you spend a whole year practicing massage and soft tissue work you will excel more so in that regard. If you spend four years studying energy systems along with designing and implementing conditioning programs then it goes without saying you will move closer to becoming an expert in energy system development.

What's the first big take away regarding the OCT? Simply that you cannot learn, do, or become an absolute expert in every category or area of study and practice that exists. You will either by choice or by natural selection gravitate towards certain things and will therefore develop depth in that area. Directly making you less of an expert in other areas not related. If you study, learn, and practice nutrition I would come to you with diet questions. If I wanted to learn deadlift technique and programming I would go to someone who has written material on the subject and experienced great results with the individuals whom they've produced over the years. It's as simple as that.

The areas of study and practice that are in fact related fall within the Circle of Truth. Using the previous example, a nutritionist knows that exercise is necessary and will further enhance his results if augmented with his nutritional programming. He/She therefore learns about exercise and perhaps exercise technique. On the other hand, the person who's an expert in deadlifting technique and programming knows that quality nutritional habits are necessary and will further enhance his results if augmented with his specialized deadlift programs. He/She therefore learns about nutrition and perhaps implementation. The crossover learning between these two disciples is what we find in the Circle of Truth.

Now that all being said, this does NOT mean you cannot excel in multiple areas. Clearly that is not the case as we already discussed the elite individuals above who practice under a multidisciplinary approach. This is the second big take away regarding the OCT.

Those above simply choose to hone in on some key areas and therefore excelled in their chosen or natural interests. Some choose to focus on only a couple areas of interest while others invested more time into more than a few areas. In either case, because of their actions they grew closer and closer over time to "owning" a particular skill set. Put another way, someone does (blank) better than you! Why? Because they devoted more time in an area residing outside The Circle of Truth than you have.



### **The Big Decision**

Now that you are aware of the current state of affairs you must make a decision. If time is your currency, how much do you want to invest in a particular area? If you choose only one area of study and practice, you will become more specialized and eventually “own” that skill with deliberate practice (specialist). If you spread out your investments you will grow at a slower rate but in multiple areas, never really “owning” a particular subject matter to the fullest extent (generalist). Neither of these routes is optimal in all aspects of life, it all comes down to your own life interests and choices. What *may be* “optimal” in the “results” category is a team of specialists who all work on a single project to yield a superior product relative to what one would accomplish by trying to implement everything on their own. By default though you will learn crossover knowledge that spills over into the Circle of Truth. So outside of that, ask yourself, “What ‘blank’ will I do best?”

### **Confused Coaches & Clinicians**

Consider the following statements:

*#1 “I should do what I do and you do what you do!”*

#2 *“I think we have our job and others have theirs!”*

#3 *“That’s not my job! We’re getting carried away with everyone trying to do everything!”*

#4 *“I think we should focus our attention singularly and let others do the same.”*

Now ask yourself. What do these statements, often presented dogmatically, really mean under the surface? What are they indicative of? Below is the reality behind each of the above assertions:

#1 *“I have made a personal life choice to be a specialist and I don’t want to do what you do.”*

#2 *“I like it better when everyone picks a specialty.”*

#3 *“I don’t want to make the personal life choice to do things other than my specialty. It bothers me that other people have chosen to be generalist while I choose to be a specialist. Why can’t the world see things through my eyes?”*

#4 *“I am most comfortable when people make the same career choices as me.”*

Once again it’s the same end point – no career path you and I choose is “wrong” or “right” and it’s a shame when others try to make you feel that it is. Thank God for perspective the the ability to make the “big decision” referenced previously.

### **Where WE/YOU Went Wrong – saying “that doesn’t matter”**

Hopefully by now you’ve had a revelation of truth and are ready to face another harsh reality. For others, however, this will be an alleviating voice for the underground frustrations many keep to themselves.

How many times have you heard a practitioner from a certain discipline refer to a concept/idea/method in another discipline with the statement, “That stuff doesn’t matter.” How many Strength&Conditioning Coaches have you heard refer to something touted by Physical Therapist as, “That stuff doesn’t make *that* much difference. It’s not *that* important.” Yet, when you listen to the Physical Therapist he/she would have you believe it means a world of difference! Conversely, a Physical Therapist will say, regarding the finer

details of Strength&Conditioning programs, “That stuff doesn’t make *that* much difference, it’s not *that* significant.” Many Physical Therapists are quick to point out when a Strength Coach has over generalized a recommendation, and many Strength Coaches hold that PT’s focus on too much minutia that never implicates actual competitive performance. We downplay the importance and significance oftentimes of what we do not understand, or do not care to understand. Even the elite individuals above are guilty of these crimes.

Most all these arguments and dismissals usually are in reference to particular things residing outside the Circle of Truth. For if they were indeed universal truth there would be no argument. We need to put an end to these qualms and disregards. Just because something does not lie in the Circle of Truth and is outside your vested interest does not invalidate it or make it of any less importance. Something may, in fact, be very significant, but your limited insights and/or desire to understand its implications give you no right or authority to downplay and disregard it to others. With that said, here’s some key take home messages that ought to be spread through the various professions:

- Do not marginalize another professional’s insight and nuances to keep yourself and your methodologies in the limelight.
- Do not downplay what you do not understand by choice or intellectual incompetency.
- There is much depth to be had in *any* one single area. Have the wisdom to know where your own roots lie and accept where they do not - by choice or by intellectual competency.
- Leverage your strengths.
- Never think you are privy to esoteric knowledge. Someone knew about it and understood it completely before you ever did.
- In most cases it’s just “different”, not “right” or “wrong”. That said, we would be better served wondering about what is “less optimal” or “more optimal” on an absolute or relative level rather than “right” or “wrong”.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I state that everyone is indeed after the same thing – optimal human development and performance in general life and particular activities. Though many disciplines utilize the same methodologies and have the same thought processes, there exist certain aspects of practice that lie outside the Circle of Truth. It is these details which are the only separating factors between us. In other words there are in fact some differences, I repeat, there are differences. Yet these differences are more or less dependant on personal career choices. Thus, it's imperative for you to understand we are all more the same than different. If a skill lies within the Circle of Truth, it is impossible to “own it”. However, if a skill lies outside the Circle of Truth, you may over time come to own that skill. Choose how you spend your time wisely. Pursue passion and delibrate practice. This in turn will lead to best practice.

All the preceding rhetoric is the underpinnings of my own professional practice and the central concepts from which I operate and write.

All the Best,

Sam Leahey

