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Post-Truth, Fake News

Viral Modernity & Higher Education

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Foreword: A Vision Unspeakable

Introduction

History is, of course, littered with such tales: the curious and scarcely acceptable behaviour of individuals who suddenly set out to juggle the views of the rest, be they voters, victims or the marginally disinterested. The consequences of such creativity or strained imagination, call it what you will—Post-Truth, the Epoch of Alternative Facts, 'fake news' even—are devastating for the fundamental values that underpin the way a nation defines and operates its democracy as the Essays in this book point out.

Regardless of the particular thinking, deeds and sometimes downright squalor that accompanied a nation's advance—the political philosophies and values that brought individuals first into communities, later into nations and later still into emancipated nations—rested on a modicum of honesty and verifiable authenticity as central values, subscribed as much by those moulding the nation's institutions as they were held to be shared by those called from time to time to endorse or to reject them by national vote.

Substitutions Amazing

Honesty, accuracy or reference to events that can be checked and verified, as the essays in this book relate—mainly from the standpoint of political philosophy—are swapped for plausibility and immediate apparent acceptability. These are increasingly the prime features that are bruited abroad in lieu of a verifiable political programme to identify where society is apparently bound. The citizen is no longer asked to put her—or his—personal interests aside. Rather, she—or he—is asked to consider the collective consequence of varying degrees of sloganizing and gesticulation. Later, acts as yet unknown in extent or application, will be grafted on. To an increasing degree, citizens are being called to believe what they are told is

plausible by well-entrenched interested parties and by 'those having—or claiming to have—authority' in politics.

The latest Presidential elections in the United States are redolent of this way of thinking. They are, however, not alone. Nor, some argue, are they without precedent. (La Post-Vérité a une histoire. *Le Monde*, 2017, March 4) Indeed, the rise of European 'populism', if bolstered by antics trans-Atlantic, has slightly older—though hitherto largely unsuccessful—origins, few of which so far have found an evident place in Europe's various systems of higher education. This does not mean, however, that that 'state of mind' which lies at the base of European populism will not turn its attention to this institution.

Post-Truth, as the authors of this highly insightful study argue, and they range from Sweden, Britain, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Rumania not least, derives its power from an unprecedented instrumentality. That instrumentality is the social media, its speed and the access it provides to all who have the time to give tongue from President downwards, sometimes in amazingly illiterate forms, to their concerns, views, proposed priorities and personal opinions—or prejudice. This they can do without undue let or hindrance and can do so in 140 signs!

The Punter's Perspective

From a positive viewpoint—*The Life of Brian* reminds us 'always (to) look on the bright side of life'—such an individualization of social exchange has enormous potential to bring together people of like-minded or dissenting views. But social media operate at a speed sometimes well beyond the capacity of political institutions, alignments and parties to respond adequately to them. And such tortoise-like grip has, it would seem, two effects. First, there is the impact it has upon the individual citizen whose opinion is no longer necessarily drawn to the official political agenda, so much as to his or to her personal and often passing concern. Second and a consequence of the first, the reference point of the voter is no longer the collective interests of that institution, but rather the extent to which the national vision hawked around by parties reflects—or contains—some reference to her or his immediate and pressing concerns.

…and the Political Agency

So far, we have dealt with the voter's perspective. This may, of course, be interpreted as a reluctance to put aside personal interest and replace it with the collective vision, which formally the act of voting entails. But there are also the collective interests as conceived by the political agency. Faced with growing dissent or with what are conceived as unacceptable measures aired beneath by lobbies or by the social media, those engaged in 'selling' a political programme will seek to have it

reinterpreted. Or to dismiss it as 'fake news', preferring their own version of things. Thus, they seek an advantageous plausibility, 'adjusting that plausibility' in an attempt to have their programme echo the personal interests of their one-time supporters. In short, what was drawn up in the name of the collectivity by leaders, advisers, consultants and their like—decision-making by members of 'the political class' from above—adjusts and reinterprets the vision unspeakable, now made more plausible as taking into account the more spectacular and enduring disagreements expressed through those who have come together from beneath via the social media. The vision 'goes viral'.

Opinion, Dissent and Interested Parties

The 'creation' of opinion and dissent is not only more speedy than ever it has been. What starts off inside social media may also be taken up by interests other than the distraught potential voter. They may equally be amplified and given further tweaking by lobbies and by the popular press, which occupy an intermediary position between political party *stricto sensu* and public opinion. Here in full shape is the anatomy of present-day 'European' populism. In effect, one has only to think back to the forces that lay behind the United Kingdom's policy of Brexit and in particular to the role of the tabloids, to see how this mechanism functions.

In espousing a perspective that draws heavily and resolutely on political theory, 'Post-Truth' reminds us, however, that the dismal stage of political development towards which we are all apparently engaged in rushing headlong indeed stands evident. But, its history is rather longer than the events of the past 2 years alone would have us believe, though they draw our attention to them spectacularly. In this book, the impact of 'Post-Truth' society is examined primarily in terms of the consequences it may have upon the individual, an exercise in the interplay between individual and social values, which lies at the heart of political philosophy since the days of the ancient Greeks. It is then not surprising that one measure to counter the rise of 'Post-Truth society' should involve adjusting the university undergraduate courses to sharpen up such contemporary capacities as objective analysis, classification of source and content so that a corrective may be taken into full account when weighing up the outpourings of the social media and those who seek to have such outpourings tied to their chariot wheels!

A Complementary Perspective

Whilst none would gainsay such a proposal—quite on the contrary—two remarks are worth the making. The first is that there is little sense in confining such courses to the humanities and the social sciences alone. Indeed, if the purpose of the University is to impart a greater sensitivity and awareness to what is now being

spewed forth as part of the present-day democratic process in contrast to merely providing those skills (sic) that secure a job, such courses are imperative for all undergraduates, regardless of their ambition or lack of it! The second unkindness has to do with the social standing of graduates. One of the under-riding or tacit assumptions of this proposal appears to be that graduates still feed into what the American political scientist, Robert Dahl once termed 'the value-allocating bodies' in society (Dahl 1966): the law, the church, the education system broadly speaking, the medical profession, the tax system and, occasionally, the military.

Dahl coined the concept in 1966. Since then and above all in Western Europe, higher education has become a mass phenomenon. Portugal's higher education system, for instance, caters for over half the age cohort (Neave and Amaral 2011). True, the orientation, administration and financing of the 'higher education enterprise' have evolved mightily this quarter-century past. Still, it is safe to say that not all graduates by dint of being graduates can lay claim today to the essential status of being part of the value-allocating bodies in society or have access to such employ. There is, on the contrary, a growing stratum for which temporary jobs, precarious employment, are the common lot. Naturally, which courses these are, will depend for better or for worse on the nation's economic health and which nation one is concerned with. In short, though Dahl's classification still holds a general validity, it applies only to a varying segment—perhaps even a minority—within today's graduate corps. Whether such precariousness stands as a form of graduate 'impoverishment' is a matter of personal judgement!

A Major Watershed

By any other term, this process is a major watershed, a departure from the late 70s when the German sociologist of higher education, Ulrich Teichler detected an absence of contest for jobs between town and gown. The University, he noted, did not threaten the jobs of school-leavers. There was, effectively he argued, no substitution—no replacement—by better-qualified graduates for the jobs filled by the less-well qualified coming straight from secondary school. The University was complimentary, not a rival to the school. This is no longer so. Indeed, the downward substitution of the higher qualified is one of the major dimensions in the marginalization of the non-qualified. And this, in turn, feeds both European populism and, in varying guises, is a subject of anguish, debate and dissent—to say the least—on the Internet.

The Rise of Counter Value-Allocating Bodies and Commodification

Growth of that stratum of the 'university qualified' has not, so far, undermined the traditional liberalism of that institution's cross-national values. Agreed, the commodification of higher knowledge poses a doughty challenge to the historic value-allocating bodies. Not least amongst the challengers are the firm, the multinational corporation, the international mobility of the qualified and the possession of rare and certified ability that may carry the lucky to qualify in one Nation and find employment in another. They are powerful counter-influences indeed to the historic nation-state institutions Dahl originally equated with this function.

But the commodification of higher education has consequences other than simply its taking on the status of a purchasable and tradable good. More than ever before, commodification underlines not necessarily the benefits of higher study, or provides as it did in Higher Education's Golden Age from the early 60s through to the early 90s, an opportunity for talent to be given a chance, regardless of origin. It still does, though to a marginal extent. Rather, the current situation underscores the penalty of *not* taking up a university place. It underlines as never before the need for the individual to be qualified. Moreover, it alters and stratifies student exchange. From building a Europe that was attractive to its young people—its original intent (Neave 1984), today, student exchange has partially mutated its function, particularly in countries where the economy is weak and the fight for employment is ferocious. What was once lauded as 'getting to know one's neighbours' by dint of a few months study in their universities, polytechnics and Instituts Universitaires de Technologie is now seen as providing an initial opportunity for getting to know the 'local labour market' (Sinn et al. 2016) with a view to emigration later.

Dismal Prospects

Thus, despite the emergence of precarious employ for graduates, the university retains, comparatively speaking, a relative advantage in the qualification stakes. This condition probably also explains its relative immunity—so far—to forms of European populism or to the ravages of 'Post-Truth' society. It is, in fact, well worth noting that both in the United States and in Europe generally, support for 'populism' within the Nation is most evident amongst unqualified members of what once would have been identified with—and organized by—syndicates, trades unions, centre of Left political parties in Europe or the diploma-less inhabitants of 'rust belt' states in North America. The proposal to readjust the undergraduate curriculum to counter the Siren song of populism in higher learning might certainly be argued is a necessary prophylactic. Whether it will succeed is another matter. Much depends on higher learning retaining its relative advantage and, most important of all, what can be done to get rid of the spiralling disillusion amongst

wide swathes of what is nothing less than the growing ranks of an unqualified and marginalized working class whose principal characteristic is precisely lack of work, absence of status and precious limited prospects.

What is very clear—and it is dissected in detail by those contributing handsomely to this volume—is that the advantages of some, even if not always as visible as they have been in the recent past, are taken to be the disadvantage or the deliberate stepping aside from the growing concerns of others. The policy of economic austerity, upheld by the European Commission despite the recommendations of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, is by no manner of means alien to this way of thinking. Increasingly, it appears to account for what the French term *la dimension identitaire*, which goes hand in fist with the 'alternative policy' of restoring a measure of economic independence to the nation-state and bringing to a halt Bruxelles' 'creeping competence' (Amaral 2009).

Envoi and a Sobering Thought

Put succinctly, and seen from the populist perspective, what will be the shape Europe might take, once it has sobered up from celebrating the 60th anniversary of signing the Treaties of Rome? Time, as this book illustrates to the full, is not always the Great Healer. Like Tide itself, Time also waits for no man. Nor does its mere passing always provide a template for how we should do things today. It is all very well to sing the praises of a European trading community created to avoid war over the coalfields of the Franco-German-Belgian frontiers. It is no less an 'alternative fact', however, that European society has seen the spectacular forging ahead on nigh-on all fronts of social and financial inequality in the course of the past 5 and 20 years. In a society, which is in process of becoming more and more economical with the Truth, this latter fact remains equally and obdurately as a Truth Undeniable, though rarely admitted by Europe's political class. That which is done in the name of the citizen can today be commented upon publicly and precisely by the individual, who may now reach out to endorse, reject, and/or suggest alternatives or register personal disapproval. This phenomenon has but one precedent in the history of Political Thought—the advent of universal suffrage. With the emergence of Post-Truth society, not only do we have to be alert to the uses and abuses to which it is often made to serve. We have also for better or for worse earnestly to consider, as the authors of this collection do, with clarity and forethought to see what the implications are for the embedding of democracy more solidly in the values the individual citizen wants to have preserved and protected.

St. Germain-en-Laye, France   Guy Neave
February 2017

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Part I
Philosophy in a Post-Truth World

Post-truth, Fake News: Viral Modernity and Higher Education

Sharon Rider and Michael A. Peters

Then verily, child I will tell you the truth.

Introduction: The Deep Cultural Roots of Truth in the Western Tradition

Outside of philosophy department seminar rooms, truth would seem to be an obvious and everyday affair. We do not need it explained to us; in our way of life, truth and its cognate concepts (right, correct, accurate, real) and truth-telling activities are central to our institutions of science, politics, law, and education. But more fundamentally, it is part of the cultural infrastructure within which we exist and make sense of the world. It is one of a handful of abstract concepts that serve as a kind of intellectual scaffolding in our civilization. But has the scaffolding been undermined by the movement of history? How we think and talk about truth has, after all, changed from, say, the oral tradition in Ancient Greece to the basis for digital logic in the twenty-first century. We still attach to it great significance and value, but "truth" has a time and a place, which is to say, a history: it has evolved both as a concept and cultural practice. To take an example from philosophy, while the notion of truth in the philosophical tradition up until the medieval period was associated with "saving the phenomena", that is, with evidence for what was known about natural world, it has since Galileo come to be understood in terms of underlying causes that have little or nothing to do with how the world appears to us.

In "Pre-Philosophical Conceptions of Truth in Ancient Greece", Corazzon (2016) tracks the Homeric use of *Aletheia*, noting that the formulaic ritual sentence "Then verily, child, I will tell you the truth" occurs five times in the *Odyssey*. He

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maintains that Homer's use of this stylistic device "suggests that the sentence is one that has come down in the tradition as a ready-made formula which Homer inherited." The word *Aletheia* also often appears in the phrase "the whole truth", meaning, Corazzon says, to give an account or "to tell the whole story." He concludes with the remarkable statement:

> The Homeric notion of Aletheia which emerges from examining its uses is precisely the same, with the same force and flavour, as that enshrined in the traditional oath or solemn affirmation required of a witness in court proceedings: to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. (Corazzon 2016)

Whether Homer is to be seen as a single poetic genius or as a tradition, the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* are thought to have been composed in the late eighth or early seventh centuries BCE. The poems, which were sung from memory, constituted a shared source of moral and practical understanding for the ancients. They also were a common reference point for the telling of what happened, of "giving an account".

Wolenski (2004, pp. 340–341) affirms that "*Aletheia* is the most important Greek counterpart of our 'truth'; *alethes* (true), *alethos* (truly) and *alethein* (to speak the truth) are related words. However, the Greek 'truth-family' is much more comprehensive and consists of 14 words, among others (adjectives): *atrekes, nemertes, adolos, ortos, apseudos, etymos and etetymos*." He maintains that "the philosophical usage of a term (in the present case, the counterpart of 'truth' in archaic and ancient Greek) was related to the archaic one". The "remarkable" element alluded to above is that a notion of *aletheia* as truth has an historical lineage in the oral tradition that represents almost 3000 years of use, and originates in the time before the poetry of Homer (or the Homeric tradition) in ordinary life. There is here a stability of use, a traceable passage from the pre-philosophical to the philosophical stage.

In contrast, "theories of truth", in the academic philosophical sense, are of a much later vintage, most of them first formulated in the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. George Pitcher writes: "the great philosophers of history, although they had something to say about the concept of truth, said surprisingly little: they were far more interested in truths than in 'truth'" (Pitcher 1964, p. 1). Pitcher suggests that the interest in theories of truth was developed in response to German Idealism. Yet it seems odd that a concept so central to philosophy was not properly "theorized" earlier. One plausible explanation was that prior to the late nineteenth century, truth was not itself considered a problem to be solved, but rather where you arrived when you had solved your problem. That theories of truth have received so much attention in the last century suggests then that truth has itself become increasingly problematic. It cannot serve as a self-evident touchstone for the adjudication of disputes, since it has come to be commonly understood as a theoretical concept, a construction, and, as such open to negotiation and revision. Yet the need and desire to distinguish between true accounts and false ones remains. We do in fact rely on certain statements and not on others; calling a claim or an explanation true and another one false *does* something; it makes its mark on the world as a ground for our words and deeds.

The Organization of This Collection

The editorial starting point for work on the volume has been to follow Chesterton's admonition in his biography: "The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid." The present volume consists of essays concerned with the truth as a real problem, not a purely theoretical one. While a number of the articles will refer to philosophical notions of adequacy, coherence, reference, and so forth, the emphasis throughout is on our present condition, that is, the state of affairs that the idea of truth has become not simply confused but in point of fact, like "art" or "justice", an "essentially contested concept" (Gallie 1956). At the same time, while the anthology is not intended as a contribution to theoretical philosophy (philosophy of language, metaphysics or epistemology), neither do we have the ambition to engage with methodological problems in political or moral philosophy. The problems addressed here have to do with how we are to understand the pragmatics of truth in education and higher learning, with special attention to the political dimension, since what would appear to be at the heart of the cultural convulsions we are undergoing is the sense that our modern institutions of truth-telling (the courts, the press, universities, and laboratories) no longer serve as a touchstone for a common understanding of the world, a universally acknowledged and hence binding store of reliable knowledge. In Western liberal societies, it is up to the individual to select, on the basis of interest and inclination, her own sources of information and interpretative frameworks. It is natural to think in terms of the World Wide Web (social media and alternative news sites, etc.) here, but we should also bear in mind that there are academic disciplines and departments, even colleges and universities, that have specific orientations (often, but not necessarily, stemming from religious or ideological affiliations). Because universities are our main institutions for the training and certification of professions, the consequences of an array of alternatives for what is considered the "knowledge" necessary to become a teacher, lawyer, doctor, or engineer have repercussions far beyond the academy. The consequences of the multiplication of truths, one for every taste, are vast.

Thus, our goal at the outset has been to put together an arena for the free exchange of very different perspectives. Moreover, the authors have been encouraged to speak their minds. That means that while the collection contains papers by a number of preeminent scholars, the volume is to be read as explicitly and quite intentionally normative, even if the norms in play in the individual essays are rather wide-ranging. The resulting book thus contains contributions from across a wide spectrum of disciplines and theoretical orientations; some of the pieces are polemical, while others are more meditative. Certain names crop up in several of the essays (George Orwell, naturally, but also Erich Fromm, Hannah Arendt, Richard Rorty, and Michel Foucault), and a number of terms recur ("alternative facts", "democracy", "citizenship", "critical thinking, "objectivity", *parrhesia*, and so on), but there is no superstructure or basic unifying premise (aside perhaps from Donald Trump, who is either center-stage or a conspicuous offstage presence throughout).

In order to avoid chaos, the work has been organized thematically, according to broad characterizations, which, it has to be admitted, do not always do justice to the contributions. In numerous cases, the papers cover several aspects of the problem of the complex relationship between truth, politics, media, social and cultural life, scientific practice, professional norms and ethical values, and selecting which chapter heading is most appropriate has been no easy task.

If there is a clear trajectory to the different contributions, it is in the direction toward restoring our confidence in truth, not as a given, but as a viable social endeavor or achievement. Truth-seeking and truth-telling require a certain degree of skepticism to conventional accounts, but not cynicism toward the endeavor itself. Vulgar relativism is as much of a danger as self-satisfied dogmatism, since it means that there is no recourse to a mutually acknowledged point of reference. Many of the articles end on a self-critical note, with the challenge of recognizing that *we* have a problem, "we" here meaning not some vague notion of "society", nor "we, the enlightened" as opposed to "ordinary people", but rather specifically referring to those of us who take our professional tasks as having to do with formulating, establishing, or negotiating the grounds for distinguishing the true from the false (educators, philosophers, judges, journalists, etc.).

In the first section, *Philosophy in a Post-Truth World*, Steve Fuller wages a frontal attack against the presuppositions that undergird most mainstream academic philosophy in general, and its epistemic assumptions in particular. Describing "Truth" as a "brand name in need of a product that everyone is compelled to buy", Fuller points out that it was only very recently in human history that philosophers began to distinguish a purely fact-based conception of evidence from personal revelation and authoritative testimony. He ties the concept of evidence to the secularization of knowledge, and the modern conception of truth to the idea of being loyal or faithful to the object of inquiry. The history of the philosophers' Truth is a complex and heterogeneous one, which means that there is no one idea of "Truth" which we are now "post". Inspired by Hans Vaihinger's Kantian philosophy of the "as-if", he sees contemporary analytic epistemology as a genre of fiction, filled with brains-in-vats and Chinese rooms, and consisting of "spurious reasoning, fake philologies, eccentric histories, obscurantism and hyperbole". Following Vaihinger, he rejects the idea of a one-Truth-fits-all epistemology, and suggests that we understand truth as decided from case to case, as in a court of law. Reviewing contrasting takes on the role of the philosopher in deciding what is true, Fuller sees a conflict running through the history of Western thought from Plato to Wittgenstein, between the "democrats" (sophists, poets and other public intellectuals) and "authoritarians" (philosophers, priests and scientists). With regard to the status of "truth" in the post-truth era, Fuller reminds us that to deny that there is some justification for the truth of facts outside of or beyond the process of securing them is not to deny either the facts themselves nor their "objectivity" (which, as it turns out, is not so very far afield from Carnap's or Popper's respective positions). One can view consensus among scientists "rhetorically", Fuller proposes, that is, with an eye toward the mix of epistemic and material considerations involved in its formation. Taking his cue from that notorious whistle-blower on fake philosophy,

Richard Rorty, he embraces the label "post-truther" to the extent that it signifies someone who is engaged in the struggle to undo present power structures by knocking down the pulpit from which Truth is preached, that is, in a project of epistemic democratization.

Sharon Rider's piece, "On Knowing How to Tell the Truth", also concerns what one might call "epistemic politics", but she ties it to the observation that all politics, even of the epistemic kind, is local. Reflecting on the assumptions built into the reaction of scientists, journalists, and pundits to notions such as "alternative facts" and "post-truth", she attempts to capture the deep grammar of the central terms, noticing in particular how arguments tend to revolve around being "within" (the consensus of scientists, the expertise of professionals) or "without" (the position of the layman, the epistemic outcast from the community of experts, who lacks the "right" or "correct" understanding). Inspired by Arendt, Ortega y Gasset, and the turn-of-the-century Swedish philosopher Hans Larsson, Rider argues that genuinely "free" thinking, as opposed to the "bourgeois" or institutionalized form of thought that expresses itself in consensus, is actually a prerequisite for any relevant sense of the notion of truth. At the same time, to admit this is to sacrifice the status of being a member of the community of those "in the know" in moral, political, and social questions, and relegated to the position of engaged and informed citizens talking to each other about matters of mutual concern in the agora.

Taking a somewhat more epistemologically optimistic tone, Cathy Legg works out the implications of Charles Sanders Peirce's epistemology of inquiry, and its understanding of knowledge as a process of fixing belief. The virtue of Peirce's ideas, she thinks, is that they offer methods for making the process more efficient. Legg show that each part of the process, *tenacity*, *authority*, *a priori reasoning*, and *science*, which may exist simultaneously, has its own virtues as well as deficiencies, except the last which is a kind of culmination of the first three in the collective actions of the community of inquirers. She finds in Peirce helpful strategies for "weathering out epistemic storms" such as that of what we might baptize Hurricane Post-Truth. Borrowing Jayson Harsin's term "regime of post-truth" as a term of art to describe current trends in contemporary politics, Legg describes the way people's emotions and motivations are systematically cultivated to yield desired opinions. Arguing that the ivory tower has hitherto provided perhaps too much shelter from the storm, she suggests that academics are perhaps overreacting to the situation, and admonishes us to take a step back to better understand what is happening. This need for understanding, she maintains, cannot be met with the tools of mainstream epistemology. The benefit of a Peircean approach is that it addresses the *motivational* side of epistemology and the lived context of truth-seeking. Legg demonstrates that given a processual understanding of truth, it makes no sense to label a set of human behaviors as "post-truth", since truth is nothing but the endpoint of inquiry. She warns against the inclination of scientists and academics to consider themselves "knowers" with the institutional power to "fix belief" for the rest of the community of inquiry. Legg asks academics to be more self-critical, and rather than regarding our present condition as "post-truth", to see that in the process of fixing truth, the community of inquirers can move back and forth when set truths become

unsettled. At this point, we find ourselves in an epistemic "pre-truth" period, in which "the [only] solution to poor opinions is more opinions".

Jeff Malpas has the final say in this section, going for the conceptual jugular. In "Wisdom's Limit: Truth, Failure and the Contemporary University", Malpas addresses the central issue of cognitive fragility and epistemic failure. Taking as his point departure John Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he proposes that in considering the mission of the university today, we begin with the fact that human reason is limited, and our powers of comprehension, in the end, narrow. This insight, the recognition that we don't really "know" all that much, is central to the conception of wisdom from Socrates onward. Analyzing the current state of educational policy in advanced industrialized nations, characterized as they are by careful attention to utility, employability, marketability, and competition, Malpas asks where, if at all, the pursuit of wisdom has a place at the university. He then contrasts these goals with the idea of the university famously formulated by John Henry Newman, the notion that cultivation of the mind, knowledge and understanding institutionalized in the work of the university are ends in themselves, not merely means to practical ends. Malpas argues for the valuing of truth and knowledge for their own sake, as intrinsic goods in Newman's spirit, and draws a parallel to Michael Sandel's argument in *What Money Can't Buy* that value is separate from price. Importantly, for Malpas, the recognition of the limits of human understanding is not merely an epistemic question, but also an ethical one. It is here that the theme of failure comes in. To acknowledge the possibility, even inevitability, of failure in our projects and enterprises is to recognize the essentially limited character of human life and activity as such. The technocratic notion of "continuous improvement" through "quality management" is then a dangerous delusion. The emphasis on problem-solving tends to make us notice successes, while failures remain hidden. Yet seeing that there is no success without the failure that necessarily precedes it, the problem to be solved, means admitting the limits of human action. Wisdom consists in recognizing this constitutive role of limits and failure. Similarly, the idea of education as an accumulation of results (information, facts and competencies) conceals the intellectual activity, the actual work of thinking, of which they are products. In contrast, Malpas offers the idea of education as a striving toward wisdom, that is, knowledge that grasps its own boundaries. Malpas ties this notion of wisdom as mastery not only of the skills and knowledge within one's own area of expertise, but of the world in which that expertise is to function effectively, to the classical idea of *critique*, insofar as both are committed to the pursuit of truth. A key task for the university is thus to find ways to allow and even to encourage dissent, based on the idea of the fallibility of claims to know, or better, on a recognition of the limits within which knowledge is itself constituted.

The stage of the second section, *Politics, the Papers and the Public*, is set in Michael Peter's essay, "The History and Practice of Lying in Public Life". There Peters argues that in order to balance the emphasis on truth and truth-telling, we need also to consider the other side of the binary, that is lies and lying, more carefully. With his starting point in Foucault's lectures on truth-telling (*parrhesia*),

he goes on to analyze the relationship between a "culture of lying" and public life in light of the political thought of Hannah Arendt. He arrives at the unsettling conclusion that we may be witnessing the advent of a culture in which lying becomes the sole philosophical principle of culture, and true political action is impossible.

The suspicion that we have already arrived at the frightening dystopian picture that ends Peters' essay is the starting point for Doug Kellner's powerful polemic in his assessment of the political aftermath of the Trump campaign and early presidency in "Trump and the Politics of Lying". He argues that the view that the current President of the United States is, in the words of the former President, both "unqualified and unfit", rests on a misunderstanding. According to Kellner, Trump is both qualified and fit to take the office such as he and his supporters understand it, namely, as that of autocratic despot. Making use of Erich Fromm's diagnosis of the authoritarian personality, Kellner makes the case that deception and lying are not something added on to an agenda, but rather constitute it. He concludes that the only resistance that can succeed in undermining an agenda of deception is an educated citizenry, which is why the appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education is central to the Trump administration. The dismantling of public education is an essential element in the overall plan of government by mendacity.

In "Post-Truth and Critical Pedagogy of Trust", Petar Jandric turns the focus of attention from the question of the necessary political conditions for true statements to the ethical question of the necessary conditions for trust. He argues that the Internet introduces an entirely different set of problems than we are accustomed to addressing in the theory of knowledge, challenges connected to the anonymity and immediacy of online communication, but also stemming from the very infrastructure of digital information. He concludes with a reminder that our suspiciousness toward the accuracy of information, at the very heart of "post-truth", is rational. At the same time, an exaggerated mistrust undermines the very possibility of collective deliberation and action. What is required to combat the ill effects of post-truth is not clinging on to a dogmatic ideal of sovereign objectivity, but a fully developed critical pedagogy of trust.

The question of what the Internet does with our ideas about authentic sources and reliable practices is a central theme for George Lazariou's paper, "Post-Truth and the Journalist's Ethos". Stressing the effects of globalized reporting, he suggests that trustworthy news is not merely a matter of professional methods and standards, but first and foremost a matter of the ethos of the journalist. In the attempt to bring in all and only relevant and reliable information, there is a tendency to emphasize accuracy and fact-checking at the expense of a global perspective, in which balance and fairness are achieved not simply by presenting all sides, but by actively seeking out stories that are often disregarded by mainstream media and acknowledging that what constitutes "the news" is a matter of professional discretion that makes moral demands on the journalist.

Mats Hyvönen discusses the role of the press in public deliberation in his paper, "As a Matter of Fact: Journalism and Academic Scholarship in the Post-Truth Era", and points to similarities in the effects of marketization and meditization on journalism and on the academy. He argues that we should distinguish between the

activities of truth-seeking and the exercise of professional judgment, on the one hand, and the medium in which those activities are conducted, on the other. The newspaper and the traditional university are probably on their way to obsolescence, he cautions, but that does not mean that the values they have incarnated or the purposes that they have served no longer apply. To the contrary, the challenge for both journalism and academic scholarship is to find new forms of instantiation and public service. He concludes with concrete suggestions about how to get moving on the long hard road ahead.

The social and material mechanisms by which the truth (news, facts, knowledge) is produced and disseminated are the focus of Derek Ford's "Don't Bring Truth to a Gunfight: Pedagogy, Force and Decision". Borrowing the term "democratic communicative capitalism" from Jodi Dean to describe how the democratic ideals of access, participation, inclusion, diversity, and critique become actualized through capitalist technological infrastructure, Ford argues that Trump and the right wing have understood something about our contemporary networked society that the Left has yet failed to realize, namely, that critique and analyses with the aim of securing truth, accuracy and understanding miss the mark in the political sphere. He proposes that the Left adopt a stance that requires commitment, self-sacrifice, risk, and responsibility, that is, adherence to a program of action. Such a position, to be politically effective, requires organization; Ford sees in the Communist Party the potential to engage the whole personality in the movement, as means of mobilizing the forces of both intellect and desire so that political engagement doesn't degenerate into a reified, abstract system of rights and duties. Instead of continuing the debate ad infinitum about what the truth is or isn't, the aim of the Left should be "a truth that would do justice to our Earth and all its inhabitants".

The last section, *Pedagogy and Postmodernity*, contains essays which, in one way or another, embrace a pedagogy of epistemic indeterminacy, while at the same time trying to find ways of avoiding the potentially calamitous consequences, for science, school and society, of a post-truth culture. In his brief essay, "Education in a Post-Truth World", Michael Peters considers the power of the lie, especially as instanced in the election campaign and presidency of Donald Trump. He argues that in the era of post-truth, it is not enough to revisit standard notions or theories of truth, or rely on accounts of "evidence" and forms of epistemic justification to guide us. We need to understand the broader social and cultural implications of post-truth in politics, science, and education; but we also need an operational strategy to combat "government by lying," and its role in a global order that accepts and even encourages the subordination of truth to emotional appeals and irrational personal inclinations.

Inspired by Jacques Rancière's ideas about the implications of linguistic arbitrariness for political matters, Liz Jackson and Charles Bingham problematize the conception of truth that is commonly assumed to be the point and purpose of education, namely, that of a collective or shared understanding. In particular, they study how this ideal is tied up with notions of merit as an integral part of the idea of schooling. They examine how such basic academic notions as "work", "rigor", and "quality" are built into even critical pedagogical projects, at the same time as the

latter eschew the supposition that these terms are ideologically neutral. The authors suggest that educators, following Rancière, should see the poetic and constructive powers of language as a possibility rather than a threat to a genuinely democratic order, both in and out of school.

Arriving at a conclusion reminiscent of Ford's but with similar considerations as Jackson and Bingham's as her point of departure, Nesta Devine attempts to negotiate between post-structuralist skepticism toward meta-narratives about truth and objectivity, on the one hand, and the need to move forward and not remain stuck in perpetual, but politically ineffectual critique, on the other. She proposes an ecological and posthuman take on ideology critique, in which the claims of the environment be understood as claims made on human beings in the interests of the planet.

Tracy Bowell addresses the question of what, concretely, we as educators are to do with the problem of deeply held beliefs that seem to be immune to conceptual or factual modification or revision. In "Changing the World One Premise at a Time: Argument, Imagination and Post-Truth", drawing on the work of Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd and Iris Marion Young, she proposes a new way of teaching critical thinking, which focuses on establishing common grounds through real confrontation with a multiplicity of forms of life and the voices to which they give rise.

The question of different life forms and the conceptual frameworks belonging to them is central to the discussion in "The Complexity of Post-Truth in Research: An Indigenous Speculation". Mika and Matapo question humanist assumptions with regard to truth, in particular, those baked into most social and educational science research. They argue that assuming truth to be an epistemological term already undermines the possibility of another understanding of "truth", namely, as an ontological term. Their case in point is indigenous Pasifika cultures, in which knowledge is inherently collective, and where the past is present in the collective, and the collective is part of the world, not a spectator on it. From this perspective, objectivity as it is commonly construed in philosophical debates is not a contrast to post-truth, but an early form of it. The authors seek a path for educational and social science research that will, on the one hand, be based on a common frame of reference that is not merely local or personal, but which, on the other hand, acknowledges difference with regard to truth. The ideal they propose is to "put objectivity its place without entirely denying it".

Finally, bringing together the central themes of the book as a whole, Henry Giroux poses the fundamental question: "What is the Role of Higher Education in the Age of Fake News?" Using Trump's use of "fake news" as a prime example of a "weaponized policy for legitimating ignorance and civil illiteracy", he describes the current government in the US as a "powerful disimagination machine", and develops a plan of critical action for disassembling it. According to Giroux, education is central to politics because it is always implicated in the struggle over values and agency. In particular, he stresses that we are now witnessing a new form of illiteracy, one which is not simply an absence of learning or knowledge, nor merely a symptom of the digitalization of everything, but is the result of conscious

goals and willful practices of depoliticization and desocialization. Giroux proposes a strategy for counteracting this deliberate policy of manufactured illiteracy, under the rubric of "thinking dangerously" on the part of academic staff and students. Echoing Arendt, Giroux sees education as a fundamentally future-oriented moral and political practice, and pedagogy as a site-specific and self-reflective and self-critical project of education rather than as a set of methodological quick fixes to be applied willy-nilly to any and all classroom situations. In the current context, the method of "thinking dangerously" means, among other things, freeing faculty and students from harness of corporate demands or the needs of the welfare state. It also implies a more critical attitude toward the language of commodification, while at the same time opening itself to new venues for intellectual development in the public sphere, and requires that the professoriate engage in these rather than ensconce themselves within their chosen fields of specialization. Higher education must utilize common sense while at the same time subjecting it to scrutiny. It must connect "reading the word with reading the world", if it is to produce citizens capable of governing rather than being governed.

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What Can Philosophy Teach Us About the Post-truth Condition

Steve Fuller

A Post-truth History of Truth

Philosophers claim to be seekers of the truth but the matter is not quite so straightforward. Another way to see philosophers is as the ultimate experts in a post-truth world. They see 'truth' for what it is: the name of a brand ever in need of a product that everyone is compelled to buy. This helps to explain why philosophers are most confident appealing to 'The Truth' when they are trying to persuade non-philosophers, be they in courtrooms or classrooms. In more technical terms, 'truth'—and the concepts surrounding it—are 'essentially contested' (Gallie 1956). In other words, it is not simply that philosophers disagree on which propositions are 'true' or 'false', but more importantly they disagree on what it means to say that something is 'true' or 'false'.

If you find my judgement too harsh or cynical, consider the careers of the key philosophical terms in which knowledge claims are transacted, not least 'evidence' and 'truth' itself. 'Evidence' is a good place to start because it feeds directly into the popular image of our post-truth world as 'post-fact', understood as a willful denial of solid, if not incontrovertible, pieces of evidence, whose independent standing sets limits on what can be justifiably asserted about the world.

Yet it was only in the early modern period that philosophers even began to distinguish a purely fact-based conception of evidence from personal revelation and authoritative testimony. The break only became clean in the mid-nineteenth century when logic books regularly started to classify people-based claims to evidence among the 'informal fallacies', unless the people had direct acquaintance with the specific matter under dispute (Hamblin 1970). The concept of 'expert', a late nineteenth-century juridical innovation based on a contraction of the participle 'experienced', extended the idea of 'direct acquaintance' to include people with a

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specific training by virtue of which they are licensed to inductively generalise from their past experience to the matter under dispute. In this way, the recently proscribed 'argument from authority' made its return through the backdoor (Turner 2003).

This slow crafting of the concept of evidence was part of the general secularisation of knowledge. At the same time, it would be a mistake to think that today's concept was purpose-made for scientific inquiry. Rather, it was an adaptation of the inquisition, the procedure used on the European continent to identify heretics and witches. Its English importer was Francis Bacon, King James I's lawyer, who believed that nature itself was a fugitive from the law, hiding its secrets from humanity for much too long. Special trials were thus required to force nature from its normally equivocal stance to decide between two mutually exclusive options (Fuller 2017).

Bacon called such trials 'crucial experiments', which Karl Popper turned into the gold standard of the scientific method three centuries later. To be sure, Bacon and Popper were under no illusions that the facts produced under such 'extraordinary rendition', as we would now say, were nature's deliverances in more relaxed settings. On the contrary, Popper went so far as to call facts 'conventions', by which he meant convenient waystations in a never-ending inquisition of nature. After all, what made experiments 'crucial' was that their outcomes hastened knowledge of a future that otherwise would only unfold—for good or ill—on nature's timetable, which would provide humanity little opportunity to plan a response, let alone steer nature's course to human advantage.

As for 'truth', it harks back to an older English word, 'troth', which harbours all of the concept's philosophical difficulties. 'Troth' means faithfulness—but to what exactly: the *source* or the *target*?

Originally 'truth' meant fidelity to the source. It was about loyalty to whoever empowers the truth-teller, be it the Christian deity or a Roman general. In this context, it was associated with executing a plan of action, be it in the cosmos or on the battlefield. One remained 'true' by following through on the power-giver's intention, regardless of manner or outcome. It is this sense of 'true' that enabled the Jesuits, a Counter-Reformation Catholic order founded by a soldier, Ignatius Loyola, to do God's work by operating on the principle that 'the end justifies the means'.

However, thanks to another Catholic, Thomas Aquinas, truth came to be seen in the modern period as loyalty to the target—specifically, the empirical objects already in the field of play. His own Latin turn of phrase was *adequatio ad rem*, whose crude English translation, 'adequacy to the thing', captures the disempowering character of the concept, which philosophers continue to dignify as the 'correspondence theory of truth'. Aquinas, writing at a time of considerable heresy in the late thirteenth century, was reasserting confidence that the world as it normally appears is close enough to God's plan that the faithful should stop trying to second-guess God's intentions and focus instead on getting the empirical details of Creation right. Today Aquinas is the official philosopher of the Church, a secure guide to the accommodation of science to faith.

These contrary pulls on the concept of truth—the source vis-à-vis the target—have persisted to this day. When Newton famously declared '*Hypotheses non fingo*' ('I feign no hypotheses') in the second edition of *Principia Mathematica*, he was diverting suspicious religious readers who feared that he might be trying to get into 'The Mind of God' rather than simply providing a perspicuous account of nature's order. Of course, there is no doubt—given his voluminous private theological writings—that Newton was indeed aiming to second-guess the deity in which he believed. He was going for the source, not merely the target of all knowing. Against this backdrop, it is ironic that an avowedly 'atheist' physicist such as Stephen Hawking, successor to Newton's Cambridge mathematics chair, managed to parlay 'The Mind of God' as the driving metaphor of that popular science classic, *A Brief History of Time*. Newton and Hawking differ not only in terms of details of execution but also degree of self-awareness. Newton was deliberately concealing what by Hawking's day had been formally disowned if not long forgotten.

One philosopher who offers guidance in navigating through the somewhat surreal post-truth intellectual environment is Hans Vaihinger, the person most responsible for turning Immanuel Kant into a fixture of scholarly interest, by founding *Kant Studien*. Vaihinger also developed an entire world view around Kant's repeated use of the phrase '*als ob*' ('as if'). Much of the normative force of Kant's philosophy comes from thinking or acting 'as if' certain things were true, even though you may never be able to prove them and they may even turn out to be false. Vaihinger (1924) called the resulting world-view 'fictionalism' and it epitomises the post-truth sensibility. And seen through Vaihinger's eyes, philosophy appears to be the most post-truth field of them all.

A good way to see Vaihinger's point is to consider contemporary philosophy's notorious schism between 'analytic' and 'continental' schools. The analytics accuse the continentals of having picked up all of Nietzsche's worst habits. The result is a trail of spurious reasoning, fake philologies, eccentric histories, obscurantism and hyperbole. This is quite a list of offenses to the truth, yet it is striking that analytic philosophy's most lasting contributions have been a series of thought experiments, which are no more than figments of the imagination—such as Putnam's 'brains in a vat' or Searle's 'Chinese room'—that are passed off as heroic abstractions from some hypothetical reality. The rest of analytic philosophy is basically just scholastic wrangling about the wording of these thought experiments and the conclusions one is licensed to draw from them, leavened by occasional moments of high dudgeon, as well as displays of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and bias vis-à-vis other, typically more 'continental' or 'postmodern' modes of reasoning.

Vaihinger could make sense of what is going on here. He divided our approach to the world into *fictions* and *hypotheses*. In a fiction, you don't know that you inhabit a false world, whereas in a hypothesis you know that you don't inhabit a false world. In either case, 'the true world' doesn't possess any determinate epistemic standing. On the contrary, you presume 'a false world' and argue from there. From this standpoint, continental philosophers are purveyors of fictions, and analytic philosophers of hypotheses. What we colloquially call 'reality' moves between these two poles, never really honing in on any robust sense of truth. Here, one needs

to think of 'fictions' on a sliding scale from novels to plays to laws ('legal fictions') and 'hypotheses' on a sliding scale from what Euclid was talking about to what scientists test in a lab to what people do when they plan for the future.

Does this mean that truth is a redundant concept altogether? That there is a 'redundancy theory of truth', proposed by the logician Frank Ramsey nearly a hundred years ago, suggests as much. Moreover, the theories of truth that have followed in its wake—alternatively called 'deflationary', 'disquotational', 'expressive' and even 'honorific' (to recall Richard Rorty's reappropriation of Dewey) —can be added to the post-truth repertoire of analytic philosophy. But 'in fact' (permitting the locution), Vaihinger would say—and I agree—that truth turns out to be whatever is decided by the empowered judge in the case at hand. In other words, Francis Bacon was right, after all, which perhaps explains why Kant dedicated the *Critique of Pure Reason* to him. And that's the post-truth of it.

Embodying Truth/Post-truth: Of Plato's Dialogues and Wittgenstein's Two Halves

Many accounts of Greek etymology observe that *theory* and *theatre* share a common ancestry in *theos*, the Greek word for God. Implied here is a conception of the deity whose supremacy rests on being able to see both inside and outside its own frame of reference, a double spectator, or *theoros*. In logic, this is called *second-order* awareness: One not only plays a language game but also knows that the game is only one of many that she might be playing. In what follows, I associate this awareness with the *post-truth* mentality. In Plato's dialogues, the sophists are clearly trying to cultivate just such a mentality in their clients, which in principle would give them a god-like discretion to decide which game they play in the open space of the agora. Socrates pushes back from this arch sense of self-awareness, arguing that there is ultimately only one game in town, *truth*, adherence to which would keep everyone playing by the same rules and thereby stick to what logicians would call a *first-order* awareness.

Perhaps the most straightforward example of Socrates' approach appears in chapter 20 of *Protagoras*, in which he manages to get his sophistic opponent to admit that all virtues are one because they all have the same contrary, *aphrosyne*, which is normally translated as 'lack of proportion or perspective'. In the process of persuading Protagoras of this thesis, Socrates gradually removes the sense of the virtues as something skill-like, each possessing its own gradient along which one may perform better or worse. This serves to neutralise the image of the citizen that the sophists presupposed, namely, one whose competence consists in playing the virtues off each other as the situation demands, very much in the spirit of a modern economic 'optimiser' who decides to act after having traded off her various interests. In its place, Socrates proposes that to think that there are separate virtues is to reflect one's ignorance of what virtue is. Thus, the just, the good, the beautiful, etc.,

are all simply aspects of virtue as such. 'Virtue' in this univocal sense is identified with the truth, in that everything is understood in its rightful place. From this standpoint, by proliferating virtues as skills, Protagoras is selling parts as if they were the whole. Socrates' argument, as filtered through Plotinus, would exert profound influence in the Middle Ages, as the Abrahamic deity came to stand for what Socrates had identified as the one truth behind all its virtuous appearances.

The ultimate difference between Socrates and the sophists is not the dialectical capacities of the two sides, which are basically the same. In this respect, Plato's coinage of 'philosophy' for Socrates' argumentative style and 'rhetoric' for the sophistic style is itself a rhetorical diversion. Rather, the difference lay in Socrates' objection to the free-wheeling—some might say 'democratic', others might say 'commercial'—way in which the sophists deployed these common capacities. To render the premises of arguments pure inventions of the arguer is potentially to turn any human into a deity if enough people are persuaded to regard his or her premises as the rules of the game by which they all subsequently play. And as Plato knew from first-hand experience, the sophists did succeed in persuading enough citizens of their 'dialectical divinity', so to speak, that Athenian democracy ended up reproducing the chaotic sociability of the gods of Greek mythology. Unfortunately, in the real world this led to the defeat of Athens at the hands of Sparta in the Peloponnesian War, the beginning of Athens' terminal decline.

In Plato's telling, Socrates stands for the need to play just one game, which explains why the sophists and the 'poets' are put in the same basket. I put 'poets' in scare quotes because the term should be understood in its original Greek sense of *poiesis*, the productive use of words to conjure up worlds. In Plato's day, playwrights were the poets of chief concern, but in our own day those adept at computer coding—'hackers'—might be the main source of comparable subversion (cf. Wark 2004). Whereas Plato believed that only philosopher-kings in training should cultivate a second-order imagination—shades of Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*—his enemies were keen to distribute this capacity as widely as possible. At stake was *modal power*. In other words, whatever the rules of the game happen to be—or seem to be—they could be otherwise. From the post-truth standpoint, truth looks like an extreme disciplining of the imagination, which accounts for the authoritarian—and even totalitarian—feel of Plato's positive proposals for governing the polity in the *Republic*.

At the same time, it is easy to see how Augustine and other early Christian thinkers found Plato attractive as a metaphysical backdrop for their own monotheistic views, since the dialogues brought into sharp relief the perils of humans trying to behave like gods in a polytheistic cosmos. However, Christianity is also a religion that claims that believers have some sort of direct contact with their one deity. Indeed, since humans are biblically created *in imago dei*, a phrase Augustine himself popularised, the prospect that each person might not merely imitate a god—as in the Greek case—but actually instantiate divinity proved to be an endless source of heresies. It culminated in the Protestant Reformation, which arguably has reproduced the sophistic situation that the early Christians were trying

to avoid by embracing Plato. Of course, Augustine's own original solution was to strengthen the authority the established church of his day, which over time has turned out to be inadequate, to say the least.

Let me now shift gears and tell the same story from the standpoint of the twentieth century by using the two phases of Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical career—in particular, his attempt to determine what is true in his early (e.g. *Tractatus*) and later (e.g. *Philosophical Investigations*) writings. The early writings were fixated on the idea of a truth-functional logic into which all meaningful statements might be translated and evaluated. If a statement was deemed 'meaningful', then one could determine straightforwardly—perhaps even mechanically—whether it was true or false. In contrast, the later writings were concerned with the fact that the same string of data, be they quantitative or qualitative, may be subsumed or interpreted under any number of rules that would render them meaningful. In that case, the form of inference required is closer to abduction than deduction.

The early Wittgenstein captures the 'truth' orientation, whereby the rules of the knowledge game are sufficiently well understood by all players that appeals to 'evidence' mean the same thing to everyone concerned. This is the world of Kuhnian paradigms, whose knowledge game is called 'normal science' (Kuhn 1970). To be sure, depending on the state of play, some evidence may count more than others and may even overturn previous evidence. However, the uniformity of epistemic standards means that everyone recognises these moves in the same way and hence there is a common understanding of one's position in the epistemic tournament, including which teams have made the most progress.

The later Wittgenstein captures the 'post-truth' orientation, whereby the knowledge game is not determined by the rules; rather determining the rules is what the knowledge game is about. Emblematic of this approach is the duck-rabbit Gestalt that appears not only in this period of Wittgenstein's work but also in Thomas Kuhn's account of the psychology of the 'paradigm shift' that characterises a scientific revolution. The idea is that the same evidence can be weighted differently depending on the frame of reference adopted, which may result in a radical shift in world view. Both Wittgenstein and Kuhn agreed that whichever frame prevails is not preordained but a contingent matter, one which tends to be covered up after the fact by the justificatory narrative that the community concerned tells itself in order to go forward collectively. Kuhn notoriously dubbed this narrative 'Orwellian', after the work done in 1984s Ministry of Information, whereby a regular rewriting of history to match the current direction of policy subtly erases any memory that policies had been otherwise—and might also be otherwise in the future.

Where the later Wittgenstein and Kuhn differed was that the former appeared to think that the rules of the game might change at a moment's notice, depending on who is in the room when a binding decision needs to be taken. Thus, in principle, the number series that begins 2, 4,… may continue with 6, 8 or 16, depending on whether the implied rule is agreed to be $n + 2$, n2 or n^2. Usually there is precedent for settling the matter, but that precedent amounts to no more than a 'convention'. The alternative rules for going forward on such an occasion are comparable to the

alternative dialectical framings of a situation that the sophist juggles at any given time until an opportunity presents itself (*Kairos*). Indeed, this interpretation served to make the later Wittgenstein the darling of ethnomethodologists in the 1970s and '80s, including within the nascent 'sociology of scientific knowledge', who launched STS. In contrast, Kuhn believed that the decisive moments require a specific prehistory, the logic of which effectively forces a decision that is then taken only with great reluctance and may involve a de facto rejection of those who had been previously part of the relevant community. This 'logic' is characterised by the accumulation of unsolved puzzles in the conduct of normal science, which then precipitates a 'crisis', resulting in the paradigm shift that imposes new rules on the science game. In this respect, Kuhn might be seen to strike a balance between the two Wittgensteins, or Socrates and the sophists.

How Truth Looks to Post-truth

It is worth stressing that a 'post-truther' does not deny the existence of facts, let alone 'objective facts'. She simply wishes to dispel the mystery in which the creation and maintenance of facts tend to be shrouded. For example, epistemologists have long tried to make sense of the idea that 'correspondence to reality' explains what makes a particular statement a 'fact'. On the most ordinary reading, this sounds a bit mysterious, since it suggests a strange turn of events. Take the case of scientific facts: (1) Scientists do whatever they do in a lab. (2) They publish something that convinces their learned colleagues that something happened there, which sets off a train of actions which starts by imprinting itself on the collective body of scientific knowledge and ultimately on the world at large as an 'expert' judgement. (3) Yet—so the 'truthers' tell us—in the end what confers legitimacy on the fact (i.e. makes it 'true') is something *outside* this process, a reality to which it 'corresponds'.

To someone not schooled to 'know better' (i.e. in the 'truth' mode), (3) seems to be quite an arbitrary conclusion to reach, just given (1) and (2). Unsurprisingly then, the twentieth century has been largely a story of philosophers gradually falling out of love with this scenario, which in turn has animated the post-truth sensibility. Indeed, there is a fairly direct line of intellectual descent from the logical positivists and the Popperians to contemporary social constructivism in the sociology of scientific knowledge, contrary to their textbook representation as mutual antagonists. I have gone so far as to call science and technology studies (STS) 'postmodern positivism'—in a non-pejorative sense (Fuller 2006)!

The tell-tale sign is that they all define 'truth' as something *inside*—not outside —the terms of a language game. Put another way, 'truth' shifts from being a substantive to a procedural notion. Specifically, for them 'truth' is a second-order concept that lacks any determinate meaning except relative to the language in terms of which knowledge claims can be expressed. (This is known as the 'Tarski convention of truth'.) It was in this spirit that Rudolf Carnap thought that Thomas

Kuhn's 'paradigm' had put pragmatic flesh on the positivists' logical bones (Reisch 1991; cf. Fuller 2000: Chap. 6). (It is worth emphasising that Carnap passed this judgement before Kuhn's fans turned him into the torchbearer for 'post-positivist' philosophy of science.) At the same time, this orientation led the positivists to promote—and try to construct—a universal language of science into which all knowledge claims could be translated and evaluated.

More to the point, the positivists didn't *presuppose* the existence of some univocal understanding of truth that all sincere inquirers will ultimately reach. Rather, truth is just a general property of the language that one decides to use—or the game one decides to play. In that case 'truth' corresponds to satisfying 'truth conditions' as specified by the rules of a given language, just as 'goal' corresponds to satisfying the rules of play in a given game.

To be sure, the positivists complicated matters because they also took seriously that science aspires to command universal assent for its knowledge claims, in which case, science's language needs to be set up in a way that enables everyone to transact their knowledge claims inside it; hence, the need to 'reduce' such claims to their calculable and measurable components. This effectively put the positivists in partial opposition to all the existing sciences of their day, each with its own parochial framework governed by the rules of its distinctive language game. The need to overcome this tendency explains the project of an 'International Encyclopedia of Unified Science'. In this respect, logical positivism's objective was to design an epistemic game—called 'Science'—that anyone could play and potentially win.

How Truth Looks Back at Post-truth: Veritism as 'Fake Philosophy'

Perhaps the most elaborate 'fake philosophy', so to speak, that has been designed to counteract the post-truth sensibility is called *veritism*, which reasserts the 'outside' conception of truth by declaring it a necessary constraint if not the primary goal of any legitimate inquiry. Veritism is popular, if not dominant, among theorists of knowledge and science in contemporary analytic philosophy (e.g. Goldman 1999). Its extramural admirers include those keen on shoring up the epistemic authority of 'scientific consensus' in the face of an increasing multitude of dissenters and sceptics (e.g. Baker and Oreskes 2017). The 'fakeness' of this philosophy comes from both its studied refusal to engage with the 'essentially contested' nature of 'truth' and related epistemic concepts, which results in a conflation of first- and second-order concerns.

Here's an example of the fakeness of veritism in action:

> On the contrary, truth (along with evidence, facts, and other words science studies scholars tend to relegate to scare quotes) is a far more plausible choice for one of a potential plurality of regulative ideals for an enterprise that, after all, does have an obviously cognitive function. (Baker and Oreskes 2017, p. 69)

The sentence *prima facie* commits the category mistake of presuming that 'truth' is one more—albeit preferred—possible regulative ideal of science alongside, say, instrumental effectiveness, cultural appropriateness, etc. However, 'truth' in the logical positivist sense is a feature of *all* regulative ideals of science, each of which should be understood as specifying a language game that is governed by its own validation procedures—the rules of the game, if you will—in terms of which one theory is determined (or 'verified') to be, say, more effective than another or more appropriate than another.

As an epistemic policy, veritism says that whatever else inquiry might seek to achieve in terms of the inquirers' own aims, it must first serve 'The Truth'. The result has been some strange epistemological doctrines, including 'reliabilism', which argues that there are processes that generate truths on a regular basis even if their possessors lack epistemic access to them. On the surface, such a doctrine is designed to dissociate truth from any subjective states, which would otherwise make it difficult to generalise truth claims from an individual's own version of 'justified belief', let alone personal experience. However, to the post-truther, reliabilism looks simply like a pretext for individuals to outsource their own judgements to experts in, say, cognitive, brain and/or behavioural science—those unelected masters of what remains unknown to us about ourselves.

Indeed, on closer inspection, when veritists say that truth is a 'regulative ideal' of all inquiry, they are simply referring to a social arrangement whereby the self-organising scientific community is the final arbiter on all knowledge claims accepted by society at large. To be sure, the scientific community can get things wrong—but things become wrong only when the scientific community says so, and they become fixed only when the scientific community says so. In effect, veritists advocate what I have called 'cognitive authoritarianism' (Fuller 1988: Chap. 12). From a post-truth standpoint, veritism amounts to a lightly veiled moral crusade, as exemplified by such pseudo-epistemic concepts as 'trust' and 'reliability', in which 'scientific' attaches to both a body of knowledge and the people who produce that knowledge. I say 'pseudo' because there is no agreed specifically *epistemic* measure of these qualities. Judgements about people are invariably used as proxies for judgements about the world.

For example, *trust* is a quality whose presence is felt mainly as a double absence, namely, a studied refusal to examine knowledge claims for oneself, the result of which is then judged to have had non-negative consequences—presumably because some 'trusted party' (aka scientists) did the requisite validation work. I have called trust a 'phlogistemic' concept for this reason, as it resembles the pseudo-element phlogiston (Fuller 1996). Indeed, my general opposition to this sensibility has led me to argue that universities should be in the business of 'epistemic trust-busting'. Here is my original assertion:

> *In short, universities function as knowledge trust-busters whose own corporate capacities*
> *of "creative destruction" prevent new knowledge from turning into intellectual property*
> (Fuller 2002, p. 47; italics in original).

By 'corporate capacities', I mean the various means at the university's disposal to ensure that the people in a position to take forward new knowledge are not simply part of the class of those who created it in the first place. Of course I had in mind ordinary teaching that aims to express even the most sophisticated concepts in terms ordinary students can understand and use, thereby deconstructing the rather historically specific—or 'path-dependent'—ways that innovations tend to become socially entrenched, which in turn create relationships of trust between 'experts' and 'lay people'. But also I meant to include 'affirmative action' policies that are specifically designed to incorporate a broader range of people than might otherwise attend the university. Taken together, these counteract the 'neo-feudalism' to which academic knowledge production is prone—'rent-seeking', if you will—and to which veritists are largely oblivious.

As for the veritists' core truth criterion, *reliability*, its meaning depends on specifying the conditions—say, in the design of an experiment—under which a pattern of behaviour is expected to occur. Outside of such tightly defined conditions, which is where most 'scientific controversies' happen, it is not clear how cases should be classified and counted, and hence what 'reliable' means. Indeed, STS has not only drawn attention to this fact but it has gone further—say, in the work of Harry Collins—to question whether even lab-based reliability is possible without some sort of collusion between researchers. In other words, the social accomplishment of 'reliable knowledge' is at least partly an expression of solidarity among members of the scientific community—a closing of the ranks, to put it less charitably. This is a less flattering characterisation of what veritists claim as the epistemically luminous process of 'consensus formation' in science.

An especially good example of the foregoing is what has been dubbed 'Climategate', which was triggered by the hacking of the computer server of the UK's main climate science research group in 2009, which was followed up with several Freedom of Information requests. While no wrongdoing was formally established, the e-mails did reveal the extent to which scientists from across the world effectively conspired to present the data for climate change in ways that obscured interpretive ambiguities, thereby pre-empting possible appropriations by so-called 'climate change sceptics'. The most natural way to interpret this situation is that it reveals the micro-processes by which a scientific consensus is normally and literally 'manufactured'. Nevertheless, veritists are unlikely to regard Climategate as their paradigm case of a 'scientific consensus'. But why not?

The reason lies in their refusal to acknowledge the labour and even struggle that are involved in securing collective assent over any significant knowledge claim. For veritists, informed people draw the same conclusions from the same evidence. The actual social interaction among inquirers carries little cognitive weight in its own right. Instead, it simply reinforces what any rational individual is capable of inferring for him- or herself in the same situation. Other people may provide

additional data points but they don't alter the rules of right reasoning. The contrasting post-truth view of consensus formation is more explicitly 'rhetorical' (Fuller and Collier 2004). It appeals to a mix of strategic and epistemic considerations in a setting where the actual interaction between the parties sets the parameters that define the scope of any possible consensus. Even Kuhn, who valorised consensus as the glue that holds together normal science puzzle-solving, clearly saw its rhetorical and even coercive character, ranging from pedagogy to peer review.

Finally, a word should be said about a 'politically correct' form of veritism that is popular among feminists and multiculturalists: *epistemic justice*—or rather, epistemic *in*justice (Fricker 2007). The nuance matters. One might think that 'epistemic justice' is about doing justice to knowledge, in response to which various theories of justice might be proposed that weigh the competing demands of equality, fairness, desert, cost, benefit and so forth in the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge. This captures the post-truth spirit of my own 'social epistemology' because it presumes that the norms governing knowledge and knowers need to be forged simultaneously: Who knows and what is known are always mutually implicated. Identities are not fixed in stone (or in the genetic or historical record, for that matter). In contrast, 'epistemic injustice' presupposes that the rules of the epistemic game are already set, and so the objective is to identify and correct violations of play. These typically relate to members from socially discriminated groups who are prevented from contributing their unique 'data points' to an agreed sense of inquiry. And without denying the historic neglect of women and minority voices, which has damaged both them and any greater sense of human inquiry, one wonders whether this strict sense of 'epistemic injustice' can survive the ongoing 'trans-' revolution (i.e. transgender, transrace, transhuman, etc.) which promises an unprecedented level of identity mobility and its attendant changes in the rules of the knowledge game.

Conclusion: Settling the Score Between Truth and Post-truth

Richard Rorty became such a hate figure among analytic philosophers in the last two decades of the twentieth century because he called out the veritists on their fakeness. Yes, philosophers can tell you what truth is, but just as long as you accept a lot of contentious assumptions—and hope those capable of contending those assumptions aren't in the room when you're speaking! Put another way, Rorty refused to adopt what might be called a 'double truth' doctrine for philosophy (comparable to the various 'double truth' doctrines promulgated in the Middle Ages to save religious faith from critical scholarship), whereby amongst themselves philosophers adopt a semi-detached attitude towards various conflicting

conceptions of truth while at the same time presenting a united front to non-philosophers, lest these masses start to believe some disreputable things.

As Rorty (1979) had explained, his own post-truth vision had been shaped by his encounter with Sellars' (1963) distinction between the 'manifest' and 'scientific' images of the world. Sellars' point was that the two images were 'incommensurable' in the sense that Kuhn would popularise. In other words, they cross-classify the same world for different purposes, in which case any straightforward 'reduction' or even evaluation of one image by the other is arguably question-begging. In other words, to say that a common-sense observation is contradicted by scientific findings is to tacitly assume that the observations should be held accountable to findings—or, more bluntly, that the ordinary person should be playing the scientist's language game. Thus, positivism—both in its original Comtean and later Carnapian forms—always carried a strong sense of trying to reform the world. My own social epistemology is also informed by this sensibility.

Sellars' distinction influenced a range of philosophers who otherwise stand on opposite sides of key issues in epistemology and philosophy of science, including Bas van Fraassen (scientific antirealist), Paul Churchland (scientific realist) and most relevant for our purposes, the self-styled 'anarchist' philosopher of science Feyerabend (1981). Feyerabend was an avowed enemy of 'methodolatrists', namely, those philosophers (and scientists, of course) who place great store by particular rituals—demonstrations of methodological probity—which are said to increase the likelihood that the resulting facts enjoy the desired state of 'correspondence to reality'. As in the days of the Pharisees and the Puritans, a rigorous demeanour is made a proxy for access to truth. But Feyerabend (1975) revealed the rhetorical strength and weakness of this 'truther' strategy by mobilising the case of Galileo, a sloppy and perhaps fraudulent wielder of the scientific method by modern standards. Here was someone who didn't understand the optics behind the 'telescope', a pimped up periscope to the naked eye, including the eyes of his Papal Inquisitors. Yet, we would say that Galileo's methodologically rigorous Inquisitors—perhaps by virtue of their own rigour—rendered themselves blind to the 'full truth' of his claims.

To be sure, Feyerabend leaves the moral of his story tantalisingly open. Nevertheless, the post-truther is clear that we know that Galileo was right because the rules of the science game had changed within a few decades of his death to allow his original knowledge claims to be re-established on new and improved grounds, courtesy of Isaac Newton and his followers. Galileo's interlocutors had overlooked that while failing to meet *their* standard of evidence, he was predicting something about the future of science itself that would make them obsolete and enable his knowledge claims to become facts. Galileo's sloppiness and duplicity was thus a risky epistemic investment that paid off in the long term but of course not in the short term. He was trying to play by the rules of a game other than the one to which he was being held to account. Galileo's trial displayed the difficulties of trying to change the rules of a game from within the game while the players think that the rules are fine. This last gloss helps to motivate Kuhn's claim that scientists will not shift to a new paradigm until the old one has accumulated enough unsolved problems.

As we have seen, the post-truther plays two games at once: Of course, s/he plays the knowledge game in which s/he is situated, in which s/he may have little prima face 'room for manoeuvre' (*Spielraum*). But s/he also plays—at least in his/her own mind—a second and more desirable game, into which s/he would like to convert the current game. This explains that the value that the sophists placed on *Kairos*, the opportunity to argue a specific case. It amounts to a search for the dialectical tipping point, a moment that the Gestalt might just switch from 'duck' to 'rabbit'. In that respect, the post-truther is an epistemic 'double agent' and hence open to charges of hypocrisy in a way that the truther is not. I have associated this sense of double agency with 'bullshit', as incensed veritists have applied the term to postmodernists for nearly four decades now (Fuller 2009: Chap. 4). However, a relatively neutral settling of the scores between truthers and post-truthers would conclude that post-truthers aim to weaken the fact/fiction distinction—and hence undermine the moral high ground of truthers—by making it easier to switch between knowledge games, while the truthers aim to strengthen the distinction by making it harder to switch between knowledge games. In short, the difference turns on the resolution of a struggle over what I earlier called 'modal power'.

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On Knowing How to Tell the Truth

Sharon Rider

Introduction

> Stones are hard, water is wet, objects unsupported fall towards the earth's center […]
> Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else
> follows. Orwell (1949)

For several years now, we have been confronted with a number of developments that we sense may be quite dangerous, but the contours of which are still unclear. One of the first (and still best) attempts at finding a single word for this phenomenon was made, not by a philosopher or poet, but by the comedian Stephen Colbert, who coined the neologism "truthiness" (or "veritasiness"). The term is used to describe the quality of seeming, or more importantly, being felt to be true, regardless of the actual state of affairs in question. The word designates the preference for what one wishes to be true, rather than factual or conceptual validity. Colbert concludes the debut of his show by saying: "I know some of you may not trust your gut, yet. But, with my help, you will. The truthiness is, anyone can read the news to you. I promise to feel the news 'at' you" (Meyer 2006; Peyser 2006). A closely related Colbertism is "wikiality", a statement considered to be true because the majority of people agree on it, rather than because of established facts. It is the sense of reality that arises when enough people are brought to assent to something made up. More recently, in connection with the tumult surrounding the mediatization of the political sphere, the use and abuse of social media for ideological indoctrination in particular, other terms have been coined to capture this now all-too-familiar condition: "fake news" and "post-truth" are the most current. Yet the phenomena covered by these terms have much in common with a

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quintessentially twentieth-century thought-form described by Erich Fromm in his Afterword to George Orwell's *1984*. He refers here to an American writer, Allan Harrington, whose book, *Life in the Crystal Palace*, gives an account of the workaday world of a major corporation. Harrington coins the phrase "mobile truth" to capture how loyalties forged out of vested interests rather than ideals, values or critical assessment of facts are moved freely and easily when circumstances change. Thus, an agent for a corporation can earnestly believe in, and testify passionately to, the superiority of the product he is selling over the competitor's, and turn around almost immediately with equal conviction and fervor to proclaim the supremacy of the competitor's product the day he loses his job at the first company and takes up a position with the second. Fromm notes that what this entails is this: the question of whether or not the claim is justified, or if its truth is at all ascertainable, is irrelevant. What matters is that, if I am working for a certain company, their "truth" becomes mine. If I change employers, the new company's truth will replace the former employer's as "my truth", since the truth of the claims follows with my interests as employee. The claims are equivalent in terms of their value or function. "Mobile truth" can thus be seen as a precursor to Counselor to the President of the United States Kellyanne Conway's own indelible contribution to American English, on *Meet the Press*, when she coined the phrase "alternative facts" in her defense of White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer's claims about the number of people in attendance at Donald Trump's Presidential Inauguration.

Reflecting on "mobile truth", Fromm concludes: "It is one of the most characteristic and destructive developments of our own society that man, becoming more and more of an instrument, transforms reality more and more into something relative to his own interests and functions" (Fromm 1961, p. 321). This is how we should understand the preponderance of "truthiness", "wikiality", "fake news", "alternative facts", and so on. They are symptoms of something much more profound than a simple loss of accuracy or honesty in public discourse. The problem is that words cannot be relied upon to do the work they are supposed to do; we really can't be sure about what is meant by terms and distinctions such as "true" and "false", "real" and "fake", "fact" and "opinion", "truth" and "lie", "reason", and "excuse", because their employment is tied to goals and aims that are not apparent to all. What is occurring is a change in the conditions for human understanding and communication, in the epistemic atmosphere in which we think, discuss, and deliberate. Some, perhaps most famously Richard Rorty (1989), think that we should be less concerned with Truth than with freedom and justice. Others want to see freedom and truth as two sides of the same coin: "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two makes four", and conversely, "Two and two makes four if and only if we are free to think that two and to make four." In this paper, I wish to find another way of considering the problem of "post-truth", one that neither focuses on technical epistemological issues nor stays at the level of present-day politics. In what follows, I will discuss the family of notions that are at stake ("truth", "lie", "fact") in terms of the work they do for us, and this in light of the very basic distinction between inside and outside, in hopes of getting clearer on what we want to say when we are inclined to talk about someone "being in the right".

In the Know and on the Outs

What is required for a shared recognition of when and in what contexts we need words such as "fact" or "falsehood"? When a situation arises in which we cannot assume that we can trust that our use of such words as something belonging to all of us in the same measure and by and large in the same way, then it is as if the scaffolding upon which properly human things (culture, science, the rule of law) are built founders. Some political observers have expressed the pessimistic view that what we are witnessing are the first tremors of precisely this sort of social and political collapse.

It has been argued that the best means we have for the protection and preservation of a stable and flourishing society are our educational institutions. But there is a fundamental assumption at work in such hopes, which should not go unnoticed. It is quite simply this: "higher education" is as vulnerable to the situation described by "truthiness", "wikiality", and "alternative facts" as any other institution for assessing the validity of claims, including courts of law, laboratories, and the investigative journalism of the press with legally responsible publishers. My concern here will be with the connection between our use of this vocabulary, and the political and social conditions in which they have or make sense. I will argue that the problem is that a picture has gotten hold of us in which social, ethnic, economic, and other divisions encourage the thought that commonality in our way of life is a pernicious delusion, rather than a sine qua non for the choice to live and to continue living together. Important for this context is the division between what is often termed "educated elites" and "uneducated masses", which suggests somehow a straightforward divide between intelligent, open and informed opinion and dogmatic, narrow-minded prejudice. Were the matter so simple, then the answer to the question, "how are we to reconstitute and sustain the polity for the future good of man and the world?" would be relatively straightforward. But I would suggest that it is not.

If one believes in the autonomy of reason, as did Enlightenment thinkers, then "higher education" would be the training and cultivation of that capacity. Liberal-mindedness has been seen as both a means and an end of education, and it is likely this liberal ideal that inclines some to place such faith in it. The hope is that intellectual inquiry and the free exchange of beliefs and ideas manifest, perpetuate, and improve the exercise of human reason in the settling of disagreements as to what is, in fact, the case. A more contemporary version of this ideal formulates it in terms of a "widening the range of consensus about how things are", as opposed to an "appeal to reality, apart from any human need" (Rorty 1998, p. 35). A classical liberal theme is thus, on the one hand, institutionalized rights and constitutional checks on power that might inhibit the exercise of reasoned discourse; on the other, but closely related to this necessary condition of a liberal polity, is the confidence that every citizen will acknowledge that his right to think and speak freely is conditioned on the recognition of that right for others, and further, that he must, in a sense, actively will the possibility of disagreement as an absolutely necessary

component of the free exercise of his reason, that is, as a fundamental requirement for the kind of interchange that will increase the power of reason in all.

The expectation that the unimpeded use of reason will lead to the attainment of universally recognized truths is now considered by many, not just philosophers and intellectuals, to be naïve, and deeply problematic, at least with regard to matters concerning the political, social, and cultural sphere. The recurrent calls in certain quarters of the student body and faculty for No Platform-activism, safe zones, and trigger warnings attest to this mistrust. On the other hand, the very notion of academic freedom rests on the premise that thoughts are not dangerous, deeds are. The liberal confidence in education as a remedy for societal ills rests on the intuition that the most dangerous deeds are those performed without thought, i.e., that thoughtlessness in action is the same as stupidity, which is never a good thing and which, at worst, undermines the very capacity for intelligence. Since thinking requires communication for its vitality, rectification, and enhancement, the fear that certain thoughts about the nature of politics or the ethical are in themselves hurtful, insulting or intimidating, militates against their rectification through higher education, since what is at stake is exactly what truths are, and how truth claims are to be investigated, validated, valorized, or discredited. The political problem of how to maintain social cohesion, or, more dramatically, how to prevent the dissolution of the polity into an inchoate mass of belligerent particularism and conflicting interests, applies also to the university.

One thing that has become clear from the popularity of climate change denial, "birtherism" and other conspiracy theories and the like is that the more that "expertise" or "knowledge" is merged with the appropriation and dissemination of certain values, the less it will be associated with impartiality. The consequence of the turn to values, in turn, is that authority in the sense of "authoritative" evidence, for instance, is undermined and loses its democratic legitimacy; it is replaced with the perception that the institutions that evolved to ensure unbiased and balanced expert analyses have become authorities in another sense, that is, something like "state agencies with the authority to discipline, with or without basis in impartial scrutiny of facts or argumentation," which is to say dictatorial, authoritarian regimes. The sense that the search for truth has been replaced by the invention of truthiness is shared on both sides of the political spectrum.

Since the election in November, Richard Rorty's William E. Massey Lectures in American Civilization at Harvard in 1997 have been cited frequently. In particular, a seemingly prescient diagnosis of the state of the nation at the time concerning the effects of neoliberalism on American democracy received great attention after the election of Donald Trump:

> [M]embers of labor unions, and unorganized unskilled workers, will sooner or later realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. Around the same time, they will realize that suburban white-collar workers — themselves desperately afraid of being downsized — are not going to let themselves be taxed to provide social benefits for anyone else.

> At that point, something will crack. The nonsuburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for—someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond sales-men, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots […]

> One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. […] All the sadism which the academic Left has tried to make unacceptable to its students will come flooding back. All the resentment which badly educated Americans feel about having their manners dictated to them by college graduates will find an outlet. (Rorty in Senior 2016)

Notice here the depiction of the problem: there is an "in-crowd" of educated, suburban elites engaged in a project of doing away with the bad "manners" and "sadism" of those on the outs, i.e., uneducated, exurbanites, through their roles as professionals and members of the "creative class". In their professional capacity, they have apparently had an important role to play in the gains made by women, the LGBT community, and ethnic minorities. With their influence diminished by a populist regime that does not respect their expertise and professionalism, all hell will break loose. The Vandals are storming the gates; the Wildings are about to scale the Wall. This picture is largely how the problem of post-truth, fake news, alternative facts is usually framed. It were as if there really were a gate or wall dividing civilized society from the onslaught of an untamed and untamable mass, which, as it happens, is the wall dividing experts, propagators of the true (whether understood in terms of universalism or in terms of "good in the way of belief"), from the attack of the false (i.e., factually or politically incorrect or, alternatively, "bad in the way of belief"). But, historically speaking, this is surely a striking reversal of political positioning.

Less than a century ago, the schism between progressive and conservative thinkers was to a considerable extent a question of what to do about the advent of mass society, where progressives believed in the capacity of everyman to become enlightened and participate equally, fully and with sound judgment; among more radical thinkers, it was suggested further that this was something that could not be achieved "top down", but would have to be the work of the working classes themselves. This is the original idea of the social movement that was to become Continuing and Adult Education (Hållén 2016). The more conservatively minded, for their part, doubted that that democracy could lead to anything but political turmoil, cultural decline and social dissolution. For this reason, the running of the polity should be left to elites, the proper education of whom was seen as vital to civilization: "Liberal education is the necessary endeavor to found an aristocracy within democratic mass society. Liberal education reminds those members of a mass democracy who have ears to hear, of human greatness" (Strauss 1968, p. 5). Thus, the ostensibly "progressive" position in our day is Leo Strauss turned inside out. That is to say, the Left today is more or less arguing for an aristocracy of opinion, it is just that the aim is not to remind the elites of cultural greatness, but rather of their responsibility toward an emancipatory project of social justice understood as identity formation and recognition. Further, there is an implicit

anti-universalist assumption, sometimes made explicit, that certain groups, due to historical injustices, are ideologically more clear-sighted than others, a supposition presumably inherited from an application of Lukac's idea of the standpoint of the proletariat now applied to ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, the disabled, etc. In any case, whether we follow Rorty or Strauss, those who "belong" to the enlightened elite are demarcated from those who do not. What I will do in the rest of this paper is pay attention to this divide, wall, division, barrier, or whatever we wish to call it, and ask what it means with regard to the discourse of true and false, both for politics and for education.

In the Know and on the Outs

I've chosen to discuss the problem at hand in terms of the most basic words I could think of: "within" and "without". The reason is that I want to be able to start from scratch. If I were to begin with, say, "subjectivity" and "objectivity", "inner experience" and "the outer world", "internal concepts" and "external objects", "intrinsic qualities" and "extrinsic properties", "intelligibility" and "sensuous experience", and so forth, both the author and the reader would be at once poised to think in certain terms and make specific associations, due to how this cluster of notions have developed over time, especially in philosophy. Similarly, terms such as "inclusion" and "exclusion", "center" and "periphery", have become linked with a variety of scholarly and political positions and projects. I want to avoid these associations in an attempt to say something very basic, even banal, about how these terms work for us, and, at times, seemingly against us.

What is within?[1] The preposition designates being inside (of some thing, say, "a fire within the building"), or in the range of an area or boundary (for instance, "within town limits"), but also in the scope of a specific action of perception ("the lighthouse was now within view from the ship"). In each case, there is a notion of inclusion within bounds, which makes possible also more abstract uses of the word ("within the law", "within the terms of the contract"). Similarly, "within" is used to indicate proximity in time or space ("the tickets were sold out within a few hours", "he lives within thirty kilometers from Uppsala"). "Without" is a somewhat more

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[1]One might object that what follows has more to do with the idiomatic peculiarities of the English language than with a way of thinking that belongs to the deep grammar of the language of modern thought. But here one might think of the influential discussion of *le dehors et le dedans* in Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1967, p. 46 ff). At any rate, if one considers the use of say, *innerhalb* and *außerhalb* in German, or *innanför* and *utanför* in Swedish, we find a constellation of words which, taken together, contain elements of what I describe here. In particular, I am thinking of how, for instance, *utanför* (outside of) simply juxtaposes the parts that make up *förutan* (without, in both senses of exclusion implied by the word). This is due to the prefix, *-ut*, which, depending upon what root it combines with, can indicate spatial division or deficiency, i.e., absence from, in the one case, and absence of, in the other. So too with the—*auß* in *außer*, etc.

suggestive word. Its primary use is to denote absence of someone or something ("he hated being without her"), but also the non-occurrence of some action ("they ate their meal without talking to one another"). It is also commonly used to describe a lack of access ("they were without electricity for weeks after the storm"). But the meaning that would seem to be parallel to the general sense of inclusion, that is, the one having to do with exclusion beyond boundaries as opposed to inclusion within them, formerly common and quite literal, is now considered archaic, dialectal or literary. I'm thinking of such usages as "the enemy without", for instance, where the word means just "on the outside". Here I want to examine the "within", the inner or enclosed or delimited, in terms of both senses of "without", that is, of being on the "outs", of both lacking and being off limits or out of bounds. What I want to say is that this binary distinction, perfectly useful and in order in everyday speech (as in the examples above), tends to enthrall us when it reaches the level of "the concept", especially when we theorize the political. One aspect that I want to draw particular attention to is the stasis inherent in the distinction, the limit or boundary by which we determine that something is either in or out, having or lacking. It seems to me that we have here in many cases a kind of optical illusion, caused by our forgetting that most boundaries are constructed for a purpose; they *do* something. Inclusion or exclusion, being within or without, are not simply passive traits or positions, but processes and products. This insight is fundamental to the hermeneutic project, but it is not my aim or ambition to position what I have to say now within the intellectual tradition. I'm most concerned here with what is happening now.

Let us now reconsider the terms in question, within and without, more closely. The idea of "the inner" has taken different, even contrasting, forms in the history of thought as well as in what is called "the popular imagination". For someone like St. Augustine, the inner was the sphere "within" in which the voice of conscience, that is, God, could hold sway, whatever the "external" circumstances. As Arendt and others have pointed out, the germ of what was to become the philosophical proposition of a "free will" is one in which the actual experience of freedom serves as a model for an uninhibited inner life when the body is in chains. In the last century, in large part due to the dominance of the marriage of psychological tropes to liberal politics, the inner has become a theater of drives, desires, and inclinations which constitute the satisfactions and happiness of the individual, so long as their expression is kept within the rule of law, and does no self-evident harm. The "within" as a realm of emotion or "psychological states" is here not the reasoned dialogue between a man and his God or conscience, but primarily a point of contingent unification of immediate responses to what is "without", the result of external pressures and excitements, and spontaneous inner compulsions. The inner is free at best in the sense of "free for all", in contrast both to the Christian tradition and the sense of autonomy or unfettered self-disciplined thought that was the ideal of Enlightenment thinkers. In the hyper-liberalism of our epoch, whatever I "believe", for whatever reason I believe it, is in order just as it is insofar as it is my belief. On the other hand, since everyone has the right to his or her reasons, or to have no reason at all, it is thought that such belief must be respected as "true for me", while entailing no consequences in the world. One might say that not only the

word but the very experience of "experience" today collapses *Erfarenheit* into *Erlebnis*. So much for the "within" of inner life.

Regarding the "without", one might distinguish between two general ways of describing the proximate, delimiting sense. One is as a border, limitation, or boundary: in the case of the individual, it would be what is beyond my body, which is the horizon of my experience. The "without" is then everything that directs, impinges upon, impresses, or effects me without coming from within myself. The other way is to view the "without" as a kind of infinite beyond, where I am, or my body (including my thoughts, appetites and emotions) is, not so much a horizon as a fixed point at which discrete experiences arise at the juncture of the movements of the world and other people. One might say that the first case is more "idealistic" insofar as the "outer" can only be formulated within the horizon of possible experience, the life-world, whereas the latter depiction, construing the inner in terms of what "science" tells us about the dynamics of the universe and laws of biological life, is rather "materialist".

There is also, I said, a second sense of "without", that of "lack", deprivation, and impediments to achievement or obstacles to access, which is today the more standard usage. But what is the connection between exclusion, externality, being out of bounds or off limits, on the one hand, and lack, absence, deficiency, deprivation, need, want, insufficiency, on the other? I would suggest that it has to do with the perspective from which something or someone is within or without. From the point of view of an assumed center, the without is characterized by negation or lack, by what is missing. Hence, the without is peripheral insofar as it is determined by its not being what is "central". But the limit which determines what is central and what is peripheral must be drawn somewhere. It is established at some point in *time* and at some *place*. Furthermore, the line has to be generally recognizable to be a limit or limitation. That means, among other things, that in our efforts to acknowledge the "without", we fall immediately into a kind of remediation mode, in which what is on the periphery becomes a kind of passive recipient of the work of agency at the center. Even if the explicit intention is to enhance autonomy, the assumption is that (a) only agency is productive; (b) autonomous action is possible and necessary, a sine qua non, for a truly and fully *human* life.[2] To call into question such assumptions is often to be understood as denying the value of autonomy, reason, and liberty, i.e., as falling into a facile and destructive relativism. This reaction is due, I think, to our being "thwarted by a kind of Weltenschauung", to borrow a phrase from Wittgenstein (1969, §422).

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[2]One might think here of Martha Nussbaum (see, for instance, 2013) as a case in point with respect to how attempts at respectful recognition of otherness and difference as a political resource can't help but assume the centrality of their own starting points.

Politics Inside/Out

Many theorists have called attention to how basic dichotomies dissolve upon closer inspection. They emphasize that, as a matter of practical fact, the starting point for all our epistemic or ethical endeavors is a kind of productive vulnerability, the state of affairs that we all find ourselves at any given moment within a state of affairs, and without another. What we call "limitations" are often at the same time preconditions for action or thought. To begin with, our primary access to the world, in both chronological and logical order, is through our first language, into which we enter rather than which we create. In the case of language acquisition (which is, at the same time, acquisition of a world in common with others), one could say that what is without, the periphery, is absolutely central; without the without, there is no within. Lack is the unrealized (and perhaps unrealizable) possibility of sufficiency or autonomy. Limit, or negation, is the condition of possibility of any position. The without is what makes the within appear at all; it provides the contours of salience and meaning. In this respect, it makes sense to say that the without constitutes the within. But what does all this mean, concretely, for how we are to understand the role of truth in politics, or the role of education for the polity? I want to conclude by suggesting a number of consequences to be drawn for politics, education and the politics of education from what has been said thus far.

Arendt (1968) argues that the two fundamental requirements for engaging in such a project as the political are imagination and judgment, rather than "knowledge" (in the sense of subsuming some particular fact under a universal). She applies Kant's idea of "disinterested judgment" to the sphere of politics, and points to the necessity of withdrawing into the position of the "spectator" of events, of seeing things from the "without", when considering a critical situation. The view of those within the field of action, the participants in these events, is always, almost axiomatically, "What shall I do?", since the essence of a "crisis" (from the Greek *krinein*, "to decide") is the need to make a decision. The actors, as actors, are in medias res. The view from without, that of the spectator as opposed to that of the agents, is on *all* the actors moving about in their various positions, from a distance, since the spectator qua spectator is not herself an actor. The result is not objectivity in sense of generality or scientific validity, but that of "impartiality". The spectator has no vested interest in the events portrayed in the spectacle; she has no role to play, no function to fill, nothing to win or lose, and, qua spectator, she is loyal to no character or plot. As soon as we withdraw from the scene of action and consider ourselves at a critical distance, we are ourselves spectators. To think meta-politically is to regard our own actions at such a distance, not so as to objectify them, but rather as to be able to perceive the situation from the various perspectives of all the actors on stage, to see what our actions and speeches do, what effects they produce on the other players and the scene as a whole. To see our own actions and opinions as on an equal footing with those of the other actors, to recognize that the centrality of our own perspectives has to do with our position and place in a complex and dynamic flow of events, requires great moral as well as

intellectual effort. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt (1978) calls this broadened perspective "thinking", which is not some characteristic quality possessed by the human species in the way that having a "sting" is a quality attached to being a wasp. It is not something we "have" at all. Rather, thinking, the capacity for sound judgment, clarity of ideas and attentive and intelligent action, must always and everywhere be achieved, fought for, upheld.

In a similar vein, Ortega y Gasset criticizes the intellectualist ideal of man as *res cogitans*, as already "thinking" insofar as he is human, which presupposes that intellectual resources are just there at our disposal when we need them. The danger of this attitude, he argues, is that it leads to complacency, obliviousness, and negligence.[3] The desire to know is most certainly indispensable for actually knowing, but hardly sufficient. As distinct from other animals, whose lives consist of unceasing responsiveness to their current environment, who are, in effect, steered by it, man can from time to time withdraw "into himself", and ignore everything around him except that which is the object of his concern. While animals are by and large "without", man is at once without and within. Or, in Ortega's formulation, he can make the move to "pay attention".

What is it that he is paying attention to? Himself: his ideas, thoughts, hopes, plans, and aims. But, importantly, these things are not just there in the individual, but come to him from "without", that is, from the world of which he is a part: the talk he has heard, the words he has read, the patterns of social life into which he was born, the very language he speaks. Thus, paradoxically, in order to retreat into myself, I have to be exposed to others. Without the without, there is no "inner world" into which to retreat, and no thoughts to think. We are all always already inner and outer, inside out, and each of us must keep up the business of achieving our language, our civilization, our knowledge, through considered common action. Through our speeches and actions, we *constitute* the human world. Every time one of us returns to the field of action, as we must, we leave our imprint on it by leaving traces in the speeches and actions of others. Thought and its manifestations (science, art, law, philosophy, commerce) are not the aim and purpose of human life, but action in isolation from thought, for Ortega as well as for Arendt, is by definition unreflective—quite literally thoughtless (or, as Ortega says, "stupid"). Liberality (broadmindedness, generosity, fairness, tolerance) as a way of thinking and liberalism as a form of political life go hand in hand.

When a human being is constantly responding to threats, risks, and real or perceived dangers, when she is incessantly reacting to preoccupations that prevent her from withdrawing to collect her thoughts, she will follow her impulses. The pivotal issue is not lacking or having education; it is rather that her concerns with biological life are so real and so pressing that they consume her. If she is not at leisure to pause and say, "Wait, let me think", neither can she be "herself". She simply "is": "one", "das Man", "mass man", everyone, and no one. But that means

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[3]What follows in this section is for all intents and purposes a paraphrase of José Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses* (1957a) and *Man and People* (1957b).

that she can be someone else; her thoughts will, recalling Harrington, follow the job description, the role she has to play in any given situation. When will and direct action dominate an epoch ("strong leadership", as we say today), Ortega warns, the first thing to do is run and lock all your doors. Where there is no time and place for thinking, the stage is set for thoughtless action, or, to use Ortega's technical term, "stupidity".

In a bee society, all the bees do what they must. They have no reasons, and they don't need them. But as the animal with logos, human beings are fated to reasons, for themselves and for others. In order to decide if I have "good reasons", have thought rightly, I have to confer and compare with the reasons and thoughts of others. Yet to do that means that we have already some kind of *sensus communis*, a common ground to stand on. If we reject at the outset the possibility of achieving such a common ground, we deny with it the possibility of living together peacefully and purposefully. Every opinion or judgment about a state of affairs is a kind of movement back and forth between myself and others: in order to examine my reasons for making the judgement "X is good", I have to be able to explain or at least relate those thoughts to someone else. This is because thinking requires communicability for its performance and enlargement. Where there are no reasons, there are no judgments, but only expressions of something—a preference, a visceral reaction, a feeling. The very notion of judgement implies a movement into myself (my reasons) and outward (accounting for the grounds for my decision or choice), suggesting that there must be some common standard or point of reference, i.e., a shared human world. That world, as we said, is just our joint efforts at paying attention and taking each other into consideration in thought and deed. This is what we try to do when we say that we are seeking the truth, trying to eliminate false-hood, or working to establish the facts. Another word for this shared effort to take responsibility for establishing common ground is "education", properly understood, which is not something that some "possess", while others do not, but something that we are always, ideally, "working on".

Learning and Knowing How to Tell the Truth

When Aristotle introduces his critique of the Platonic doctrine of ideas regarding the Idea of the Good as a guide to morals, he reflects upon his relationship to his former mentor and the latter's disciples in the Academy. Thus he begins Chap. 6 of book I of the *Nichomachean Ethics* with a confession:

> We had perhaps better consider the universal good and discuss thoroughly what is meant [*legetai*] by it, although such an inquiry is made an uphill one by the fact that the Forms have been introduced by friends of our own. Yet it would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers or lovers of wisdom; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends. (Aristotle 1966)

One might see this admission in light of an important Aristotelian distinction, one which itself can be seen as a sort of confession, given Aristotle's overall ambition of laying down guidelines for what we would today call proper scientific procedure. In a famous passage in the *Metaphysics* (1952, 1004b), he asserts that the difference between sophistry, dialectics, and philosophy rests not in their respective methods, but in the role the reasoning plays in one's life:

> [D]ialecticians and sophists appear to be philosophers; for sophistry is but apparent wisdom, and dialecticians converse about any and all affairs on the ground that being is common to all. But, evidently, they converse about all these matters because all are appropriate to philosophy. Sophistry and dialectic, indeed, revolve about the same kind of concerns as philosophy; but philosophy differs from dialectic in degree of power, and from sophistry in *kind of life*. For dialectic puts questions about matters which philosophy knows, and sophistry appears to be, but is not, philosophy. (Aristotle 1952, emphasis added)

According to Aristotle, what the sophist says instrumentally in order to give the appearance of wisdom, and the dialectician treats as an exercise, the philosopher is really trying to understand or know. The distinction Aristotle draws in this passage, and the notion of truth formulated in the earlier quote from the *Nichomachean Ethics*, can be read together, as highlighting an aspect of human thinking that seems to have been largely forgotten today: the *desire* for truth or wisdom is ultimately an attitude or orientation in one's life, a moral demand that the individual makes on himself. But here we find the paradox discussed earlier: the need to get clear on things, to understand how things really are, is something that arises in the individual precisely because she is of necessity part of the world, which, for the human being, means being a member of a greater collective, a tradition or community. Being a member of a community, one finds oneself positioned not only within that community, but also and at the same time "on the outs" with it, or aspects of it. One can very well imagine a community in which such a need cannot arise, or is stifled as soon as it shows itself. Indeed, that scenario is a recurrent theme in twentieth-century dystopian literature.[4] What seems to be occurring today is that in their search for "true facts", reliable sources of information, correct analyses, and diagnoses, not only individuals but entire communities are "on the outs", not just with other communities, but with themselves. They do not converse on affairs on the grounds that "being is common to all."

What constitutes the collective or community, then? It can be a shared theoretical position or philosophical doctrine, an ideological stance, or engagement in a given project, organization, or institution. As a proponent or representative of a certain standpoint or enterprise, the individual is faced with a difficulty. The distinction Aristotle makes between philosophy and dialectics can be understood, in modern terms, as the difference between free thinking and thinking that is

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[4]George Orwell's *Nineteen eighty-four*, as mentioned, is perhaps the most influential in this genre, making terms such as doublethink, Newspeak, thoughtcrime and Thought Police common parlance. But Koestler's (1940) *Darkness at noon* and Huxley's (1932) *Brave new world* are, of course, also important representatives of this genre.

characterized by its adoption of, or submission to, the collective standards, evaluations, norms, methods, and vocabulary of a given community of thought. This does not mean that in order to develop and maintain intellectual integrity, one must distance oneself from one's family, teachers, friends, employers, or colleagues. It might very well be the case that after long and hard thinking, one is all the more resolute in a common point of view. What is at issue here is something else: the attitude one has to one's own stance or point of view, or the relationship between a thinking person and her thoughts.

Not so very long ago, the academic ideal was to strive toward free thought, in contrast to "bourgeois thought", in a respect resembling the distinction drawn above. Naturally, this is not to say that all or even most academics ever realized this ideal, or even reflected upon it. To the contrary, some of the most eloquent defenses of that ideal were formulated as complaints about its erosion or neglect. But the attacks on dogmatism, scholasticism or bourgeois thinking were articulated on the basis of the assumption that the ideal itself was a shared ideal, if only implicitly and however poorly heeded. As recently as the turn of the twentieth century, the Swedish philosopher Hans Larsson wrote:

> Because of Socrates' struggle against wrong opinions, we easily forget his struggle against true ones. An opinion that is simply correct, which one has not understood and come to one one's own, is, for the friends of wisdom, nothing; even a correct opinion that leads to just action; without insight, on the basis of habit or authority, to act or think rightly, this was in the eyes of Socrates and Plato no virtue. Academic life begins, historically speaking, precisely when true opinion is set aside in favor not only of genuine knowledge, but also in favor of the free search for truth. (Larsson 1921, my translation)

In Larsson's view, free thought, at least as much as correct thought, *is* an ideal toward which we ought to strive. Larsson did not mean that academic training guarantees that graduates are freer from misconceptions or delusions than the populace at large, but that they, as learned men, ought to *strive* to be. Academic studies, according to Larsson, *oblige* one to enter adult life with more deeply considered reflections than one had before. Larsson's idea of academic freedom is this: when one is allowed and allows oneself to think freely, it is ultimately in order to be able to think rightly. It is not so simple a thing as to be achieved merely through legislation. Academic freedom is an obligation in the first instance: freedom of thought entails an obligation to take personal responsibility for one's ideas, opinions, and habits of mind.

In other words, academic freedom is not in the first instance to be understood as applying to the results of one's thinking, but rather to one's approach and attitude *toward* thinking. The *desire* to think freely entails that one also *desires* to think rightly, not for conceptual or psychological reasons, but for moral ones. The desire to think whatever one likes with no restrictions is the desire toward irrationality and illiberality, since there is no limit to what one can choose to think, and without the possibility of reference to an arbiter beyond one's own inclination or preference, the arbiter of final resort is force. Again, it might very well be the case that, having thought something through, the opinion one arrives at is very much in harmony with, or even identical to, what everyone else says. But that has to do with where

one has arrived, not how one arrived there, which is what is at stake here. Larsson rails against the disposition to "think freely" tout simple, without any regard for where that thought is leading: "a bourgeois liberalism that has lost, or still not matured to, a warm sensitivity to things and to what is right" (Larsson 1921, p. 55).

There are, however, also many who are disposed toward thinking rightly without thinking freely. In this respect, the desire to think rightly in Larsson's sense (which is to say, freely), and social, political, ideological, and professional norms and standards, on the other, may well stand in conflict with one another. The individual who tries his best to think rightly, regardless of the opinions and convictions of his community, thus bestows upon himself the *right* to think for himself (for who else can bestow that right upon him?). Giving oneself the right to think things through for oneself is, I take it, what Larsson is aiming at in his distinction between the results of one's thinking and the thinking itself. Clearly, demanding that thinking itself be "right" or "correct" according to some set of preestablished norms, values, or conventions can only lead to restricted thought, the opposite of a way of thinking that does not assume at the outset what sorts of results and consequences are "good", "desirable", "acceptable", or "useful".

Consider now education toward enlightened thought in the broad sense, as sketched above, and our contemporary notions about higher education. One may reasonably question whether education today can be free in anything but the "bourgeois liberal" sense that Larsson contrasts with what he calls "academic" or "scientific" thinking (Larsson 1921, p. 53). The university today is largely characterized by its "bourgeois" social and economic functions, the point of which is to be useful for society (as if we already knew, in advance of any serious reflection, what we need and who, as a society, we are or want to be). Teaching is to be conducted in and through de facto institutions developed in accordance with what is deemed progress and utility from the perspective of society as it is, not as it might or even should be. If the university is to be something other than a subcontractor for agendas set by political and economic elites, then we must acknowledge that the demands we make for academic freedom come with a responsibility to seek actively to bring as many as possible into the community of truth-seeking and truth-telling, not as some preexisting institution to which we belong and into which we invite others to partake (i.e., to have a share in what we, as it were, "have" in our possession), but to loosen the bonds that we impose on our own thinking, for fear of where it might lead. If we who are given the task of propagating truth, not only through what we arrive at, but first and foremost, by way of example, how to get there, by showing what the unfettered and unafraid search for answers looks like, are perceived by those on the "outside" as faithful functionaries in the Ministry of Truth, we might need to ask ourselves why. For the point of Orwell's novel is that "doublethink" and "Newspeak" are unnatural. They require great effort and control on the part of the Party to achieve. If we find ourselves today in an epistemic atmosphere of doublethink, it might well be because we have had a part in creating it. And in that case, the best way to oppose it will not be to buttress the wall dividing "the experts" from "the laymen", "the educated" from the "ignorant", those "in the know" and those who are "out of touch", but to tear it down.

That would mean in part foregoing some of the privilege of our status as professionals and experts, but it might also enhance our credibility as moral and epistemic agents. In any case, the entitlements of the bureaucrats in the Ministries in *1984*, all of them members of the Outer Party, were not much more than the luxury of being just a step above the poverty, filth, and disease that plagued the proles; the proles, however, were not as constrained in their thought or actions, since they had no political significance. Freedom of thought is only dangerous where thought has the potential to become intelligent and realized in action, i.e., effective. If academic faculty were as liberally minded as we take ourselves to be, we would welcome the opportunity to enhance and expand our potential for genuinely free thought, which would mean recognizing our own assumptions and commitments as being as much a part of our epistemic frameworks and social functions as the prejudices and loyalties are for those outside the seminar rooms and lacking academic credentials, those who are "without education" in both senses. We would welcome controversy and disputation, eschew claims to expertise on moral matters, dismiss "excellence"-initiatives as an organized hindrance to free intellectual exchange, acknowledge how "selectivity" preserves and reinforces preexisting social and class divisions, and admit to ourselves that working in the fields of human understanding does not make us denizens of a higher sphere of moral and intellectual refinement. Such an attitude does not require "research", but it does take effort. It means perhaps that we should concern ourselves less with the production and dissemination of facts, and more with thinking.[5]

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[5]Portions of this paper have been adapted from material published in other contexts. In particular, elements of the section on Ortega have appeared in slightly different form in Rider (2017a, b), respectively. The section on Aristotle and Hans Larsson contains a modified version of a few passages in Rider (2006).

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'The Solution to Poor Opinions Is More Opinions': Peircean Pragmatist Tactics for the Epistemic Long Game

Catherine Legg

Introduction

Certain recent developments in mendacious manipulation of public discourse seem horrifying to the academic mind. The term *post-truth* newly describes a climate where, as defined by (no less than) the Oxford Dictionary, 'objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (OED 2016). In such a context, strong opinion is considered to be worth more than facts, precisely due to its (apparent) strength. Allegedly, humanity is experiencing, 'a crash in the value of truth, comparable to the collapse of a currency or a stock' (D'Ancona 2017).

Should we panic at having reached a new epistemic low in human history? Is truth disappearing from human culture and public life, never to return? And if so, what should we do about it? In this paper, I will first suggest that these are long-standing tendencies in human history, so there is no need to panic at the present time. Next, I will note that we might expect aid with these problems from philosophers, given their self-professed love of wisdom (or as it is more often put these days, 'critical thinking'). The relevant branch of philosophy would seem to be *epistemology*, which sets itself the task of studying *belief*, *truth* and *knowledge*. But I shall argue that it is difficult to 'make ends meet' between mainstream epistemology and the raft of problems falling under the heading 'post-truth', so such problems constitute a profound philosophical challenge to business as usual in that discipline.

By contrast, I argue that one epistemology is able to help us understand these troubling developments: the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Peirce. Unlike epistemologies in the analytic philosophical tradition, which largely organize around the study of *knowledge,* understood as some kind of *idealized end point* of

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human thought, Peirce's epistemology focusses on *inquiry*, understood as the *process* of 'fixing belief'. This focus enables useful questions to be raised, such as: How can we make that process more effective? Peirce's famous paper 'The Fixation of Belief' is directed at precisely this question. It presents a taxonomy of four methods for fixing belief: *tenacity*, *authority*, a priori *reasoning* and *science*. In the last of these, the four methods culminate in a definition of truth in terms of the specific actions of a 'community of inquiry', which gives the definition real practical heft. In the order stated, this taxonomy of methods charts an evolutionary arc through human thought, from the least to the most logically sophisticated and effective method of eliminating doubt. Peirce does note, however, that at any given point in time all four methods can be observed in practice, as they also identify basic human personality types. He also warns that our general culture has a tendency to slip backwards from time to time in its evolutionary development. These claims will be further explored in ways that throw light on our current politico-intellectual climate.

Finally, I will draw on Peirce's philosophy to suggest certain 'pragmatic' strategies (and corresponding responsibilities on the part of us educators) for weathering the 'epistemic storms' that Western culture would currently appear to be experiencing. For not just presenting how things *are*, but suggesting what we can and should *do* about them—is the distinguishing goal of pragmatist philosophy.

A New 'Post-truth Regime'?

The term *post-truth* was apparently first coined in 1992 in discussion by Steve Tesich in the *Nation* of reactions to political scandals such as Watergate and Iran-Contra by the American people. He writes:

> All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary […] In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world.

Here, Tesich signals a shift in political distortion of the truth, from the traditional active *suppression* of important information by political leaders to apparent problems in *accepting* important information in ordinary people. (As such it offers an interesting challenge to the American pragmatist philosophy that informs this paper, insofar as its Deweyan strand places great faith in democratic processes emerging naturally in all problem-solving contexts. But we shall see that the Peircean strand of American pragmatism provides a considerably more complex analysis of 'group inference'.)

However, it is just in the past 2–3 years that discussion of, and concern with, the post-truth concept has exploded. In 2015, media and politics scholar Jayson Harsin influentially launched the term *regime of post-truth* to encompass many aspects of contemporary politics. Harsin deliberately chose the term 'regime' to signal that this epistemic turn is newly *systematic*, unlike past lying such as Watergate, however

egregious and far-reaching its impact may have been. This systematicity has a number of dimensions. Harsin points to ways in which politically motivated agents now use cognitive science, micro-targeting and other sophisticated manipulations (often drawing on Big Data) to influence the emotions and motivations of ordinary people, and to coarsen and thereby control public debate and opinion. It seems that to the extent to which we now live in an attention economy, the full force of human acquisitive ingenuity has been unleashed on 'hacking' this new source of value, to the point where, as Matthew Crawford has astutely observed, one is assailed by advertisements even when putting one's shoes in the crate to go through an airport scanner, and at slot machine manufacturing conferences experts boast of being able to manipulate their users to 'play to extinction' (Crawford 2016).

The regime also manifests remarkably in a deliberate, continued *repetition of talking points* even when they have been clearly rebutted by easily verifiable facts. Consumers of the talking points are often even aware that these rebuttals exist, but don't seem to care. The government of US President Donald Trump has engaged particularly blatantly in such behaviour; infamously, Trump's inauguration crowd was described by White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer as 'the largest audience ever to witness an inauguration' in the entire world, and when it was put to the White House that President Barack Obama's crowd was far larger (a question easily resolvable by inspecting photos of both events) staffer Kellyanne Conway notoriously remarked that the Press Secretary didn't lie but merely offered 'alternative facts'. Astoundingly, according to the respected fact-checking website Politi-Fact (http://www.politifact.com), fully 69% of Trump's public statements are 'Mostly False', 'False' or 'Pants on Fire'.

To many professional intellectuals, such behaviour seems maddeningly immoral. Philosopher A. C. Grayling has warned of the 'corruption of intellectual integrity' and damage to 'the whole fabric of democracy' inherent in such developments. He blames growing economic inequality for inflaming many people's anger to the point where they care little for reasoned argument. He also blames the rise of social media for making it *too easy to publish*, so that 'a few claims on Twitter can have the same credibility as a library full of research' (Coughlan 2017), and the role of society-wide trusted authorities to distinguish between truth and lies dwindles to the point where the authorities themselves become fewer. Paradoxically, at the same time, new social media enable people to much more aggressively *filter* what they consume, to the point where they avoid encountering any viewpoints or arguments that contradict their own. This has effectively produced a slew of parallel media ecosystems, organized around a landscape of incompatible naive opinions. Finally, the information overload created by the vastness of the system (even within a particular preferred ideological position) encourages a degraded forcing of attention in so-called 'clickbait' headlines on any number of highly popular websites such as Buzzfeed, many of which are eye-wateringly preposterous. As noted above, these headlines often grab attention by playing on people's emotions in vivid ways (regarding which, new 'dark arts' are developing in certain professional contexts).

Although the ivory tower remains (in my opinion) relatively sheltered from the regime, it has nonetheless been felt there in ominous ways. More and more 'junk'

publications are appearing in fraudulent journals and conferences that masquerade as 'genuinely academic' (Culley 2017)—more significantly, the very line between genuinely academic and junk publications seems to need renewed definition and defence. The past 5 years or so has seen an alarming rise in flagrant bullying of academics who work on politically and ethically sensitive issues (such as gender and race) spilling across the social media interfaces which many academics have been encouraged by their institutions (and themselves sought) to cultivate.[1] Cuts to university-funding, combined with newly confident metrics of control by many governments of how the remaining money is spent in order to target so-called 'outcomes', have also produced a number of effects that are arguably demoralizing for the research profession. A 'crisis of peer review' is developing as the burdens of the refereeing gift economy become unmanageable for ever more time-poor academics. In the empirical sciences, there is a 'reproducibility crisis' as no one has the time merely to repeat another researcher's experiments, and it is career suicide to publish 'negative results'. As university-funding for pure research is undermined, industry-sponsored research moves in, which is increasingly biasing results in key areas such as biomedical research (Edmond 2008), and seeking to block government action in, for instance, public health initiatives and climate change remediation.

Meanwhile, the academy's very notion of 'expert' opinion seems to be increasingly treated with distrust and disdain by wider society. A key leader of Britain's recent campaign to leave the European Union (Justice Secretary Michael Gove) famously declared, 'people in this country have had enough of experts!' (Mance 2016). This comment was viewed by many not as a scandal but rather as a trenchant observation. As D'Ancona (2017, p. 2) writes, 'The notion of science as a conspiracy rather than a world-changing field of inquiry used to be confined to cranks. No longer. It seems to me intolerable that this should be so'.

It is worth considering that at least some of the apparent decay in academic mores described above may have been developing for some time. For instance, back in 1996, philosopher Susan Haack diagnosed a growing 'preposterism' in our profession whereby 'incentives and rewards encourage people to choose trivial issues where results are more easily obtained, to disguise rather than tackle problems with their chosen approach, to go for the flashy, the fashionable, and the impressively obscure over the deep, the difficult and the painfully clear', and where, 'the effective availability of the best and most significant work is hindered rather than enabled by journals and conferences bloated with the trivial, the faddy, and the carelessly or deliberately unclear', and, 'mutual scrutiny is impeded by fad, fashion,

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[1]In 2016, Professor George Yancy of Emory University received a torrent of hate mail for comments he made in his research area of philosophy of race: https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/04/18/the-perils-of-being-a-black-philosopher/. A graduate student instructor at Marquette University was targeted for abuse by a professor in her own institution for remarks in the classroom concerning sexual orientation, resulting in her personal details, such as her home address, being made public: http://dailynous.com/2017/05/05/judge-upholds-marquettes-suspension-prof-smeared-philosophy-phd-student/

obfuscation, and fear of offending the influential'. (Haack, pp. 191–192). 15 years later, Haack reprised this discussion, concluding that the situation had become even worse. In her estimation, scholars pursuing research with ethical conduct appropriate to the task are now likely to find themselves seriously at odds with their employer (Haack 2012). And criticisms can be found going much further back than that (e.g. Anderson 1935).

Are These Developments Unprecedented?

All of this is of course deeply worrying to me as a philosopher and a professional educator, and I believe that we should treat these problems with the utmost seriousness. In order to do this, we first need to understand them clearly. In this regard, I think it's worth noting the way in which the academic-theoretical mind is geared for criticism, perfectionism. In my view, this makes us prone to a particular cognitive bias towards the view that 'the sky is falling' and things of great value are about to be ruined irrevocably. Yet is this the first time in human history that a great many ordinary people have shown flagrant disregard for evidence or the opinions of thinking people? It is very sobering to examine the relationship between power and truth in the ancient world, which was considerably less constrained by the rule of law than contemporary Western society (for all the latter's failings). For instance, a number of vignettes in the Stoic philosophy of Epictetus instruct the reader how to approach a tyrant who cares for no higher value than imposing his own will. Such an encounter can turn deadly at any moment for the independent thinker, yet Epictetus argues that this does not leave the philosopher with no choices:

> […] it is a man's own opinions which disturb him: for when the tyrant says to a man, "I will chain your leg," he who values his leg says, "Do not; have pity:" but he who values his own will says, "If it appears more advantageous to you, chain it." Do you not care? I do not care. I will show you that I am master. You cannot do that. Zeus has set me free: do you think that he intended to allow his own son to be enslaved? But you are master of my carcass: take it […] (Epictetus 1890, 1.19)

More recent examples of power abusing truth (or the search for it) abound: the medieval Catholic Church's burning of 'heretics'; the behaviour of Italian city rulers as described by Machiavelli in *The Prince*; the fascism of Hitler; the communism of Stalin and Mao. Therefore, we will not panic, but we will nevertheless begin to look for solutions that are continuous with the past, whilst acknowledging that today's technologically enhanced epistemic situation offers some new twists.

Why Mainstream Epistemology Arguably Cannot Help Us

Consider the first few lines of the entry 'Epistemology' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, a deeply respected source that arguably plays a canonizing role in current mainstream philosophy:

> Defined narrowly, epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. As the study of knowledge, epistemology is concerned with the following questions: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits? As the study of justified belief, epistemology aims to answer questions such as: How we are to understand the concept of justification? What makes justified beliefs justified? Is justification internal or external to one's own mind? (Steup 2005)

What guidance can we draw from the discipline thus defined for dealing with a 'post-truth regime'? The first part of the definition concerns *knowledge*. It assigns epistemology the task of defining knowledge, and assumes that this definition must take the form of *necessary and sufficient conditions* (for something being knowledge). So we see a significant literature in mainstream epistemology discussing particular candidate sets of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge, and their counterexamples. A particularly thoroughly explored candidate is that something is knowledge if it is a *belief*, and *true* and *justified*. But it is widely discussed that this definition is subject to counterexample (Gettier 1963). For instance, if one is driving along the highway and sees some barns in a field (which are in fact cardboard replicas of barns), and on that basis concludes that there are barns in the field (which there in fact are, but not positioned where one can see them), such a belief is both true and justified, but we would not want to call it *knowledge* (Goldman 1976).

But why is it *useful* for philosophers to seek necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge? Presumably in order to enable human beings to *recognize* instances of knowledge when we manage to produce them (and the debate's structure presupposes without argument that this recognition will be essentially the same whether it concerns fake/real barns or, say, new particles in quantum physics, or a politician's true intentions). But how do we *produce* instances of knowledge? Little explicit guidance is given on this. One might argue that the second part of the definition, concerning *justification*, addresses this. Justification is often understood broadly as any process of supporting belief with reasoned arguments and evidence. Yet we have seen that one of the post-truth regime's most characteristic features is that talking points continue to be repeated after reasoned arguments and evidence have been presented against them, and are nonetheless avidly embraced. Against this behaviour, studies of rational justification would appear to be of little help.

It's also worth noting that this disciplinary definition makes no mention of *people*. Although knowledge is discussed, *knowers* are not—except right at the end of the quote, where a (single) 'mind' is invoked. This disembodiment and methodological individualism in epistemology is a legacy of modern (i.e. post-Cartesian) philosophy, and it points to further ways in which epistemology so

characterized cannot help us to confront the current post-truth regime. The regime's savvy manipulation of people's emotions for epistemic victory in the public arena lies outside the purview of this disciplinary definition because the definition says nothing about emotions, and because it says nothing about the public arena. One dimension of human emotion which it would be particularly useful to consider epistemologically in the light of the post-truth regime is human *motivation*, since one of the regime's salient features is that people no longer seem to *care* about getting things right. Why do they not care about something that we intellectuals consider to be so important? Is there anything that could be done to encourage them to care? And why should we attempt to change this, exactly?

By contrast to this mainstream characterization of epistemology, then, we need to know more than just what knowledge *is*. We also need guidance on how to find and keep it, how to call out its many pretenders, and on how to encourage people who are currently neglectful to care about it. In short, as one public commentator has quipped: What is the opposite of post-truth? It's not as simple as 'the facts' (Poole 2017).

Peirce's Epistemology

We will see that, by contrast, Peirce's characterization of truth and knowledge is *public*, and it addresses the *motivational* side of epistemology and the lived context of truth-seeking.

Developing his ideas shortly after Darwin's landmark *Origin of Species*, Peirce pursued a consciously naturalistic approach to epistemology, examining truth-seeking's use in the life of human beings as biological organisms making their way in a complex and often dangerous world. What understandings might flow from that? First, Peirce suggested certain definitions of *belief* and *doubt*. Peirce defines belief as *habit*. Belief is a settled state where one knows how to act in a given respect. For instance, if one believes that one's car is in good working order, then one will reliably get in and turn the key in order to go somewhere. This settled state feels comfortable to the human organism. Peirce then defines doubt as *missing, or disrupted habit*. This is an unsettled state in which one no longer knows how to act in a given respect. This state is intrinsically irritating to human beings, and we naturally (have evolved to) seek to resolve this mental irritation, just as we naturally scratch our physical itches. In this way, the effect of doubt on us is more immediate than that of belief.

These definitions lead Peirce to distinguish two importantly different kinds of doubt. The first Peirce calls *genuine or 'living' doubt*. This can be recognized in that it actually disrupts action. An example is a sudden realization that I cannot remember locking my car before leaving it parked in the street, where the associated concern that my car might be stolen will not leave me in peace until I go and check. The second kind of doubt Peirce calls *pretend or 'paper' doubt*. This doubt does not actually disrupt action. Examples include classical scenarios of 'extreme'

Cartesian scepticism, for instance: 'Could there be an evil demon producing every one of my "experiences" for me?'; 'Could the entire world have been created only 5 min ago, including all of my memories?' If the entire world *were* created only 5 min ago, along with all my memories, what would I do differently? This is not clear. Peirce advises that concerning oneself too much with such questions, insofar as one is not moved to act on them in any way, is actually intellectually corrosive.

This analysis leads Peirce to reject a certain foundationalism—which he diagnoses as Cartesian—that has been highly influential in mainstream philosophy. Thus Moritz Schlick, although a member of the positivist Vienna Circle and in that sense an avowed naturalist, famously wrote:

> All important attempts at establishing a theory of knowledge grow out of the problem concerning the certainty of human knowledge. And this problem in turn originates in the wish for absolute certainty. (Schlick 1934, p. 207)

Peirce claims that this 'quest for certainty' is an antinaturalistic and damaging illusion, due to a peculiar feature of truth. Although often greatly desired, truth is *opaque* to us in that we can never know for sure that we have it, and there is no criterion by which we can infallibly recognize it. For our methods of inquiry themselves are part of what we must correct as inquiry develops. Putting one's belief-deriving method into the epistemological frame along with one's beliefs has already been noted as characteristic of pragmatist epistemology. In my view, it is surprising that other epistemologies have not attended to this matter as it is obvious in our history that, as Peirce puts it, 'each chief step in science has been a lesson in logic' (Peirce 1877, p. 1).

If truth is opaque, then we cannot take it as an explicit goal. So what should we search for? What motivates us to inquire? Merely this: avoiding the intrinsic irritation of doubt. Peirce claims, 'The most that can be maintained is, that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true. But we think each one of our beliefs to be true, and, indeed, it is mere tautology to say so'. (Peirce 1877, p. 3). Peirce calls this goal the 'settlement of opinion', or (as his paper title says) '*the fixation of belief*'. He notes that this process is what we must call *inquiry*, for want of other options, although in some cases this designation is 'not very apt'. So how *do* we fix our beliefs (as we in fact do, every day)? Peirce claims that there are four basic methods.

The first is the *method of tenacity*. Here, you personally decide what you want to believe. You dwell on and 'constantly reiterate' to yourself that belief, and if anyone offers reasoned argument or evidence against it, you refuse to consider it. We may not like to admit it, but this method is used by all of us in many real-life situations. Peirce gives an example that is still strikingly relevant today, concerning *free-trade* (i.e. globalization):

> I remember once being entreated not to read a certain newspaper lest it might change my opinion upon free-trade […]You might […] if you read this paper, be led to believe in protection. But you admit that free-trade is the true doctrine; and you do not wish to believe what is not true. (Peirce 1877, p. 7)

The method has significant advantages in situations where decisiveness is wanted. If you are a soldier serving in Iraq, for instance, then to decide never to question the rightness of your country's declaring war on Iraq might literally keep you alive. Yet the method also creates problems, since human beings are social creatures with a common 'form of life', so that we naturally influence each other's beliefs. So, Peirce claims, this method will not eliminate all your doubt unless there is something wrong with you:

> The man who adopts [the method] will find that other men think differently from him, and it will be apt to occur to him, in some saner moment, that their opinions are quite as good as his own, and this will shake his confidence in his belief. This conception, that another man's thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one's own, is a distinctly new step, and a highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed, without danger of destroying the human species. Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other's opinions; so that the problem becomes how to fix belief, not in the individual merely, but in the community. (Peirce 1877, p. 7)

In short, the method of tenacity is internally unstable and leads on naturally to the next method.

The second method is *the method of authority*. Here, you get some group of people to fix your belief for you. Human history has not lacked examples of organizations willing to assume such a role, from churches, to political parties, to professional guilds. In order to enforce the preferred beliefs, such institutions must take certain steps. They will 'reiterate them perpetually, and teach them to the young; having at the same time power to prevent contrary doctrines from being taught, advocated, or expressed' (Peirce 1877, p. 8). So, for instance, in the medieval period, the Christian Bible served across Western Europe as an ultimate authority for belief, and, in 1277, the Bishop of Paris, incensed by philosophical discussions taking place in the University of Paris, banned 217 propositions![2]

Peirce notes that this method has 'immeasurable mental and moral superiority' over the previous one, and consequently it produces a marvellous stability in society. Yet it too has serious problems. As a method of 'fixing belief' so that people are not disturbed by doubt's intrinsic irritation, it *never quite lasts*. No matter how powerfully a belief system is enforced, there will always be some people who notice a certain randomness in the way that the intellectual leaders have formed the group's beliefs, and this raises genuine doubt in their minds concerning those beliefs:

> […] in the most priest-ridden states some individuals will be found who are raised above that condition. These men possess a wider sort of social feeling; they see that men in other countries and in other ages have held to very different doctrines from those which they themselves have been brought up to believe; and they cannot help seeing that it is the mere accident of their having been taught as they have […] that has caused them to believe as they do […] Nor can their candour resist the reflection that there is no reason to rate their

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[2]These included, *That the absolutely impossible cannot be done by God*, *That the world is eternal* [i.e. not created as the Bible says], and *That the only wise men of the world are philosophers*(!).

own views at a higher value than those of other nations and other centuries; thus giving rise
to doubts in their minds. (Peirce 1877, p. 8)

In short, the method of authority is internally unstable and leads on naturally to the
next method.

The third method is the a priori *method*, whereby the kinds of people who
naturally resist having their opinions fixed arbitrarily by institutions will seek a
'new method of settling opinions must be adopted, that shall not only produce an
impulse to believe, but shall also decide what proposition it is which is to be
believed' (Peirce 1877, p. 9). Through discussion, such people decide on the beliefs
that seem to them most 'agreeable to reason'. Of course, this method has been very
popular with philosophers. And, once again, it is greatly intellectually superior to
what went before, since for the first time reasoning is employed in deciding what to
believe. Yet Peirce claims that this is actually the worst method of all for fixing
belief! For it exposes our beliefs to the vagaries of individual taste and fashion,
making them fluctuate wildly:

metaphysicians have never come to any fixed agreement, but the pendulum has swung
backward and forward between a more material and a more spiritual philosophy, from the
earliest times to the latest […]. (Peirce 1877, p. 9)

This method's methodological individualism also means that each individual's false
assumptions and epistemic blind spots are never corrected. So if we perform a
scientific induction over this method, we are forced to conclude that it really doesn't
work.

Finally, we come to the method that Peirce prefers—the *method of science*.
Peirce here understands 'science' extremely broadly. He explains the method as a
public investigation (open to any interested parties) that is organized around a
particular hypothesis:

Its fundamental hypothesis […] There are Real things, whose characters are entirely
independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular
laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by
taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really
and truly are; and any [person], if he have sufficient experience and he reason enough about
it, will be led to the one True conclusion. (Peirce 1877, p. 11)

Peirce claims that only in this method does a full-blooded concept of truth first
emerge, since only under this method is there a distinction between a 'right' and
'wrong' way of inquiring:

This is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and a
wrong way. If I adopt the method of tenacity, and shut myself out from all influences,
whatever I think necessary to doing this, is necessary according to that method. So with the
method of authority: the state may try to put down heresy by means which, from a scientific
point of view, seem very ill-calculated to accomplish its purposes; but the only test *on that
method* is what the state thinks […] So with the a priori method. The very essence of it is to
think as one is inclined to think […] But with the scientific method […]the test of whether I
am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but,

on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method. Hence it is that bad reasoning as well as good reasoning is possible […]. (Peirce 1877, p. 11)

Implicit here is the reason why Peirce thinks the method of science is superior to all the others at fixing belief: only in this method does the reappearance of doubt not produce a breakdown in the method itself, but rather is folded back into the method and used as fuel for self-correction.

We've seen that only the method of science allows an object entirely independent of human thought, which it is appropriate to call *reality*, to determine what our beliefs should be. But that reality cannot be approached directly since, as noted, truth is opaque to us. So how is Peirce, as a naturalist pragmatist epistemologist who wants to locate his theory of inquiry in human lived context, to give an account of such an opaque concept? Ingeniously, he 'triangulates' truth via the community of inquiry, writing famously in his paper 'How to Make our Ideas Clear' that, 'the opinion that would be agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth' (Peirce 1931–1958). This definition of truth is often summarized in the slogan: Truth is the *end of inquiry*. It's important to note that this is not 'end' in the sense of finish: some utopian future time where all questions are settled. It is 'end' in the teleological sense of aim or goal (Misak 2004, 2008).

Meanwhile, a commitment to fallibilism is 'operationalized' in the way Peirce defines the community of inquiry as containing indefinitely many inquirers and stretching across indefinite time. This infinite scope has been criticized as an idealization that renders truth unattainable, and engages in excessive optimism (how do we know there will be such a thing?) (see for instance Russell 1939; Rorty 1995). Yet every argument that Peirce can never know that there is an end of inquiry is equally an argument that the sceptic can never know that there isn't. We just don't know. That is the human condition. It is worth noting how the infinite framework elegantly allows that no matter how wide a consensus exists on a given belief, it is always possible that another inquirer will come along, at a later time, and manage to overturn it. Thus, we might say that in Peirce's epistemology: *The solution to poor opinions is more opinions* (and, given truth's opacity, there can be no other solution).

I shall now argue that this philosophy, with its teleological arc, long horizon and rare combination of strong realism and contrite fallibilism, points towards ways that we might weather the epistemic storms of our current sociopolitical regime, and perhaps even come to see them as inevitable in our intellectual and political development.

Analysis of the Post-truth Regime

The first thing to note is that under the Peircean epistemology, labelling a set of human behaviours 'post-truth' doesn't make much sense. As the postulated end of inquiry, truth comes 'post-' everything else in human discourse. Yet, there is much in Peirce's framework that we can make use of to discuss our current regime.

We saw that one characteristic (and disturbing) phenomenon of the regime is a repetition of talking points that seems immune to counter-evidence or logical argument. In at least some respects, this fits squarely with Peirce's method of tenacity. We saw Peirce noting that a key part of practicing this method is reiterating to oneself the beliefs one wishes to hold. (At this point, it might be interesting to ask *why* the talking points need to be repeated over and over. It seems as though a concerted effort is required to block out something further that exists in oneself, such as some potential for rational reflection perhaps.) Yet the fit between these practices of repeating talking points and Peirce's method of tenacity is not quite exact, because the practices seem to be to some degree *communal*, forming public crowds that frequently behave like mobs (Ronson 2015). In its group character, then, the behaviour seems to fall under the method of authority. And with respect to this method also, we saw Peirce noting that repetition of the belief (this time by relevant institutions) was an important feature. Yet, at the same time, the behaviour lacks much of the *stability* in belief for which Peirce praised the method of authority —noting that 'except the geological epochs, there are no periods of time so vast as those which are measured by some of [the] organized faiths' (Peirce 1877, p. 9). In its ever-shifting kaleidoscope quality, whereby the current media landscape seems comprised of countless incompatible perspectives at war with one another, the current regime also seems to resemble Peirce's a priori method, in its giving over of our beliefs to taste, fashion and a spurious consistency largely untried by real experience with the beliefs' objects.

What all of these methods (and, correspondingly, our current regime) lack is humble *deference* to an object that is external to human opinion—deference that naturally leads one to seek further information about that object before behaving as if one has certainty about it. Such arrogant assumed certainty is a dismaying feature of our current regime. In that sense, our current situation, in its heady mix of Peirce's first three methods, might be best described as a degeneration to a *pre-truth* scenario. It's worth noting again that this state of affairs is something that mainstream epistemology cannot see. With its abstracted, non-human perspective granting its concept of knowledge a spurious universality, it cannot see that it takes a great deal of philosophical work, and certain social structures, to even get onto the page of developing a concept of truth, and so beginning to inquire. Philosophers such as Brandom and Habermas have done much useful work lately in charting this 'normative pragmatics' underlying our assertions of truth. But Peirce did valuable work much earlier in showing that there are 'assumptions involved in the logical question' (Peirce 1877, p. 5).

Analysis of Ourselves

By 'ourselves' here I mean those of us concerned enough about the current regime to write and read papers about it, such as this esteemed volume. Many Western intellectuals proudly self-conceive as living in a 'scientific age'. But do we practice

the method of science, as Peirce described it? I shall now make some suggestions—offered in the spirit of Peircean fallibilism—about some ways in which we may currently fall short.

(1) We have a strong tendency to treat the misbehaviour of *governments* as a harbinger of epistemic doom. In this respect, we arguably remain trapped in the authoritarian modes of thinking that Peirce identified with the medieval age, although modernity is increasingly quickening around us in information-sharing practices that transgress national and institutional boundaries in order to deliver mutual aid (Shirky 2009). The epistemic space is ours by professional designation, if not always in practice. How much are we willing to communicate with one another across the boundaries of powerful institutions and genuinely inquire together, in order to claim that space and show epistemic 'tyrants', by way of example, that there is another path to fix belief?

(2) Conversely, we have a strong tendency to treat ourselves as the epistemic saviours of the rest of humanity, in the sense of imagining that ordinary people should simply listen to our expertise, and use it, for their own good. In this respect, we arguably risk practicing the method of authority again—this time with ourselves at the head of belief-fixing institutions. Here, it would be helpful to take an honest look at our own guild behaviour and careerism. (Consider our systems of ranking ourselves, for instance.)

(3) We don't want to engage with 'those people', with their 'deplorable' views. But don't we believe in rational argument?

Weathering the Epistemic Storm

The post-truth regime challenges us academics to return to the vital question: Why do we care about truth? (Even: *do* we care about truth? And we need to be rigorously honest here.) Today's academics, in their highly specialized institutional setting with its relative freedom to write and think, also exist in a specialized community with its own assumptions. We have embraced this institutional isolation extremely uncritically (for an excellent recent critique, see Frodeman and Briggle 2016). Of course, who doesn't want as much paid time as possible to do very important work? But in so doing, we have created an environment where we never have to genuinely engage with the many ordinary people who, it would appear, have been developing genuine ('living') doubts on a number of the beliefs that we have been taking for granted (liberalism being one key example, the value of a University education being another).

If we are regressing to something of a 'pre-truth regime' in the West—and I have given some reasons to suppose that we are—we might like to look correspondingly backwards in philosophical history for advice. I believe that there are some useful resources for our current discussion in Plato. Plato came to maturity in a world that was (for obvious reasons) 'pre-Academic'. Charles Griswold has offered useful

insights into what Plato might have to teach us today in a discussion of Plato's use of *dialogue* in his philosophy, a choice that Griswold argues was not merely ornamental, but epistemological. The reason, he suggests, is that Plato himself was confronting a pre-truth regime, against which discursive reasoning (i.e. non-dialectical philosophy) is largely ineffective. In such a context, he notes:

> The real debate is not between the proponents of dialectic and those of nondialectical epistemology, but between the dialecticians and critics of philosophizing, or "reason-giving" as such. (Griswold 1988, p. 151)

Griswold's important insight is that the argument between reason-giving as such and its enemies cannot be settled nondialectically. He claims, '[i]t is not possible to successfully attack *or* defend philosophy directly' (Griswold 1988, p. 154), since to argue against philosophy is already unavoidably to engage in it. (Rorty 1982, has put the same point, but with respect to attacking rather than defending philosophy, by claiming that 'edifying' philosophers such as himself have no *view*.)

This essential dialectic character means that the defence of philosophy *cannot be successfully constructed in the absence of fundamental objections to philosophy* (Griswold 1988, p. 156). Here, epistemologists have to back away from disputes between *positions*, which beg the question emptily in favour of doing philosophy, since only a philosopher can frame a position, to disputes between *persons*, which do not so beg the question, since philosophy is something that persons may or may not choose to engage in. Griswold claims that such conversations between persons who do and persons who do not choose to engage in philosophy are always occasional, never conclusive, never ending. Yet they are vital. Thus '[t]he origination of philosophy itself out of the medium of opinion is the most comprehensive theme in Plato's dialogues' (Griswold 1988, p. 153). Philosophical rhetoric is *pedagogical* in its original etymology of 'leading the soul'. We've seen how, in our current regime, the repetition of the talking points is somewhat obsessive, as if something else is being prevented from happening. Perhaps, then, a useful service for a twenty-first century epistemologist might consist in leading souls away from such repetition. (And this is surely just one of many possible approaches.)

We have seen that in this human life, truth is unavoidably opaque to us. We cannot prove that it even exists—particularly to those profiting by (or ensnared in) a pre-truth regime. But, Griswold notes, we can *learn ourselves*, and we can *help and encourage others to learn*. The *deed* of learning is the ultimate proof that truth exists. In this way, philosophical discourse exhibits irony—but not of the easily dismissive Rortyan kind. This paper has been written in the pragmatist belief that in order to confront the current regime, we professional thinkers and writers would do well to pay more attention to our own *actions*. This includes listening well to those with contrary opinions—even those who promote them most aggressively—since, in the *epistemic* as opposed to the *political* space, as ever, 'the [only] solution to poor opinions is more opinions'.

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Wisdom's Limit: Truth, Failure and the Contemporary University

Jeff Malpas

Towards the end of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a book that deserves to be much more widely read than it actually is, Adam Smith argues in favour of a certain modesty that ought to belong to human reason—a modesty of focus as well as of capacity:

> The happiness of the great system of the universe, however, the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings, is the business of God and not of man. To man is allotted a much humbler department, but one much more suited to the weakness of his powers, and to the narrowness of his comprehension: the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country […] The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher can scarce compensate the neglect of the smallest active duty. (Smith 1969, p. 386)

What Smith asks us to attend to here is a conception of thinking and the responsibility that attends upon it that recognises the necessary limits of thinking as well as the grounding of thinking in the domain established by those limits. Significantly, one might say that what Smith is actually alluding to is itself a form of wisdom—a sense of what constitutes the proper exercise of reason undertaken with regard to the capacities of human beings, the place in which they find themselves, and the rightful objects of their concern. Yet it is wisdom understood in terms of a notion of limit that belongs to wisdom itself, as well as to reason wisely deployed.[1] Wisdom seems the right term to use here precisely because what is at issue is no mere knowing, but rather an attentiveness to ignorance as well as to the possibility of failure, and so also an attentiveness to the essentially bounded and

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[1] Smith's concern is with the ethical, but one might say that the concern with the limits of reason that is at issue here adumbrates Kant's later concern with the limits or bounds of reason in an epistemological and ontological sense.

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localised character of our capacities and concerns (the latter in the sense that those concerns take their force and meaning from the concrete situations in which we already find ourselves). It is on this idea of wisdom as it stands in relation to limit, specifically as both might be relevant to the contemporary university, and also, though indirectly, to philosophy, that I want to focus.

Smith makes no connection, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, between what I have here called 'wisdom' and the university. He does talk elsewhere, namely, in *The Wealth of Nations*, about university education, along with education more generally (Smith 1999, pp. 348–403), and his comments have been taken to support a largely market-oriented model of the university (Teixeira and Dill 2011, p. viii). Yet not only does Smith's conception of the market diverge in many respects from contemporary conceptions, as does his overall approach to both economics and society, but his discussion of education makes little attempt to offer an account of education as such, and certainly involves no real reflections on the nature of the university as such (though he does consider the development of the philosophical curriculum and different historical systems of education). Smith's comments are mostly focused around, and are heavily determined by, what he perceived to be the deficiencies of the educational institutions of his time and the need to bring about reform. He complains especially of the poor quality of teaching, which he puts down to what we might think of as the lack of connection between payment and performance. Of what underpins the university, and how that might be connected with the structure of such institutions, Smith has, however, little to say, and one cannot assume that he would have been any less critical of the corporatized universities of today than of the universities of his own time. It is not Smith's comments on education in *The Wealth of Nations* that seem to me to be most instructive or most relevant to the situation of the university today, but rather that notion of limit and its connection to what I have termed 'wisdom' that appear in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (although both limit and wisdom can, it seems to me, be brought into important connection, as will be evident below, with some of the other ideas that are at work in *The Wealth of Nations*).

So far as wisdom itself is concerned, outside of its commonplace appearances within new age and self-help literature, the notion is not one that commands much attention in contemporary thinking.[2] And although it is sometimes adverted to in educational discussions, there is relatively little recent literature that takes up the idea of wisdom as part of any genuinely critical engagement with contemporary higher education.[3] Moreover, on some of the few occasions when wisdom is taken

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[2]Although, as I note in the discussion below, it might be argued that it is taken up, if sometimes problematically, in the idea of *phronesis* or practical wisdom.

[3]Though see Ozoliņš' (2013, 2015) work. In the latter publication, Ozoliņš (2013) argues for similarities in the views of Peters and Newman on education and specifically for both as committed, in spite of the fact that neither uses the term, to a conception of education as essentially oriented to the cultivation of wisdom. Ozoliņš aside, there is a larger body of work on wisdom in higher education, but little that has appeared in the last decade—in relation to that older body of work see, e.g. Barnett (1994).

up, it is often in ways that assimilate it to an existing utilitarian and vocational discourse—as it was in an Australian discussion in 2012 when it was treated as something like an additional competency or skill relevant because of its importance to the employability of graduates.[4] The most famous discussion of higher education of the last hundred or more years, Newman's *The Idea of the University* (Newman 1927), though it makes no explicit mention of wisdom, nevertheless seems to assume something like that notion in its emphasis on education and knowledge as tied to the formation of character. Newman argues that knowledge is its own end that there is no other good to which it is subordinated—nothing else to which it is accountable—and that, therefore, the basis of the University is not any *practical* utility to which it may give rise, but its commitment to knowledge as a simple and fundamental good. For this reason, Newman regards education, which he distinguishes from the training or the gaining of skill, as also without utility—education, like knowledge, accounts for itself.[5] Certainly, education is essential to sociability and to the formation of a society, but this is not to be construed as one of the *uses* of education. Instead, education and sociability are already bound together—the one does not serve the other, so much as being already part of the other (and the reciprocity here goes both ways—something suggested by the hermeneutic notion of conversation as central to any and all forms of understanding). The university can thus be understood, through the focus on education, as given over to the cultivation of wisdom—the pursuit of knowledge turns out to be one of the ways in

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[4]See Schwartz (2012). Although Schwartz shows no awareness of the potential tension in his championing of wisdom as an 'employability' skill, elsewhere (2006) he argues for the importance of values, rather than any utilitarian purpose, as necessary to underpin the role and mission of the university. At the time of his comments on wisdom, Schwartz was Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie University, and prior to that had developed a reputation as an aggressively 'reformist' Vice-Chancellor at Murdoch University, in Western Australia, and then at Brunel University, in the UK—here 'reform' means, of course, the promotion of a corporatist and market-oriented conception of higher education. One might thus argue that not only is there an odd tension internal to Schwartz's position (especially his championing of wisdom as an employability skill), but that this reflects a tension between some of his public commentary and his actual practice as a university administrator—a practice that led, during his time at Brunel, to his being one of the top ten highest-paid Vice-Chancellors in the UK and his nomination by the academic teaching union as the 'UK's worst boss'. Such tensions, and the superficiality of discourse that accompanies them, seem characteristic of much of the rhetoric that comes from contemporary university administrators, politicians and governments with regard to the nature and role of universities, and university teaching and research. One conclusion that might be drawn from this is that the rhetoric is just that—*mere* rhetoric—and that it both reflects an emptying out of genuine discourse as well as being a means to conceal or promote quite different agendas and directions.

[5]Newman's position was one shared by Mathew Arnold and, as I note below, by John Stuart Mill, but opposed by Thomas Huxley—see Silver (2003, pp. 4–5). To side with Newman et al. on the issue of the fundamental non-utility of knowledge or wisdom is not, of course, to take sides with Newman and against Huxley with respect to all of the points in dispute between them. Indeed, Huxley also emphasised the independence of the pursuit of knowledge from all practical considerations: 'the primary business of universities is with pure knowledge and pure art—independent of all application to practice; with progress in culture, not with wealth' (Huxley, quoted in Halsey 1958, p. 148).

which wisdom is developed, and, indeed, the pursuit of knowledge cannot be undertaken except against that background.

Although Newman pays no attention to the university as a research institution, the idea of knowledge as intrinsically rather than merely instrumentally valuable can be applied to knowledge in a research as well as educational context (and that idea can be affirmed even if one does not accept the entirety of Newman's 'idea' of the university). Such a view of knowledge, and so also of wisdom, stands in clear contrast to the more commonplace contemporary treatment of for their valuation as based in utility—including employability. Indeed, although often derided, the emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, of education or of wisdom *for their own sake* remains a key point in the understanding of the nature of the sort of work that universities undertake or ought to undertake.

The pursuit of knowledge, and the promotion of education and wisdom, cannot be maintained by focusing on any system of rewards or punishments that lie outside the enterprise of knowledge or wisdom as such. In his own discussion of education, however, this is something that Smith (1999, pp. 348–349) himself seems more or less to reject, and indeed, there is a widespread view, shared by many in business and government today, that financial incentives, and the competition associated with those, are the only means to ensure performance in any field of endeavour. Yet as many empirical studies show, motivation, even outside of an academic context, is actually more complex than this sort of commonplace thinking assumes (see, e.g. Pink 2009). Systems of financial incentive and disincentive, taken on their own, have little effect in relation to those modes of performance in which the emphasis is on qualitative rather than mere quantitative results, and the imposition of targets often has the effect of depressing achievement rather than raising it. In the case of academic work, the effect of extrinsic motivation of the sort afforded by financial incentives or disincentives seems especially diminished in comparison with the intrinsic motivation associated with academic work itself (something reflected in the fact that so many academics continue to be productive researchers even after retirement). Part of that intrinsic motivation comes from the pleasure associated with intellectual work when undertaken in the right environment. Yet it is undoubtedly also true that genuine academic industry is driven, and primarily so, by the valuing of knowledge, truth and wisdom in and of themselves, and the valuing of the critical engagement that is intrinsic to them and that is the only genuine means by which their pursuit can be promoted. To attempt to drive it by any other means is likely to distort, to mislead and ultimately to undermine. This general conclusion has the important additional consequence that the one thing that matters in the valuation of epistemic success is epistemic success itself, and the only proper gauge of such success is the epistemic community in which it arises. The argument here is, I would say, parallel to the argument that operates in the ethical domain in which any justification for ethics can only come from the ethical itself: even where prudential considerations converge with ethical concerns, such prudential considerations are strictly irrelevant to any ethical imperative whose force is absolute. The ethical, in this sense, is entirely separate from the realm of the useful. To put matters slightly differently, in terms Sandel (2012) can be seen to employ in *What Money*

Can't Buy, value is separate from price.[6] An analogous point, I would argue, applies to the understanding of wisdom.

Of course, the way of thinking to be found in Newman, and more generally, the idea that knowledge or wisdom might account for themselves is a way of thinking that goes against almost all of the thinking that drives contemporary university management, policy and structure. Such thinking is not driven by considerations of knowledge, wisdom or truth, but by a much more utilitarian calculation, and one that also assumes the pure monetization even of utility. This is true whether or not one looks to the contemporary university's treatment of research as valuable only if it delivers outputs that are relevant to university ranking exercises (no matter how well-founded or relevant those exercises may be to underlying academic values) or the reduction of contemporary university education to what is little more than vocational training, itself measured in terms of the acquisition of discrete 'competencies'. This way of thinking comes from one source and one alone, not from philosophy, nor even from economics, but from a sector of society that, although it is often assumed to drive economics, is actually driven by it, namely, business and government—the latter being now so tied to the interest of the business sector as to be little more than a servant of it and a mouthpiece for its interests. It is a situation made even worse by the fact that so many contemporary politicians are themselves personally invested in the business sector both financially and socially—the Trump presidency, not unlike that of Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, providing one of the blatant and extreme exemplifications of this phenomenon.[7]

Leaving aside the questionable nature of the source from which the demand for the accountability of knowledge and wisdom in terms of their utility comes (a source that is both partisan and self-interested), the very idea that there is a limit to the relevance and applicability of utilitarian conceptions invokes the same idea of limit that I have suggested is at issue in the idea of wisdom. Only the fool (and I use this term in that specific sense of one who is 'unwise') would fail to recognise such a limit. The idea that the understanding of limit, whether in this specific case or more generally, is what lies at the heart of wisdom is not, of course, new or unprecedented. It is already suggested by the idea of Socratic ignorance—'I know

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[6]To some extent, this distinction may also be seen to mirror that between 'substantive' and 'formal' rationality—see, e.g. Weber (1947, pp. 184–186) who argues for the limitations of markets as instances only of formal rationality.

[7]Here, as in so much else, contemporary practices and conventions operate entirely against the advice of Adam Smith. With respect to any public proposal that comes from what we would now think of as the business sector—what Smith refers to as the 'dealers' or the order of men who 'live by profit'—Smith urges that such proposals 'ought always to be listened to with great precaution, and ought never be adopted till after having been long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention'. This is for the simple reason that, as Smith says, the interest of the 'dealers' is not the same as the interest of the public, and the former have indeed 'an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and … accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it' (Smith 1999, p. 359).

only that I do not know'.[8] If Socrates is in any sense an exemplar of wisdom, it is because he is so acutely aware of the limits of his knowledge. In a somewhat a more brutal form, the same point appears in an old joke that the quality of mind most likely to lead to happiness is 'stupidity', since if you are stupid, you won't have the wit to know it, and so will not be made unhappy by it—or by any of the other things that your stupidity will prevent you from recognising.

The importance of limit here—of the limit that belongs to wisdom, and the failure to grasp limit that is the essence of foolishness—derives from the simple truth that no matter how much knowledge one possesses, there is always more to know—even if it is simply knowledge of the particularities of one's own peculiar or idiosyncratic situation. Yet such limit is not merely epistemic. The ubiquity, indeed inevitability, of failure in practical matters—whether at the governmental level or at the level of personal affairs—provides a different example of the absolute centrality of limit. In all our efforts to control or manage the world, and aspects of it, the fact that any part of the world, let alone the world itself, will always exceed our capacity to manipulate or even represent it means that all such efforts are doomed, in any run other than the short, to fail. Failure is the rule, not the exception, although much of our activity is predicated on the reverse holding true (see Malpas and Wickham 1997, 1995). The fact that we often fail to notice the failing character of our enterprises and projects is simply a function of the fact that we constantly readjust our measures of success according to the realities of our failures. Failure is thus avoided by the redefinition of success, and yet failure is thereby also obscured, hidden, denied. Yet failure is the inevitable accompaniment of all human activity. As Samuel Beckett (1999, p. 7) understood, it is not a matter of failing and then trying until one succeeds, but of failing, failing again, failing better.[9] To recognise the inevitability of failure is to recognise the essentially limited character of human life and activity.

The refusal of such limitation, and the assumption of the ever-present possibility of success, is, I would argue, one of the key features of modernity. Modern technology, in particular, presents itself as a source of solutions, rather than of problems, and technological development appears as a steady progression—a process of 'continuous improvement', as the language of 'quality management' would have it. Yet as technological systems become more complex, the failure of those systems

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[8]See Plato (1966), 23b. Socrates also comments on the wisdom assumed by the craftsman who, 'because of practicing his art well… thought he was very wise in the other most important matters' (Apology, 22d)—an observation that today probably applies best to the contemporary CEO, though in this case, it is probably less the capacity to practice one's craft well that leads to the presumption of wisdom, than the mere possession of wealth and status.

[9]Becket's line, 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better', is often quoted as if all Beckett intended was a sort of rephrasing of the old saying 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again', which would suggest that the emphasis is on failure as a pathway to eventual success, but this is clearly not Beckett's intention. Indeed, if anything, the line aims to subvert the original saying to which it perhaps alludes, the emphasis being on the inevitability of failure, and the recognition of that inevitability as nevertheless founding action. The human life is thus a failing life, but a life whose failure does not entail surrender.

becomes an increasing problem. The simpler the technology, the more easily can breakdowns within that technology be coped with—the more complex the technology, the more even small failures give rise to difficulties. At the same time, the increasing complexity of technological systems—their very character, in fact, in drawing more and more elements into their sway—also increases the possibilities for failure, often requiring the development of new technologies designed to deal specifically with such possibilities.[10] This is not to say that technology is unsuccessful, but that its success is always faltering, and always brings new problems, new difficulties, in its train. Yet technology hides its own failing character, in this regard, viewing its failures as an indication of the need for greater technological perfection, of a more encompassing grasp of the elements that comprise the technological system, and shifting the focus on the 'problem space' in which it operates, so that technological success is always measured with respect to just those aspects in relation to which technology is successful, while neglecting or ignoring those aspects in relation to which it fails. The limit is most often understood as a negativity; yet in reality, it is the opposite: it is the very source of positivity, since it is the source of that which is valuable. The limit is that which allows things to appear as salient in the same way that the wall constitutes the room at the same time that it also delimits it. In this sense, the limit is not, to quote Martin Heidegger, 'that at which something stops but… that from which something begins its presencing' (Heidegger 1971, p. 154).[11] The limit is constitutive rather than merely restrictive. This is as true of the human propensity to failure as it is of fragility and beauty. Wisdom is not merely a matter of an understanding of limit, then, but of an understanding that recognises its productivity.

Inasmuch as education can indeed be understood as a matter of the getting of wisdom, so it is thus also about coming to an understanding of limit. In this respect, Newman's own emphasis on knowledge, even when taken as tied to wisdom, is perhaps misleading or, at least, potentially so. If education, the getting of wisdom, is what the university aims at, then it cannot be an education that consists in the mere accumulation of knowledge. Knowledge as simply a body of things known—of 'information' or 'facts'—is truly useless. It is the recognition of this point that might be said to underpin the idea of wisdom as a certain sort of practical understanding—so that wisdom is what is needed if theoretical knowledge is to be given application, if it is indeed to be useful. This is a way of thinking of wisdom that is supported by some of Aristotle's comments regarding *phronesis*, and it is also an idea present in the widespread contemporary appropriation of the idea of wisdom as

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[10]Although some of their discussions are now a little dated (especially in relation to computing technologies), two books that still provide useful and important analyses of the relation between technology and failure are Tenner (1996) *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* and Perrow (1999) *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies*.

[11]The same idea is repeated at several other places in Heidegger's writings.

practical expertise exemplified in the work of Hubert Dreyfus.[12] Such a conception might, however, be taken to suggest a different conception of wisdom from that which I have emphasised in terms of the focus on limit, and so as offering an alternative and competing account (and one that might be more congenial to utilitarian construal). On this basis, rather than taking wisdom to be centred on limit, wisdom would be identical with the sort of practical understanding that enables the genuine exercise of skill and expertise in a specific field, domain or art or perhaps as some generalizable form of this. One might worry that such a conception of wisdom as tied to specific forms of *practical* expertise turns wisdom into a generic term for what are actually different modes of practical skill that are valuable, not necessarily in themselves, but because of their practical utility—as the skills of an experienced carpenter or financial advisor might be thought valuable, not so much in themselves, but more because of the improvements they can bring to our lives. It might also be taken as a sense of wisdom that transforms wisdom into little more than *prudence* (itself a not uncommon translation of *phronesis*), and so as essentially geared towards practical concerns that are nevertheless founded independently of it.

The latter are surely legitimate worries that should indeed caution us against any reduction of wisdom to mere practical expertise. Yet independently of such considerations, it seems to me that there are other reasons for taking the idea of limit still to be a key idea in the notion of wisdom. I would argue, first, that even with respect to forms of practical understanding that operate in relation to a specific field, domain or art, those forms of understanding cannot consist simply in concatenations of otherwise discrete capacities or competencies. Instead, they must be properly unified capacities that operate appropriately in relation to the entirety of the field, domain or art in question—it is this capacity to operate in a unified fashion that marks such understanding off as genuinely an instance of practical wisdom. As it is indeed oriented towards that field of expertise as a whole, so any such wisdom or expertise must also possess a genuine grasp of its own boundaries. There may be a question as to how those limits are indeed grasped, but the mastery of the field at issue can be viewed as a mastery constituted through a mastery of the field or art as it arises within those limits (notice how this conception of expertise is at odds with the competency approach that is so widespread and that itself has little or no basis in any empirical or theoretical understanding of expertise). On these grounds alone, then, even an account of wisdom as a matter of practical expertise need not be inconsistent with an account of wisdom as based in an understanding of limit. Moreover, even if it were allowed that this is one sense of wisdom, the fact that there is such a sense would not rule out the idea of a more basic sense of wisdom of the sort associated with the idea of a fundamental sense of limit that encompasses all our activities—a sense of wisdom that is not tied to any particular field, domain

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[12]Dreyfus's first detailed account of practical wisdom or expertise is in Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuition and Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: Free Press, 1988), but the ideas are repeated and developed over many other publications over the course of Dreyfus' career both earlier and later—see, e.g. Hubert Dreyfus, *On the Internet* (London: Routledge, 2001).

or art, and rather relates to the mode of our being in the world as human or, if it is to be said to be tied to some art, a sense of wisdom as tied to the 'art of living'.

Here, the idea of wisdom as a fundamental capacity for the governance of one's life and activities as a whole through a grasp of the proper limits of that life, and the activities associated with it, connects with another idea that, while not always associated with wisdom, is very often associated with the idea of the university—the idea of *critique*, and together with this also, in terms that are more commonly associated with wisdom, the idea of the commitment to truth. In pursuit of this idea, let me return once again to Smith. It is sometimes pointed out that what Smith argues against in the *Wealth of Nations* is the imperialistic mercantilism exemplified by the developing British Empire as well as by the Dutch. Such mercantilism was associated with the centralised governmental control of markets and trade in the interests of the nation state. In opposition to such mercantilism, Smith argued for a more open and diverse economic system—and with it a more diverse and open social and economic system also. It is the insistence on diversity and openness that lies at the heart of Smith's emphasis on the market and the importance of competition (and so his abhorrence of monopolies and the need for regulation to ensure the proper functioning of the market). Allied to this, for Smith, was also the idea that the virtues that underpinned a healthy economy and society were not those of consumption and the satisfaction of desire, but rather of frugality and industry—of care in the proper use of resources as well as a commitment to real achievement.

Although he does not do so himself, Smith's emphasis on diversity and openness in economic systems can be applied analogously to the enterprise of knowledge, of education, and so also to the understanding of wisdom as tied to limit. There is a strong tendency for the enterprise of knowledge, like the enterprise of wealth, to become monopolistic. This is something that the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn discusses in his account of the structure of scientific theory and practice. Although emphasising the importance of the 'paradigm' or 'disciplinary matrix' in making scientific endeavour possible, Kuhn (1970) also argues for the necessity, even within such 'paradigms', of allowing for divergence and innovation.[13] For Kuhn, more radically for Paul Feyerabend, and later for Richard Rorty also, a key task is to maintain the diversity and openness of science, which means finding ways to allow and even to encourage dissenting views, to ensure a multiplicity of approaches and to counter the almost inevitable tendency towards scientific monocultures. Something like this idea can also be seen in the work of J. S. Mill. In *On Liberty*, Mill (1974) argues for the importance of ensuring diversity in ideas, which means not allowing the most popular or prevalent ideas and viewpoints to dominate over all others. From Mill's perspective, the attempt to constrain ideas can only have the effect of constraining and distorting the search for knowledge and

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[13]In the 'Postscript' to *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn (1970, pp. 184–187) argues that this is achieved through the way shared values within a disciplinary matrix nevertheless allow for differences in individual judgments of value—see also D'Agostino (2005, pp. 201–209). The title of Kuhn's (1977) *The Essential Tension* refers to just the dynamic relation between tradition and innovation, convergence and divergence, that is at issue here.

truth. Hence the importance of freedom of ideas and expression, and tied to this also, of freedom to choose one's own way of life (with the important caveat that it should not unreasonably constrain the freedom of others to so choose) (Mill 1974).[14] Mill's argument, like that of Kuhn, can be seen to be based on the idea of the fallibility of claims to know, or better, on a recognition of the limits within which knowledge is itself constituted. The importance of maintaining diversity and openness in the search for knowledge and truth, in Mill and in Kuhn, mirrors Smith's emphasis on diversity and openness, instantiated in the operation of the market, as the basis for any genuine and common wealth—not because the former ensures the latter, but because it is partly enabling of it.[15]

In the university setting, this commitment to diversity and openness has—or ought to have—several obvious consequences. If Kuhn's point about the diversity of evaluative judgment is heeded, then one will refrain from the imposition of measures or frameworks that try unduly to constrain judgment or to impose uniform evaluative structures from above. In keeping with this, one will look to ensure a reasonably diverse field for academic engagement—resisting the tendency towards monopolistic regimes of publication as well as the coercing of academic production into some standardised set of forms, styles or genres. One will also aim to retain of a breadth of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches—diversity means diversity across as well as within disciplines. Above all, and following the analogous point in Smith, one will resist any attempt to impose the equivalent of the mercantilist (which is to say the corporatist) system in research and higher education that would centralise control of epistemic enterprise and impose systems of tariffs that stifle the free and open movement of ideas. It is not just a form of university-directed mercantilism that is the problem here, but any form of interventionism that seeks to second-guess the way knowledge will develop, or that thinks it can direct knowledge in general in ways that will gear it to national or extra-epistemic interests.[16] Whether mercantilist or communist, such epistemic interventionist must always fail. In the Soviet Union, Lysenkoism was the most spectacular example of the folly of such an approach (Resnik 2009, pp. 67–69), but sadly Lysenkoism remains alive and well today, since it consists in little more than the familiar idea, widespread in contemporary Anglo-Saxon societies, that one should align scientific research, not with *scientific* interests, but with perceived *national* interests. The latter are most

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[14]An important influence on Mill here is the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and especially Humboldt's (1854) *The Sphere and Duties of Government*. An epigram from Humboldt appears at the beginning of *On Liberty*: 'The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity' (von Humboldt 1854, p. 65).

[15]On the inappropriateness of taking Mill to suggest a direct modelling of epistemic endeavour on the operation of the market, see Gordon (1997, pp. 235–249).

[16]On the problems relating to political interference in research, see Resnik (2009). He makes the interesting comment that 'The most likely explanation of US success in science and technology is that scientists in the United States have greater autonomy than in almost any other country in the world' (p. 66).

often reflections of the personal interests and prejudices of those in power (so are essentially *political* interests), which often means, in the current climate, the interests and prejudices of *business*, and especially big business. Not only does such Lysenkoism depend on the valuing of knowledge for its instrumental usefulness, but also on the idea that the pursuit of knowledge is something that can itself be deployed and directed instrumentally. Once again, what appears here is a failure to understand the proper limits within which the pursuit of knowledge itself operates, and so an instance of the very *hubris*—a *hubris* that is tied to the desire for power and control—that Smith counsels against.

Smith emphasised the need for competition in the economic realm, a competition regulated by the market. In the world of ideas, this idea of competition is often assumed to translate into competition for funding or students, but in fact, it can only mean competition for truth, and allied to that, though essentially secondary to it, the reputational benefits of honour and recognition that go with the achievement of truth. This is the real currency that drives the enterprise of knowledge. To some extent, this can be connected with Smith's emphasis on the importance of frugality and industry. Smith's focus on these ideas is partly based on the moral character associated with such qualities, but we might also say that it involves the valuing of the work of production, of making, which is why I talked about the value of achievement. This is especially important when it comes to knowledge. Sometimes, of course, a deep commitment to some extra-epistemic value—the relief of suffering, for instance—will drive an individual's pursuit of a scientific project or career. But such extra-epistemic values are not always present, nor as they always operative in motivating and sustaining scientific pursuits. In a university or higher education setting, this ought to mean that a key objective should be the formation and sustenance of epistemic communities that will embody and so also support the qualities of diversity and openness, and genuine commitment to epistemic excellence, that are essential to successful epistemic work and production—what we might think of as communities that are themselves oriented towards wisdom as a primary concern. This must apply not only to research but also to university teaching—certainly to that form of teaching on which Newman focuses, and that is not merely about the inculcation of technical skill or informational mastery, and probably to all teaching to a greater or lesser extent.

Such a view of the nature of the academic communities that ought to constitute universities can be seen to be suggested, if not by Smith's own account of the universities of his time, then by his preferred form of economic, political and social order. Smith famously says, and the passage has become so often quoted and misquoted that its original meaning has been almost entirely obscured, that we cannot rely on the beneficence of other economic actors to ensure our own welfare (Smith 1982, p. 119). That is certainly true; we cannot and should not expect others, in the normal course of affairs, to act in *our* interests rather than their own. Yet this does not mean that selfishness, as opposed to self-love, is to be encouraged or endorsed, and nor does it mean that we should take any sort of self-interested action on the part of others as the proper basis on which the welfare of all can be ensured. Smith is quite clear on this point, largely rejecting the view of Bernard de

Mandeville, for instance, that private vice gives rise to public virtue (see Smith 1976).[17] Moreover, the possibility of economic activity itself depends, as Smith emphasised, on the prior commitment of all of us to a moral order to which not only are we already given over in virtue of relations of sympathy, but in which we can and do rely upon others to be, for instance, generally trustworthy and truthful. This moral order embodies the same sense of limit that underpins the idea of wisdom, since it depends on the idea of both the interdependence of human life, its essential relationality and also the character of such life as always operating in a way that is delimited by the actions, concerns and needs of others as well as our own essential fragility and fallibility. In this sense, the moral life, which must also be a life grounded in a certain *human* wisdom, is a life that always rests on the recognition of essential human limitation—and so on the need for attentiveness and responsiveness to the particularities of our situation as the only basis for actions. One of the lessons Smith teaches—a lesson that is underlined by the various crises in which we now find ourselves—is that the economic order is not independent of the moral order that underpins human life as such. When that moral order breaks down, when wisdom is lost, then so too does the economic and social order also begin to disintegrate. This is why Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* is not to be construed as a work that is separate from his *The Wealth of Nations*, but as the essential accompaniment to it.

It is perhaps worth noting, once again, the way in which the idea of limit reappears here—the moral order is itself based in a recognition of our own limited capacity, and in a sense of the way in which our own existence is interdependent with that of others. In this respect, the enterprise of knowledge or wisdom is itself based on an ethical order that enshrines basic principles of trust and fairness, and does so because of the way these principles are themselves tied to an understanding of the limits within which human life and activity operate. One of the consequences of this in the university is that it ought not only to lead to a different conception of teaching and research but also a different mode of organisation and management—to one that is decentralised, more flexible and more efficient, since it will not depend on the vain attempt to 'manage' from above through systems of coercion and control, but will rather operate through the internalisation of values and commitments that are themselves derived from the very activities that lie at the heart of the University's existence and that are integral to its operation. It will operate through the internalisation of wisdom in its very structures as well as in those who take responsibility for the leadership and management of the institution. Significantly, this means the relinquishing of a certain conception of what leadership and management might be, and associated with that, a recognition of the way in which critique and truth must indeed stand at the core of university life.

The commitment to critique, and through critique to truth (since without truth there can be no critique), as central to wisdom derives directly from an

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[17]In respect of De Mandeville, Smith (1976) writes: 'the notions of this author are in almost every respect erroneous' (p. 487).

understanding of wisdom as tied to limit and the recognition of limit. But it is worth exploring this commitment to critique and truth more closely—in particular, through the way in which it can be understood in terms of an idea that appears in the late work of Michel Foucault. In his seminar on *Fearless Speech*, Michel Foucault develops a genealogy of the practice of truth-telling, *parrhesia*, and the associated questions that surround this practice. Foucault says at the end of these lectures that:

> […] the problematization of truth which characterizes both the end of Presocratic philosophy and the beginning of the kind of philosophy which is still ours today […] has two sides, two major aspects. One side is concerned with ensuring that the process of reasoning is correct in determining whether a statement is true (or concern itself with our ability to gain access to the truth). And the other side is concerned with the question: what is the importance for the individual and for the society of telling the truth, of knowing the truth, of having people who tell the truth, as well as knowing how to recognize them. With that side which is concerned with determining how to ensure that a statement is true we have the roots of the great tradition in Western philosophy which I would like to call the "analytics of truth". And on the other side, concerned with the question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth, we have the roots of what we could call the "critical" tradition in the West. (Foucault 2001, p. 170)

It is this critical tradition that properly lies, not only at the heart of the idea of the university, so that we might say that the university is based on the idea of *parrhesia*, truth-telling, as a discipline and practice, but also at the heart of the idea of wisdom as I have outlined it here. Of course, in focussing on *parrhesia*, I am also focussing on wisdom as associated with that particular form of action that is speech, but this is an especially crucial mode of wisdom in the university setting. Such *parrhesia* is, it seems to me, something exhibited in a pre-eminent way by Socrates, even when he seems to speak in ways that are imprudent or unwise—as at his famous trial before the Athenian Assembly. Significantly, the parrhesiast about whom Foucault talks may not always appear as careful or mild, since the parrhesiast is above all a critic —one prepared to challenge, to be a troublemaker, even, when that is needed.

If the idea of critique that is at issue here seems to jar with some of our traditional assumptions concerning wisdom, then perhaps that only shows that we have not been sufficiently critical in our engagement with the idea of wisdom itself. Moreover, as I noted earlier, critique is itself bound up with the idea of truth, and the lover of wisdom is also a lover of truth. Truth and wisdom are themselves bound together, and this is made especially clear through an understanding of the essential relation of wisdom to limit. Moreover, if we take wisdom to have a central role in the university, then this must also bring wisdom into close connection with critique, since the idea that critique is central to the life of the university is one that is certainly well-founded within our own tradition. Even if we think of the university as based around knowledge, then such knowledge itself rests on a practice of truth-telling and on the discipline this requires. In this regard, what is most distressing about the situation of the contemporary university is the threat to this critical tradition. As Terry Eagleton writes:

> What we have witnessed in our own time is the death of universities as centres of critique.
> Since Margaret Thatcher, the role of academia has been to service the status quo, not
> challenge it in the name of justice, tradition, imagination, human welfare, the free play of
> the mind or alternative visions of the future. We will not change this simply by increasing
> state funding of the humanities as opposed to slashing it to nothing. We will change it by
> insisting that a critical reflection on human values and principles should be central to
> everything that goes on in universities, not just to the study of Rembrandt or Rimbaud.
> (Eagleton 2010)

Arendt (2000, pp. 555–556) says that truth has always been hated by tyrants, and
the reason is, she says, that truth itself has something tyrannical about it: truth
demands our acquiescence; it does not allow us to choose.[18] Wisdom lies in
respecting the power that belongs to truth—a power over which we can exercise no
control. In this respect, truth is not itself democratic, and yet, precisely because truth
tolerates no tyranny but its own, truth is also a powerful force for democratisation—
indeed, the freedom demanded by truth, which is freedom *for* the truth and also for
the human and the humane is very closely related to the sort of freedom that Smith
argues underpins the market and is manifest in the democratic polity he associates
with it. In this respect, the threat to the critical tradition is also a threat to the very
structures that underpin the wealth about which contemporary politicians, business
and economists so often speak, and of which Smith talks in *The Wealth of Nations*.

What I have set out here, then, is not just an account of wisdom within the
context of higher education, but of wisdom as it applies *within a society*. The
society at issue is one that is founded upon a conception of its own limit—a limit
that has its end in truth and in the human. In the passage from *The Theory of Moral
Sentiments* with which I began, Smith counsels against the seductions of philo-
sophical speculation, and in favour of attentiveness to the duties of care that lie
immediately before us. Such counsel is not a counsel of the parochial or the selfish,
but arises simply from recognition of what Smith calls 'the weakness of [our]
powers, and […] narrowness of [our] comprehension'. Significantly, Smith does
not suggest, contrary to many recent and contemporary economists and political
theorists, and the politicians and business leaders who follow them, that the market
itself offers any solution to this problem of limit. Indeed, the idea, promoted by von
Hayek (1982)[19] and others, that the market provides an information-processing
machine that can overcome human fallibility and ignorance might be seen as a
variation on that universalising speculation against which Smith warns us—though
a speculation that has taken real and concrete form in contemporary 'economistic'
thought and practice. The market becomes the machine that calculates what we
individually cannot, producing, so we are constantly promised, a better world for all

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[18]See Arendt (2000, pp. 555–556): 'Seen from the view-point of politics, truth has a despotic
character. It is therefore hated by tyrants, who rightly fear the competition of a coercive force they
cannot mo-nopolize, and it enjoys a rather precarious status in the eyes of governments that rest on
consent and abhor coercion'. See also Malpas (2010).
[19]See von Hayek (1982, p. 54): '[…] the only possibility of transcending the capacity of individual
minds is to rely on those super-personal "self-organizing" forces which create spontaneous orders.'

—and so the machine of the market becomes that which will supposedly ensure 'the happiness of the great system of the universe' at the same time absolving us of attending to (even counselling us against) those 'active duties' that Smith urges upon us. Smith has no such extreme confidence in the power of the market to do what we cannot, instead arguing for a more limited capacity that belongs even to the market (and thus arguing for legislative controls to ensure that markets are not corrupted in their operation and that substantive moral constraints and obligations are not ignored). For Smith, the market is implicitly, like all artefacts of human activity and design, an imperfect, even a failing, structure—which is why we must remain attentive to it, rather than allow ourselves to be simply determined by it.

Here, we are returned once more to consideration of the inevitability of failure, the importance of critique, and so to the notion of wisdom with which this discussion began, and the limit that belongs to it. The society that would embody wisdom is also the society that embodies a sense of its own limit, and, therefore, a sense of its own humanity. Such a sense of limit is only properly expressed in the willingness to engage with the irreducible complexity of the world that presents itself to us in the light of our own failing endeavours and the obligations that derive from our substantive commitments in and to that world. It is in the service of such wisdom that the proper task of the university, indeed, of teaching and research in general, is to be found. It is not a task that can be based merely in the harnessing of the university to any economic or merely utilitarian mechanism.

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Part II
Politics, the Papers and the Public

The History and Practice of Lying in Public Life

Michael A. Peters

To lie is a horrible filthy vice; and which an ancient writer setteth forth very shamefully, when he saith that whosoever lieth witnesseth that he contemneth God and therewithall feareth men. It is impossible more richly to represent the horrour, the vilenesse and the disorder of it: for, what can be imagined so vile and base as to be a coward towards men and a boaster towards God? (Montaigne).

The deliberate falsehood and the outright lie, used as legitimate means to achieve political ends, have been with us since the beginning of recorded history. Truthfulness has never been counted among the political virtues, and lies have always been regarded as justifiable tools in political dealings (Arendt 1971).

Introduction: Lying and Public Life

Malpas (2008) begins his reflection on "Truth, Lies, and Deceit: On Ethics in Contemporary Public Life" by documenting the way truth and deceit in public life have become a major issue in the West. He rightly mentions the huge concern over the deceit and deception by leading politicians involved in the invasion of the Iraq war and notes that the public focus on lying and deceit has not been restricted to politics. CEOs of major companies and bank managers (particularly since the Global Financial Crisis) have been involved in systematic fraud, insider trading, and deliberate manipulations of the Libor exchange rate. Not only have these

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corporate players not abided by regulatory obligations and responsibilities, but after being charged, they have actively lied, falsified, and deceived their clients and the public at large with the result that people have lost their trust in the leading political and business institutions. Untruthfulness, deceit, and lying are not restricted to these twin spheres, as recent cover-ups in relation to institutional child abuse in the church, in schools, and other related institutions reveal.[1] Malpas takes the public uproar and controversy as evidence that we still care about truth and truthfulness, and yet he canvases the view that our commitment to truth (Nyberg 1993; Bailey 1991), given the extent of deceit and lying in public and personal life, itself might based upon a lie. He goes on to maintain the central significance of truth and truth-telling to questions of self and society:

> The question concerning the role and significance of truth and truth-telling lies at the heart of our understanding of ourselves—how we think about truth makes a huge difference to the sort of life we understand ourselves as living, the sort of society we take ourselves to be part of, the sort of relationship we have to the world. (Malpas 2008, p. 2)

Malpas clearly holds that truth, and the commitment to truth, is at the very heart of both ethical practice and the practice of democracy.[2]

In a conference on "Law and Lies" held by the University of Alabama School of Law, the question of deception and lying is raised concerning their ubiquity in public life:

> From the noble lie of Plato's Republic to the controversy about former President Clinton's "lying" in the Monica Lewinsky case, from the use of secrecy in today's war against terrorism to the endless spinning of political campaigns, from President John Kennedy's

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[1]See the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse at http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/. The Interim Report was released on June 30, 2014. I am reminded of the comments of Michael Ignatieff (2001) made in *The Guardian*: "Since its report came out in 1998, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has become a model for other societies seeking to rebuild their ethical order and find healing and justice after periods of war or tyranny." And we might add "systematic institutional child abuse". He continues: "There are many ways to do this: the de-Nazification of West Germany after 1945 followed by the de-Stasification of East Germany after 1989, the Chilean, Salvadorean and Argentine truth commissions, the international tribunals in The Hague and Arusha, the indictment of Pinochet. In all these processes, the essential problem is how to balance peace and justice, forgetting and forgiving, healing and punishment, truth and reconciliation." And now to the central point, he makes relevant to my inquiry: "you cannot create a culture of freedom unless you eliminate a specific range of impermissible lies. I put it this way—a range of impermissible lies—because all societies, and all human beings lie to them selves all the time. Citizens of liberal democracies are fooling themselves if they think we live in truth. None of us can support very much truth for very long. But there are a few lies that do such harm that they can poison a society just as there are a few lies in private life that can destroy a life."

[2]See the inspired review essay "Mendacious Flowers" by Jay (1999), reviewing George Stephanopoulos' *All too Human: A Political Education* and Christopher Hitchens' *No One Left to Lie to: The Triangulations of William Jefferson Clinton*.

behavior during the Cuban missile crisis to cover ups concerning pedophile priests in the Catholic church, from Freud's efforts to decode the secrets beneath civilized life to contemporary exposés of the private lives of politicians, lying and deception seem ubiquitous in our public life.[3]

In a prominent example, the conviction of Lord Archer, one-time chairman of the Conservative party in the United Kingdom, and the many media biographies that quickly followed his downfall, brought home a host of questions about the question of lying, not just in public life but also, more generally, in our private lives. With Lord Archer's successful prosecution, listening to the report of his trial, it seems that among his peers—conservative politicians, leaders of the party, friends, and even his wife—lying was considered to be much more heinous than anything to do with his sexual immorality. Indeed, even his wife seemed to tolerate his many affairs outside marriage. As she publicly acknowledged in a TV interview, sexual infidelity was only moderately important to her. Far more important to her, and Archer agreed, was loyalty. Archer's one-night stands with prostitutes were also, it seems, easily forgiven. Sexual "indiscretions" are tolerated in both public and private morality, but lying is not. Is this because our sexual mores and morality have changed whereas the morality of lying has remained more or less the same? Does this speak to the stability of some ethical practices and the relative changeability of others?

Archer's crime was officially *perjury*, a concept in jurisprudence that refers to the intentional act of swearing a false oath or falsifying an affirmation to tell the truth. Perjury is a statutory offense in England under the Perjury Act of 1911, which states:

> If any person lawfully sworn as a witness or as an interpreter in a judicial proceeding willfully makes a statement material in that proceeding, which he knows to be false or does not believe to be true, he shall be guilty of perjury, and shall, on conviction thereof on indictment, be liable to penal servitude for a term not exceeding seven years, or to imprisonment … for a term not exceeding two years, or to a fine or to both such penal servitude or imprisonment and fine. (http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/1-2/6)

Perjury is the act of a person's deliberately making false or misleading statements while under oath, sometimes termed "false swearing" or "false oath", or, in archaic language, "forswearing".

Archer was convicted of three charges of perverting the course of justice and one of perjury (committed at the 1987 trial) that centered on allegations he had sex with

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[3]See http://www.law.ua.edu/programs/symposiums/law-and-lies/. The rest of the quotation insofar as it concerns the law runs: "And what is true in our public life is also true in our legal life. While the law recognizes deceit as a cause of action in torts, as the late Arthur Leff famously noted, the law tolerates a lot of deception in 60 market transactions. In addition, while law condemns lying under oath, it condones deceptive silence. While law condemns entrapment, it condones deception and decoys as acceptable tools in the enforcement of the criminal law. While the law values truth it defends the right to lie as an aspect of freedom of speech. This conference will investigate the way law responds to lying and deception. When and where are they tolerated? When and where are they condemned? What can we learn about law by examining its attitude toward lies?"

a prostitute. He was cleared of one charge of perverting the course of justice. Archer also was accused of lying and creating false diaries to win £500,000 in libel damages from the Daily Star newspaper in 1987. He took the tabloid to court and won after it alleged that he paid prostitute Monica Coghlan for sex in September 1986. This is how the BBC News reported the charges facing Archer:

> Lord Archer faced dishonesty charges arising from his successful 1987 libel action, in which he won £500,000 damages from the Daily Star over allegations that he slept with a prostitute. He was accused of asking his former friend Mr. Francis, 67, to provide him with a false alibi for a night relating to the libel case and of producing fake diary entries to back up his story. Lord Archer was found guilty of two charges of perjury and two of perverting the course of justice. The first charge was that he perverted the course of justice by asking Ted Francis to give him a false alibi. The second guilty verdict was on a charge that he perverted the course of justice by using a fake diary in the libel trial. He was found to have perjured himself in an affidavit to the High Court for the libel action. He was also found to have perjured himself on oath during the libel trial. He was cleared of a final count of perverting the course of justice in relation to a diary used in the libel case, in which he was awarded £500,000 after the Daily Star claimed he slept with a prostitute. (http://www. legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/1-2/6)

On reflection, one might argue that truth and the absence of lies are at the very basis of jurisprudence as it is in public life. Or perhaps we might say that the methodology for determining the facts of the case and the systematic elimination of lies or lying is close to the heart or spirit of the enterprise. Indeed, one of the objects of the law of evidence is to ensure that witnesses tell the truth; in the past, when religious faith was stronger the oath, swearing on the Bible was deemed to be an effective and appropriate way of ensuring that witnesses told the truth.

Certainly, the religious view in the Christian tradition has taken a very dim view of lying and lies. From the Old Testament, and from Augustine through to Montaigne, lying has been viewed as a sin that admits no reservations. The Old Testament references concern both the issue of false witness, for example, "you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (*Exodus*, 20:16), and how lying is wicked and against the Lord in the following proverbs: "a worthless person, a wicked man […] one with a false mouth" (*Proverbs*, 6:12); "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (*Proverbs*, 12:22). Similar sentiments are expressed in the New Testament through the use of the Greek words for "false" or "lie" (*pseudes*, *pseudomai*, *pseudos*, *pseustes*) and Greek words for "deceitful" or "false" (*dolios*, *dolioo*, *dolos*, *doloo*). The Greek word for truth is *aletheia*, meaning "not hidden". To lie, then, is to hide the truth.

In *De Mendacio*, Augustine takes a hard line on lying; all lies, no matter what form, are wrong.[4] That lies are sinful, not surprisingly, is also the view of the Catholic Church. In *Retractions*, Augustine suggests that his discussion is "useful for the mind", "profitable for morals", and, most importantly, its significance lies in "inculcating the love of speaking the truth" (Schaff 1887). It is this broad

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[4]Augustine starts his inquiry with the question of the innocent or charitable lie and whether it is right in any circumstances to tell a lie, see http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1312.htm.

theological position that is echoed by Montaigne and seems to indicate both that lying is in some sense a deformation of meaning and language, and that it is harmful to society. Bok (1999, p. 31), as one of the first modern commentators to revive academic interest in lying, adopts a similar view that lying is detrimental to society because it erodes trust as the very foundation of relations among human beings that sustains our institutions. It is argued that truth and truthfulness is a precondition for society.

General introductions to ethics generally emphasize that lying is morally wrong because it breaches and erodes trust as a habitual way of being that exemplifies the very ethos of society. Rachels and Rachels (2011), for instance, writing about subjectivism in ethics, first discuss the basic idea of ethical subjectivism and the evolution of the theory from simple subjectivism to emotivism in order to introduce "moral facts". Rachels then discusses "proofs" in ethics in terms of the process of giving reasons and explaining why reasons matter by offering the following example: once we know that Jones is a bad man because he is a habitual liar, then we can go on to explain why lying is bad. In other words, we can support our judgments with good reasons.

> Lying is bad, first, because it harms people. If I give you false information, and you rely on it, things may go wrong for you in all sorts of ways. Second, lying is bad because it is a violation of trust. Trusting another person means leaving oneself vulnerable and unprotected. When I trust you, I simply believe what you say, without taking precautions; and when you lie, you take advantage of my trust. That is why being given the lie is such an intimate and personal offense. And finally, the rule requiring truthfulness is necessary for society to exist – if we could not assume that other people will speak truthfully, communication would be impossible, and if communication was impossible, society would be impossible. (Rachels and Rachels 2011, pp. 42–43)

This rationalist approach echoes Baier's (1958) *The Moral Point of View*, which constructs a justification for morality anchored in rationality and reason-giving practices grounded in practical reason that "saves" the enterprise from forms of subjectivism and egoism. The approach does not recognize, however, the genealogical approach to truth-telling or to lying.

Foucault on Truth-Telling

On truth-telling as a practice, I have been greatly influenced by Foucault's genealogical approach. Foucault himself was strongly influenced by his readings of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, and was indebted to them for ideas that led him to emphasize the close conceptual and historical relations between the notions of truth, power, and subjectivity in his genealogical investigations. Nietzsche's work in particular provided Foucault with novel ways to retheorize and conceive anew the operations of *power* and *desire* in the constitution and self-overcoming of human subjects. It enabled him to analyze the modes by which human beings become subjects without according either power or desire conceptual

priority over the other, as had been the case in the discourses of Marxism (with its accent on *power*) and of Freudianism (with its accent on *desire*).

From Nietzsche's *On The Genealogy of Morals* (1967), Foucault also intellectually inherited the concept and method of genealogy, a form of historical analysis that inquires into the formation and structure of value accorded Man, Reason, and Truth, through a variety of techniques, including both etymological and *linguistic* inquiry alongside the investigation of the *history* of concepts.[5] For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, genealogy *replaces* ontology. Foucault's investigations into the modes by which human beings are made into subjects are, above all, historical investigations of constellations of practices. For Foucault, as for Nietzsche, there are no essences of human beings and, therefore, also there is no basis for universalist theories concerning the *nature* of human beings. Given that there is no human nature, fixed once and for all—no essential or universalizable nature—there is no question of a *science* of human nature (à la Hobbes or Hume) or the possibility of building or deriving theories of morality, politics, or law on the grounds of this alleged nature. All questions of ontology, in the hands of Nietzsche and Foucault, become radically historicized. There is no sovereign individual or transcendental subject, but only human beings that have been historically constituted as subjects in different ways at different times through constellations of practices.

Foucault did not deny either the classical ideal of truth as correspondence to an independently existing world or the contemporary correspondence theory of truth. The early Nietzsche, by contrast, cast doubt precisely on this ideal. For the early Nietzsche, truth is a convenient fiction, merely a belief about the possession of truth.

In "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" Nietzsche famously writes that "truth" is:

> A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. (Nietzsche 1976, pp. 46–47)

This deceptively simple position is based on the understanding that concepts are human inventions, and, as metaphors, do not correspond to reality. After inventing them, we forget that they are only metaphors and treat them as "true", believing that they correspond to and picture reality (see Glenn 2004). There is no match between language and the thing-in-itself. And yet, although based on illusions, "truth" is still useful for practical purposes. It is essentially a part of aesthetics, a mythical work of the imagination that, through a web of concepts, describes the world through art. While Nietzsche's view might strike the reader as idiosyncratic, Simpson (2007) makes the case that there are striking parallels between Nietzsche and Plato on truth

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[5]See Nietzsche's famous and, apparently, only footnote in the entire corpus of his work, which appears after the first essay of the *Genealogy of Morals*.

and truthfulness and, as a consequence, they share similar views on the nature of philosophy and its possibilities.

Foucault's innovation was to historicize "truth", first, materially, in discourse as "regimes of truth" and, second, in practices as "games of truth". He gave six lectures entitled "Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia" at Berkeley during the months of October–November in 1983. In these lectures, Foucault outlines the meanings and the evolution of the classical Greek word "*parrhesia*" and its cognates as they enter into and exemplify the changing practices of truth-telling in Greek society. In particular, Foucault (2001, p. 107) investigates "the use of *parrhesia* in specific types of human relationships" and "the procedures and techniques employed in such relationships".

Foucault claims that the word *parrhesia* occurs for the first time in Euripides (c. 484–407 BC) and then is used in the Greek world of letters from the end of the fifth century BC. The word is normally translated into English as "free speech" and *parrhesiastes*, the person who uses *parrhesia*, is the one who speaks the truth. Indeed, the meaning of the word, as it evolves in Greek and Roman culture, develops five major characteristics. First, it is associated with *frankness*: *parrhesia* refers to a special type of relationship between the speaker and what he says.[6] Unlike rhetoric, which provides the speaker with technical devices to help him persuade an audience, covering up his own beliefs, in *parrhesia*, the speaker makes it manifestly clear what he believes. Second, *parrhesia* is linked with *truth*. In the Greek, *parrhesia* is a speech activity where there is an exact coincidence between belief and truth. Foucault (2001, p. 15) claims: "The 'parrhesiastic game' presupposes that the *parrhesiastes* is someone who has the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and secondly, to convey such truth to others."

Foucault (2001, pp. 19–20) provides a summary of his discussion of *parrhesia*:

> *Parrhesia* is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain relation to himself or other people through criticism […] and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia*, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.

This new kind of philosophical truth called *parrhesia* that arises in Greco-Roman culture, Foucault (2001, p. 106) characterizes, first, "a practice which shaped the specific relations that individuals have to themselves." Much of the philosophy that emerged with Socrates and Plato, and shaped the philosophical tradition that is still ours today and which defines the roots of our moral subjectivity, involved the playing of certain games of truth.

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[6]I use the male pronoun here on purpose as the *parrhesiastes* must know his own genealogy and status, and is usually a male citizen (see Foucault 2001, p. 18).

The Culture of Lying

In my view, Foucault's genealogical analysis of truth-telling requires a supplementary analysis of the practices of lying. After all, the concepts of true and false, truth and falsity, are strictly binary concepts that take their purchase from the contrast with each other, especially in the development of two-value logics or the truth table calculus. As Urchs (2006) points out, while lying is a ubiquitous element of communication, it is almost completely ignored by traditional logic. There is a deep-seated tendency dating from early Christian sources to assume that lying is a defective function of language, and that its structure deforms communication to the harm of society generally, even although this normative view is not accompanied by a formal or logical analysis. Urchs (2006, p. 69) suggests that:

> In many types of communication, lying is an important element [and] Deceptive speech acts have some characteristic internal structure. Moreover, in order to be efficient they must respect certain requirements of rationality. A formal analysis of lying is very difficult.

He concludes:

> To sum up the […] hindrances for an adequate formal analysis of lies we put together the main points.
>
> - lies produce inconsistencies;
> - whether an utterance is a lie or not heavily depends on context;
> - according to background knowledge there may occur a flic-flac-effect;
> - causal and intentional aspects are indispensable in an analysis of lies.
>
> To be sure, all these topics are handled by modern logic. And yet, to merge them into one formal framework, which remains practically feasible seems hard enough. So it is not surprising that a satisfactory logic of lying is still to come. (Urchs 2006, p. 88)

Urchs (2006) demonstrates the difficulty of proposing a formal account of lying. In the informal sense (in ordinary language as opposed to logical notation), Mahon (2008) provides the standard definition of lying following Bernard Williams' formulation:

> I take a lie to be an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, which is made with the intention to deceive the hearer with respect to that content" (Williams 2002, p. 96); or, more formally: To lie = $_{df}$ to make an assertion that is believed to be false to some audience with the intention to deceive the audience about the content of that assertion.

Mahon modifies the definition as:

> To lie = $_{df}$ to make a believed-false statement to another person with the intention that that other person believe that statement to be true.

He unpacks four necessary conditions:

> First, lying requires that a person make a statement (statement condition). Second, lying requires that the person believe the statement to be false, that is, lying requires that the

statement be untruthful (untruthfulness condition). Third, lying requires that the untruthful statement be made to another person (addressee condition). Fourth, lying requires that the person intend that that other person believe the untruthful statement to be true (intention to deceive addressee condition).

This logical analysis is useful, but lying is also a complex cultural practice that varies across history and cultures and is open to a genealogical analysis. Some idea of its complexity can be gauged both from the difficulty of treating it in a formal system and also in terms of the overlapping network of concepts involving a range of different practices from the white lie, (Plato's) noble lie, fibbing, the barefaced lie, to bullshit, bluffing, deceit, deception, and pathological lying.[7] This list does not mention associated forms of dissimulation, dissembling, propaganda, newspeak, deliberate bias, and so on. These associated practices demonstrate how pervasive lying is. If we were to take in these and other forms of behavior, then it would help explain how pervasive lying is in public and personal life. To recognize these associated forms and practices points to the demand for an "anthropology of lying", although I have found no such study or literature. (Ethnography itself seems dependent on "true" narratives of informants and is famously open to distortions, as Margaret Mead's experience in recording Pacific stories demonstrates.)[8]

I am encouraged to think of lying as a set of cultural practices partly through the influence of Foucault's genealogy. Wittgenstein's (1953) language-game analysis is also very helpful in understanding lying as yet another language game. Wittgenstein writes: "Lying is another language game that needs to be learned like any other one" (§ 241). Lying is not a misuse of language, it is just another language game. The simulation would seem to be one of the basic features of language games of emotions. Buzar et al. (2010, p. 34) take up this point to apply speech act theory to lying:

> "to lie" is a speech act like any other and it should be performed properly (satisfied, happy, etc. similar as "to pretend", Austin, 1961:201–20), and "lying is a language-game that needs to be learned like any other one" (it should be learned and practiced properly, Wittgenstein, 2001 §:249). "Being truthful" and "being lying" or to tell the truth and to tell a lie are practically irrelevant for understanding lying. What seems to be much more interesting are cases where these two are hard to differentiate because there are lies which do not include previous intent to deceive and there are truths which are in fact half-truths, incomplete truths, or avoidances of the truth.

Buzar and his colleagues explore the many intermediate cases between lying and truth-telling to conclude:

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[7]See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lie that mentions 30 "types" of lying though it is doubtful if these are discreet types.

[8]It is reported that Americans and Europeans share stereotypical beliefs about the way liars act: characteristically they avert their gaze, turn away, and pause while giving implausible accounts. Yet these beliefs are "probably false". See Global Deception Research Team (2006). On Mead's alleged hoaxing, see Freeman (1999).

> we lie much more than we in fact believe we do (this rationalisation is part of good practice of various professions like business, legal, political, medical etc. as well as our daily life in which habitual lying, is part of upbringing, customs and culture). (Buzar et al. p. 38)

It is a substantial argument that brings us back to lying and its ubiquity in public life, and also to Hannah Arendt's insightful essay "Lying in Politics" with which this paper began.

Arendt's article consists of a series of reflections on the Pentagon Papers, and she bases her assessment on the history of the lie in political culture. In "Truth and Politics" (1967) and "Lying in Politics" (1971), Arendt reflects on the fundamental relationship between lying and politics. She explains the nature of political action in the context of lying with surprising consequences that run against modern intuitions and threaten to change our understanding of the history of politics. In "Lying in Politics", Arendt provides an account of political imagination that draws inter-connections between "the ability to lie, the deliberate denial of factual truth, and the capacity to change facts, the ability to act." She writes:

> when we talk about lying, and especially about lying among acting men, let us remember that the lie did not creep into politics by some accident of human sinfulness; moral outrage, for this reason alone, is not likely to make it disappear. The deliberate falsehood deals with contingent facts, that is, with matters which carry no inherent truth within themselves, no necessity to be as they are; factual truths are never compellingly true. The historian knows how vulnerable is the whole texture of facts in which we spend our daily lives; it is always in danger of being perforated by single lies or torn to shreds by the organized lying of groups, nations, or classes, or denied and distorted, often carefully covered up by reams of falsehoods or simply allowed to fall into oblivion. Facts need testimony to be remembered and trustworthy witnesses to be established in order to find a secure dwelling place in the domain of human affairs. From this, it follows that no factual statement can ever be beyond doubt—as secure and shielded against attack as, for instance, the statement that two and two make four. (Arendt 1971)

She continues in a Nietzschean vein:

> It is this fragility that makes deception so easy up to a point, and so tempting. It never comes into a conflict with reason, because things could indeed have been as the liar maintains they were; lies are often much more plausible, more appealing to reason, than reality, since the liar has the great advantage of knowing beforehand what the audience wishes or expects to hear. He has prepared his story for public consumption with a careful eye to making it credible, whereas reality has the disconcerting habit of confronting us with the unexpected for which we were not prepared. (Arendt 1971)

The pervasive role of lying in modern politics requires a historical analysis. Cathy Caruth (2010, p. 79) explains that in her earlier work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt had elaborated the concept of political action that arose in the Greek *polis* "when words and deeds replaced the mute force of violence and created a public sphere in which men appeared before each other and created the world anew in unpredictable and unexpected ways." Caruth (2010, p. 80) points out "the public realm has become a realm of deception" and, in a world where there is such a conflict between factual truth and politics, it is a short step to the denial of history

and to the systematic political lying that invests itself in the public realm and creeps into the history books and into the culture more generally.

The real danger, Caruth (2010) maintains, is when the lie loses its traditional role within politics as an alternative means for determining true political action to become an all-consuming activity that replaces action and history altogether to deny history and constructing, in Arendt's words, an "entirely fictional world", a possibility hugely enhanced in a world based more and more on PR and "image making" (p. 82). How much more forbidding is Arendt's analysis when it is viewed at the end of the first couple of decades of the twenty-first century when the Internet has become the first truly global medium, the image has become supreme, and finance culture has penetrated and percolated to heart of government.

Examining lying and deception in political culture, Markland (2012) demonstrates that there have been significant historical differences in the moral assessment of lying in political culture in the West. Adopting a Nietzschean and Foucauldian perspective, he argues that lying can serve to shore up and maintain culture:

> With the rise of political realism and secular-positivism, the focus of politics shifted from maintaining the moral and psychological well-being of citizens (and the values they live by), to the maintenance of political power and stability for as long a duration as possible (which was central in the works of Machiavelli and Hobbes). Lying, in turn, was then justified as a useful political tool for sustaining political power. By examining the re-conceptualization of lying (for the Greeks it could be morally necessary and politically expedient, for the Christians it was morally prohibited) for purposes of merely maintaining power, I attempt to elucidate a crucial way in which lying serves life. Specifically, lying can be used to create the stability of society and the political state that is necessary for maintaining culture and values more generally (p. 14).

There are, as far as I can see, two saving graces and checks: first, as Markland remarks, we should be concerned if lying becomes the province of a one-party state and, second, drawing on Arendt, the individual lie or even the tissue of lies is only tolerable in the name of true political action. If it ever becomes the singular philosophical principle, we are lost.

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Donald Trump and the Politics of Lying

Douglas Kellner

Donald Trump is probably the biggest liar in the history of the modern US presidency. He tells repeated Big Lies despite empirical evidence and well-documented media reports contracting his lies. When confronted with contrary evidence, Trump and his handlers dismiss any critical claims about Trump as "fake news" and "alternative facts". Echoing Chairman Mao and Comrade Stalin, Trump calls the media "the enemy of the people" and rarely does a day go by without a barrage of attacks and rants on his Twitter account. Trump is also the biggest bullshitter to inhabit the modern presidency, constantly bragging about himself and his magnificent accomplishment, never failing to BS to the nth about his amazing achievement and fabulous presidency. Thus, the Trump Regime can be seen as "post-truth" and hyper-Orwellian in its use of blatant lies, propaganda, and pure bullshit.

In an article on "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying" written during the Bush/Cheney era, I distinguished between *Big Lies* that were endlessly repeated until they had the ring of truth, like the claim that Saddam Hussein was hiding "weapons of mass destruction" and was in alliance with al Qaeda (a favorite whopper of Dick Cheney and his minions), contrasted to *Bold Lies* that made claims that people knew were not true (such as the Saddam-al Qaeda connection), and *Brazen Lies* where the lying liar as well as those being lied to knew were not true, but that the spin patrol repeated anyway. In this study, I want to argue that Donald Trump continued this tradition of Big, Bold, and Brazen Lies during his 2016 presidential campaign and from the beginning of his presidency to the present.

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The Trump Campaign, Birtherism, and Donald's Daily Lies

Donald Trump began his political career as a gadfly of the right-wing swamps of the Internet with his promotion of the lie that President Barack Obama was not born in the United States. Indeed, Trump was one of the most assiduous promoters of the "birther" myth, erroneously claiming that Barack Obama was born in Africa and thus not eligible to serve as President of the United States, hence grounding his political career in a Big Lie about the first African-American President (for a biography of Trump that documents his role in promoting the "birther myth", see D'Antonio 2015, p. 283ff). In the 2008 presidential election, Trump made a big show of insisting that Obama present his birth certificate to prove that he was born in the USA, and although the Obama campaign provided photocopies of the original birth certificate in Hawaii and notices of his birth in Honolulu newspapers at the time, Trump kept insisting they were frauds. Many of his followers continue to this day to believe the myth that Obama was not born in the USA.

In Trump's presidential campaign kickoff speech on June 16, 2015, when he announced he was running for President, Trump and his wife Melania dramatically ascended down the stairway at Trump Towers, and the Donald strode up to a gaggle of microphones and dominated media attention for days with his drama. The opening speech of his campaign included typically inflammatory and arguably mendacious remarks that held news cycles in thrall for days when he stated: "The U.S. has become a dumping ground for everybody else's problems. [Applause] Thank you. It's true, and these are the best and the finest. When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."

This comment ignited a firestorm of controversy and a preview of Things to Come concerning vile racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, blatant lies, and the other hallmarks of Trump's Cacophony of Hate and Mendacity. Debate over Trump's assault on undocumented immigrants and Trump's immigration proposals would come to dominate daily news cycles of the Republican primaries and would continue to play out in the general election in Fall 2016 and into his presidency. Early in his campaign, Trump promoted the Big Lie that he was going to build a wall along the border with Mexico, and the chant "Build the Wall! Build the Wall!" became a regular feature of his frenzied campaign rallies. Adding to the Big Lie, he insisted that Mexico would pay for the wall and, in a call and response with his audience, Trump would bark, "Whose going to pay for the wall?" and the crowd would scream: "Mexico! Mexico!"

Former Mexican President Vicente Fox insisted that Mexico would not pay for the wall. Critics pointed out that immigration authorities noted that illegal immigration from Mexico to the USA was on the decline, and that more Mexicans were

returning to their country than crossing the border into the USA,[1] a condition that would continue through the election and into Trump's presidency. Further, once it was clear how expensive the wall would be, and that there was little congressional support for it, as of the first year of Trump's presidency, there was no serious effort to build the Great Wall of Mexico, although Trump continued to promise his audiences that he was going to "build that wall!"

In the lead up to the first Republican primary debate in Fall 2015, Donald Trump got the majority of media time, and his daily campaign appearances and the Republican primary debates became media spectacle dominated by Trump. Every day that Trump had a campaign event, the cable news networks would hype the event with crawlers on the bottom of the TV screen proclaiming "Waiting for Trump", with airtime on cable TV dominated by speculation on what he would talk about. Trump's speeches were usually broadcast live, often in their entirety, a boon of free TV time that no candidate of either party was awarded.

The rest of the day after the Trump event, the pundits would dissect what he had said and his standing vis-à-vis the other Republican candidates. If Trump had no campaign event planned, he would fire off a round of Tweets against his opponents on his highly active Twitter account—which then would be featured on network cable news discussions as well as social media. From the beginning of his campaign and into his presidency, his speeches, tweets, and off-the-cuff remarks would be filled with a remarkable number of lies, although only a few contentious media critics documented and dissected the candidate's Daily Lies.[2]

Hence, Trump's orchestration of media spectacle and a compliant mainstream media were crucial in thrusting Trump ever further into the front-runner status in the Republican primaries, winning for him the overwhelming amount of media attention and, eventually, the Republican nomination. The first major quantitative study released notes that from mid-June 2015, after Trump announced that he was running through mid-July, Trump was in 46% of the news media coverage of the Republican field, based on Google news hits; he also got 60% of Google news searches. Forthcoming academic studies may reveal how Trump dominated all media from newspapers to television to Twitter to social networks during the Republican primaries and then during the general election (Somaiya 2015).

Like other authoritarians, Trump uses Big Lies to mobilize his base, but no previous politician has founded his campaign and then presidency so exclusively on Big Lies nor lied so fulsomely; neither has any major presidential candidate in recent memory relied so heavily in his campaign on media spectacle. While Donald

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[1]Trump's vision of Latin American immigrants pouring over the border into the USA is a fantasy, as studies have shown that more Mexicans are returning to Mexico after working in the USA than coming into the country, illegal or not; see Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, "More Mexicans Leaving Than Coming to the U.S. Net Loss of 140,000 from 2009 to 2014; Family Reunification Top Reason for Return" (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015).

[2]For examples of Trump's Daily Lies during the primary campaign, see Lippman et al. (2016) and Berrien (2016). For analysis of Trump's lie-based and post-factual 2016 election campaign, see Kellner (2016a, b).

Trump does not have a party apparatus or ideology as did the Nazis, his lies being ad hoc and situational rather than programmatic, parallels between Trumpism and authoritarian populism nonetheless can be fairly made. Trump's August 21, 2015, mega-rally in Mobile, Alabama, for example, was televised by cable news networks broadcasting nothing but Trump, hyping up his visit to a stadium where he was expecting 30–40,000 spectators, the biggest rally of the season. Although only some 20,000 showed up, which was still a "huge" event in the heat of summer before the primaries had even begun in earnest, Trump's flight into Alabama on his own TrumpJet, and his rapturous reception by his admirers became the main story of the news cycle, as did many such daily events in what the media called "the summer of Trump".

Watching the TV footage of the event, one cannot help but notice how the networks repeatedly showed images of Trump flying his airplane over and around the stadium before landing and then cut away to big images of the TrumpJet every few minutes. This media spectacle is naturally reminiscent of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*—the chillingly effective German Nazi propaganda film of 1934. *Triumph* focuses on Hitler flying in his airplane through the clouds, looking out the window at the crowds below, landing and driving through the streets of Nuremberg for a mass rally. The crowds along the way and in the stadium greet Hitler with rapture as he enters the spectacle of a highly orchestrated Nazi rally so brilliantly recorded by Riefenstahl's film.

I do not know if the Trump operatives planned this parallel, or if it was just a coincidence, but it is clear that Trump, like Hitler, has organized a fervent mass movement outside of the conventional political party apparatuses. Like followers of European fascism in the 1930s, Trump's supporters over the years have suffered economic deprivation, political alienation, humiliation, and a variety of hard times, and they appear to be looking for a political savior to help them out with their problems and to address their grievances. Like Hitler, Trump built his campaigns on Big Lies and found compliant media to promote them.

Certainly, Trump is not Hitler and his followers are not technically fascists. Nonetheless, the terms *authoritarian populism* and *neofascism* accurately describe Trump and his supporters. Erich Fromm's theories provide an analysis of authoritarian populism that helps explicate Trump's character and his appeal to his followers (Kellner 2016a, b). Authoritarian movements ranging from German and Italian fascism to the movement led by Franco in Spain to other dictatorships in Latin America and throughout the world have all featured authoritarian leaders and followers ready to submit to their demands. Donald Trump is similarly an authoritarian leader who has mobilized an authoritarian populist movement grounded in a politics of lying.

Trump proposes magical solutions like a wall along the Mexican border that will keep out the armies of immigrants who, he claims, are taking away "American" jobs, as well as committing waves of crime—claims that have been called into question by empirical studies. Trump claims he will create millions of "great" jobs without giving specific plans. Meanwhile, his own problematic business record includes many bankruptcies, the hiring of foreign workers to toil on his projects

(many of whom he does not pay) and failures to pay many subcontractors who worked on his projects.

Trump thus presents himself as a superhero who will magically restore the USA to greatness, provide jobs and create incredible wealth, and restore the USA to its rightful place as the world's superpower. In this fairy tale, the billionaire king will fight and destroy all the nation's domestic and foreign enemies; the superman will triumph and provide a happy ending for the American people.

While Trump plays the role of the *Übermensch* celebrated by the Nazis and embodies their *Führerprinzip*, Trump is a very American form of the superhero and lacks the party apparatus, advanced military forces, and disciplined cadres that the Nazis used to seize and hold power. Like other right-wing American populists, Trump bashes the Federal Reserve, the US monetary system, Wall Street hedge fund billionaires, and neoliberal globalization, in the same fashion as Hitler attacked German monopoly capitalism. Yet even as he ranted against monopoly capitalists, Hitler accepted large donations from German industrialists—a fact brilliantly illustrated in the famous graphic by John Heartfield, "The meaning of the Hitler salute", which showed Hitler with his hand up in the Nazi salute to receive money from German capitalists. Just as Hitler denounced allegedly corrupt and weak party politicians in the Weimar Republic, Trump decries all politicians as "idiots", "stupid", or "weak"—some of the would-be strongman's favorite words. In fact, Trump even attacked lobbyists, claiming that he was beyond corruption, since he self-financed his campaign (the truth of which is doubtful, but sends the right signals to his supporters).

Like the alienated and angry followers of European fascism, many of Trump's admirers have suffered under the vicissitudes of capitalism, globalization, and technological revolution. For decades, they have watched their jobs being moved overseas, displaced by technological innovation, or lost through unequal economic development amid increasing divisions between rich and poor. With the global economic crisis of 2007–08, many people lost jobs, housing, savings, and suffered through a slow recovery under the Obama administration. The fact that Obama was the first black president further outraged many white Americans, their racism and prejudices inflamed by 8 years of attacks on the Obama administration by right-wing media and the Republican Party.

Yet, unlike classic dictators who are highly disciplined with a fixed ideology and party apparatus, Trump is chaotic and undisciplined, viciously attacking whoever dares criticize him in his daily Twitter feed or speeches, thus dominating the daily news cycles with his outrageous attacks on Mexicans, Muslims and immigrants, politicians of both parties, and media commentators who dare to criticize him. Trump effectively used the broadcast media and social media to play the powerful demagogue who preys on his followers' rage, alienation, and fears. Indeed, by March 2015, media companies estimated that Trump received far more media coverage than his Republican Party contenders, and by June, MarketWatch estimated that he had received $3 billion worth of free media coverage. The free coverage continued into the election. Yet, at whim, Trump bans news media from

his rallies, including *The Washington Post* or *CNN*, if they publish or broadcast criticisms that he doesn't like.

Like followers of European fascism, Trump's authoritarian populist supporters are driven by rage: they are really angry with the political establishment, the media, the economic, and other elites. They are eager to support an antiestablishment candidate who claims to be an outsider (which is only partly true, as Trump, following in his father's footsteps, has been a member of the real estate industry for decades) (on Trump's business failures, see Barrett 2016; D'Antonio 2015; Kranish and Fisher 2016). Trump provokes their rage with classic authoritarian propaganda techniques like the "Big Lie", when he repeats over and over again, that immigrants are pouring across the border and committing crime, that all his primary opponents, the media, and Hillary Clinton are "big liars", and that he, Donald Trump, is the only one telling the truth—clearly the biggest lie of all.

Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and his xenophobic nationalism play into a violent racist tradition in the USA and activate atavistic fears of other groups among his white followers. Like European fascists, Trump draws on restorative nostalgia and promises to make his country "great again". This plays to the vile side of the American psyche and the long tradition of nationalism, America First-ism, and plain prejudice, i.e., the desire to keep minorities and people of color in their place and potential immigrants outside of the country.

Like fascists and authoritarian populists, Trump thus presents himself as the superhero leader who can step down from above and solve the problems that Washington and politicians have created, and his followers appear to believe that Trump alone can stop the decline of America. Trump supporters say that Trump is the only one who talks straight about issues such as immigration, problems with Washington, and the role of money in politics. In late August 2016, Trump increasingly used the term "the silent majority" to describe his followers, a term Richard Nixon used to characterize his white conservative followers who felt marginalized in the fierce racial, political, and cultural battles of the 1960s—a coded phrase to appeal to aggrieved white voters.

Trump promotes himself as the tough guy who can stand up to ISIS, the Chinese, and "America's enemies". In the Republican primaries, he presented himself as "the most militarist" guy in the field and promised to build up the US military and to destroy ISIS and radical Islamic terrorism utterly, restoring the USA to its super-power status (which he says was lost by the Obama administration). With his bragging, chest-pounding, and hypermacho posturing, Trump promises a restoration of white male power and authority, and with it America's greatness. Trump will make "America First" once again and vanquish all its enemies.

"America First" was the slogan of an anti-interventionist movement in the early 1940s to keep the USA out of World War II that was associated with Charles Lindbergh and American fascist and anti-Semitic forces. Trump doesn't stress this connection, but it serves as a dog whistle to some of his extreme right-wing followers. "America First" was also highlighted in the Republican National Convention, and Trump has said it will be a major theme of his administration. To Trump, this means disconnecting from other countries: more barriers to trade,

tougher negotiations with long-standing allies in NATO, and a more restrictive immigration policy. Trump's "America First" discourse is thus an important part of his "Make America Great Again" discourse and links Trump's isolationism with his anti-NATO and pro-Putin discourse. Trump has continued to complain that the USA is paying too much of NATO's expenses and is prepared to dismantle the organization that has helped provide more than 60 years of European and American peace and prosperity after the two terrible World Wars of the twentieth century. Also disturbing is how Trump continues to speak favorably of his favorite authoritarian strongman, Vladimir Putin. And Trump has even made favorable remarks about Saddam Hussein, who was "so good at killing terrorists". Trump is obviously attracted to authoritarian dictators and makes it clear that he is prepared to be the United States' savior, redeemer, and strongman.

At the Republican convention, Trump insisted that "you won't hear any lies here", which was, of course, a laughable lie (for documentation of Trump's Big and little lies, see the compilation up to the present, Leonhardt and Thompson 2017). In his closing speech at the Republican National Convention, Trump repeated at least four times that he was the *law and order candidate*, replaying a major theme in the 1968 Nixon campaign. When he deployed his America First motif, it was intensified by his storm troopers chanting "USA! USA! USA!" After the gloom and doom vision of a declining America and a rigged system, in a highly pessimistic take on the USA and its "broken" system, Trump declared in Fuhrer-fashion: "I alone can fix it". Hence, his crowd was led to believe that he, Donald J. Trump, a self-proclaimed billionaire who has bankrupted many companies, defaulted on bank loans, failed to pay contractors for service and is the very epitome of capitalist greed, is The One who is going to fix the system and "Make America Great Again"—a slogan he puts on the baseball caps that he sells to his supporters.

The baseball hat makes it appear that Trump is an ordinary fellow and links him to his followers as one of them—a clever self-presentation for an American authoritarian populist. Sporting a hat on the campaign trail is especially ironic, given that Trump appears to have borrowed this fashion from award-winning, progressive documentary filmmaker Michael Moore, who is perhaps the quintessential anti-Trump in the American political imaginary. Further, in his speech at the Republican convention, this shouting, red-faced demagogue presented himself as the "voice of the forgotten men and women"—a Depression-era phrase of the Roosevelt administration, which Trump inflects toward his white constituency. In his speeches and on the campaign trail, Trump uses the crisis discourse deployed by classic fascist and authoritarian regimes to describe the situation in the USA and the need for a savior. In contrast to the Nazis, however, Trump tells his followers that it's his deal-making skills as a supercapitalist billionaire that credential him to be the President, and he induces his followers to believe that he will "Make America Great Again" by making a "great deal" for it and them.

Trump's campaign replicates in some ways the submission to the leader and the cause found in classic authoritarian movements. Yet at the same time, Trump also embodies the recent trends toward celebrity politics and the increasing confluence of politics and entertainment in the USA. Further, Trump is a master at promoting

his image; he would even call up journalists pretending to be a PR agent to get gossip items about himself planted in newspapers.

In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), Erich Fromm engages in a detailed analysis of the authoritarian character as sadistic, excessively narcissistic, malignantly aggressive, and vindictively destructive. These are personality traits that are arguably applicable to Trump. Think, for instance, of the disturbing footage of Trump mockingly mimicking a disabled reporter. Hence, the threats we face in his presidency raise the issue of what it means to have an aggressive, destructive, and authoritarian individual like Trump as President of the United States. What would a foreign and domestic policy governed by a malignantly aggressive leader look like? How we deal with these threats will determine the future of the United States and trajectory of world history.

The Trump Presidency, Fake News, and Bullshit

Trump began his presidency with a Big Lie concerning the numbers of people attending the Obama versus Trump inaugurations, claiming that his was the biggest ever. When TV pictures showed that there were many more people at the 2008 Obama inauguration, with comparative pictures of crowds on the mall and lining parade routes, Trump sent out his hapless press secretary Sean Spicer to read a carefully and nastily written attack on the media for misrepresenting the number of people who had attended Trump's inauguration, and threatened that the media would be held responsible for their lies and distortions. Spicer correctly argued that the Federal Parks Service did not do crowd estimates, but falsely claimed that many more people took the Metro the day of Trump's inauguration than on Obama's inauguration, and provided what turned out to be completely false numbers in his false claim that Trump's inauguration was the biggest in history.

The D.C. Metro quickly released inauguration day rider statistics for the Trump and Obama events, and reported that many more took the Metro the day of Obama's inauguration, thus leading CNN and other media to report that the Trump administration began its reign with bald-faced lies on its first day in office, and had launched an attack on the media for allegedly lying, while available statistics and facts indicated that the media had in fact been in the main truthful in its reporting about comparative crowd size and Metro usage. The comparative pictures of the Obama and Trump administration inaugurations showed clearly that many more attended the former.

On Sunday morning of inauguration weekend, more evidence emerged that the Trump administration had gone full out post-factual as the President of the United States tweeted: "Wow, television ratings just out: 31 million people watched the Inauguration, 11 million more than the very good ratings from 4 years ago!" The still functioning media quickly pointed out, however, that: "Nielsen reported Saturday that 30.6 million viewers watched inaugural coverage between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday. That figure is higher than Obama's second inauguration in

2013, which drew 20.6 million viewers. But it's lower than that of Obama's first inauguration in 2009, when 38 million viewers tuned in, according to Nielsen. The record is held by Ronald Reagan, when 42 million watched his inaugural festivities in 1981" (Battaglio 2017).

The same morning, on *Meet The Press,* the Trump administration's multiple and multiplying by the minute misrepresentations of inauguration numbers were cited by moderator Chuck Todd who asked Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president: "Why put him [i.e. Press Secretary Sean Spicer] out there for the very first time, in front of that podium, to utter a provable falsehood? It's a small thing, but the first time he confronts the public, it's a falsehood?" Conway responded: "Don't be so overly dramatic about it, Chuck. You're saying it's a falsehood, and they're giving—our press secretary, Sean Spicer, gave alternative facts to that. But the point really is—Todd jumped in and retorted: "Wait a minute. *Alternative facts?* Alternative facts! Four of the five facts he uttered … were just not true. Alternative facts are not facts; they're falsehoods."

The Trump staffers have obviously come to believe that they can define facts and mold reality as they like. If the media doesn't validate their truths, Trump and his post-factual media brigade will take them on, challenging the press to subject every word of Trumpspin to rigorous scrutiny and, if necessary, critique. Trump spinster Kellyanne Conway will evermore be remembered in the Post-Truth Hall of Infamy as "alternative facts" Conway, and Sean Spicer earned the title of 4L4 M Spicer (as in "four lies four minutes"); everything they say should be subjected to the same rigorous scrutiny and criticism that should be applied to the ultimate source, who is, of course, Trump himself.

During the early days of the Trump presidency, Spicer riled the media by his aggressive hectoring tone, threats that the press would be held responsible for their lying reporting. After loudly and aggressively repeating his litany of lies, he shouted: "And that's what you should be reporting!" The press does not like to be told what to report any more than politicians and their spinners like to be confronted with real facts that trump their "alternative" ones. Democracy requires a separation of powers, and the press serves classically as the "fourth estate" to provide part of a system of checks and balances against excessive, misused, or corrupt state power. The inestimable political value of a free press, we must remind ourselves, is that it can speak truth to power.

In the first full day of the Trump administration, Trump bragged of his "running war against the media" in front of CIA employees before the fabled CIA "Wall of Fame", and sent his flunkeys out to battle the press in the media for the next few days, but the barrage of ridicule, criticism, and anger they stirred up suggest that the White House lost the battle of Day One. Of course, Trump's daily twitters, which continued despite advice to the contrary, and his "running" war with the media, might be a smokescreen for the real war to push through a right-wing and militarist agenda while the press is distracted chasing down the Daily Lies and shooting down the "fake news" and alternative facts. To this day, Trump and his staff continue to dismiss reporting they don't approve of as "fake news". The Trump base have labeled the mainstream and increasingly anti-Trump press as "false news" tout

court, marking the first time that a president has so broadly delegitimized the mainstream media.

The State of the Union was not good as the Donald J. Trump White House Reality Show moved into its first weeks in office. The stock market had declined for 5 days straight before the inauguration and lost all of its gains for the year and continued to go down, although there would no doubt be roller coasters to come; indeed, by summer 2017, Wall Street indexes were at an all-time high as finance capital speculated in an orgy of irrational exuberance, as if they were entering the Last Days. The Earth's temperature had risen to all-time highs for the third year in a row, and a Trump administration full of climate deniers contemptuous of science continued to heat things up, ultimately shocking the world with the announcement that the USA was leaving the Paris Climate Accords.

Inauguration weekend had seen extreme weather events from coast to coast as heavy rain continued to pound California after a severe drought and rational minds were undergoing trauma at the unthinkable thought of a Trump presidency. Yet as in classic authoritarian movements, the followers accepted the pronouncements of the leader as gospel; although Trump lied more outrageously than any candidate in recent US history, his supporters turned out in droves throughout the country shouting hateful slogans, repeating Trump's lies. Like classical authoritarian demagogues, Trump produced scapegoats to mobilize his followers. The scapegoats Trump projected were not only Muslims and immigrants but also "the establishment" and a shadowy cabal of global capital identified Hillary Clinton, successfully portraying her as part of the enemy against which Trump railed. Trump played the "forgotten men and women" card effectively and presented himself as the people's chosen leader, although it was not clear what he would actually deliver to his followers.

The lack of critical thinking and disregard for facts and truth in Trump's followers demonstrates failures of the education system in the USA and the need for a reconstruction of education if US democracy is to survive. Democratic elections require an informed electorate, capable of distinguishing between true and false, and seeing through lies and deception. Donald Trump had been a celebrity con man for decades; his skills in bamboozling the public helped him enormously in the election. He is positioning himself as the first aggressively post-factual president, and citizens, with better education and the aid of a free and vital press, must become capable of holding him accountable.

An informed electorate means an educated electorate, and good jobs in the current economy require higher education, or specialized skills, to level the playing field. This, in turn, requires federal, state, and local government to expand the sector of higher education, and to provide access, training, and financial support to those sectors of the society, including or perhaps especially Trump's base, to help them better their own lives. Trump, however, chose charter school advocate and enemy of public education Betsy DeVos his nomination for Secretary of Education. DeVos appeared before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for her confirmation hearing January 17, 2017, and demonstrated that she knows next to nothing about current debates concerning the evaluation of student performance,

knew even less about disability provisions in public education, and that she was in general unqualified to run the Education Department. DeVos, a right-wing billionaire champion of vouchers and charter schools, revealed that she didn't really know anything about public education at all. When asked about her positions on guns in schools, she referred to previous testimony that guns in a certain school district were needed to protect students and teachers from grizzly bear attacks; when reporters questioned officials in the school in question, they claimed that they had no grizzly bear problems, and no guns in their schools.

DeVos' written statement was revealed to be heavily plagiarized, and testimony indicated that the charter schools DeVos had championed in Michigan were failures, yet she squeaked through the Senate committee questioning her, and barely made it through a full Senate vote that required Vice President Mike Pence to cast the tie-breaking vote. This was the first time in history in which the Veep had to break a tie to confirm a cabinet member, linking Pence to DeVos forever.

In her first foray into the public after her confirmation, protesters blocked DeVos from entering a Washington D.C. Middle School. The protesters shouted: "You do not represent anything that they stand for," referring to DeVos' attacks on public schools. Demonstrators held signs attacking her position on public education and her support for vouchers and charter schools, expressing fears that DeVos would undermine public education, which John Dewey and so many others have argued is essential for a democracy and the opportunity for equal advancement for all its citizens.

As the Trump presidency passed its 100 days mark, the lies continued to multiply (see Cillizza 2017; Kellner 2017), a condition that persists to the present day. There is speculation that Trump simply does not know the difference between truth and lies, does not care, and says whatever pops into his mind at the moment, or whatever serves his purpose at the time. Others speculate that Trump is a classic case of the bullshitter, who makes things up as he goes along and fabulates, exaggerates, dissembles, lies, and bullshits as a mode of discourse and way of life.[3] In any case, Donald J. Trump serves as a poster child for the post-truth presidency and makes recovering postmodernists nostalgic for truth, rationality, and sanity.

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Post-truth and Critical Pedagogy of Trust

Petar Jandrić

Introduction

Deception is an omnipresent and pervasive feature of human interactions—in everyday lives, we all tell numerous white (and not so white) lies in order to show our best side to the world. Public personae such as actors and singers present themselves using highly mediated images and videos in order to look young, beautiful and desirable; politicians send carefully crafted messages that show them in (what they believe is) the best possible light. Looking at individuals, the psychologists Whitty and Joinson argue 'lying is a part of daily life. The Internet has simply provided a new place for individuals to lie' (2008, p. 56). However, the Internet has not merely enhanced individual human tendency for deception. Defined as 'circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (Oxford Dictionaries 2016), post-truth is a far-reaching social concept which threatens the traditional concepts of knowledge, decision-making and politics.

According to Rider (2017), 'in order to understand the idea of "post-truth" or "post-fact" politics, it is tempting to focus on the lie. I think there is reason to resist this temptation. There are a plenty of utterances that fall in between'. This chapter examines such utterances and defines post-truth as a curious phenomenon that resides in between truth and lie, emotion and reason. Based in a philosophy of trust and analyses of digital trust, it defines post-truth as a poisonous public pedagogy and seeks response in a new, whole-rounded critical pedagogy of trust.

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The Curious Divorce of Truth and Trust

Hancock (2007) defines digital deception as 'the intentional control of information in a technologically mediated message to create a false belief in the receiver of the message'. This definition consists of three important parts: (1) deception needs to be deliberate, (2) deception needs to be addressed at someone, and (3) deception needs to be technically mediated. Hancock furthermore classifies digital deception into identity-based deception, which consists of faking identities, and message-based deception, which consists of faking the content of communication. Using these helpful classifications, he studies the psychology behind various forms of online deception from fake e-mails to fake online dating profiles.

Let us apply Hancock's definition to a recent example of post-truth. On 18 February 2017, 'Donald Trump appeared to invent a terrorist attack in Sweden during a campaign-style rally in Florida on Saturday, inviting questions that he may have confused the Scandinavian country with a city in Pakistan' (Topping 2017). Trump's deception is clearly message-based, because it consists of providing false content of communication. However, it is impossible to determine whether the deception was deliberate and who is the exact addressee of the deception. The act of deception took place in a public talk, yet the majority of its recipients received information through one or another technically mediated medium such as television and the Internet. Now let us take a brief look at the consequences of Trump's talk. On the one hand, the video recording clearly shows that Trump's deception has produced the desired emotional response from the audience. On the other hand, many people read news reports revealing the deception, and some of them may have formed different opinions based on that revelation (see, for instance, readers' comments under the article which reveals the deception) (Topping 2017).

The majority of people received Trump's message online, so a possible route for analysis is the psychology of online deception. Drawing from Hancock (2007), Whitty and Joinson describe the truth-lies paradox:

> If the technology itself is both an enabler of honesty and deceit, one needs to look beyond explanations rooted in technological determinism in order to fully understand people's behaviour online. Specifically, we would argue that to understand the nature of truth and lies online, one needs to look at the context in which people act alongside the person themselves. We would also argue strongly that truth and lies are not mutually exclusive, and that in much online interaction people are strategically managing their online identity to meet both their own goals and the expectations of the other. While doing this, they are also balancing their actions with the norms for the site or community in which they are active (Whitty and Joinson 2008, p. 143).

Finally, Whitty and Joinson place 'trust as central to the truth-lies paradox' (Whitty and Joinson, p. 143).

For Hancock (2007) and Whitty and Joinson (2008), truth is dialectically intertwined with trust: I trust you, because I expect that you are telling the truth. In the context of post-truth, however, it is almost completely irrelevant whether the alleged terrorist attack in Sweden really happened. Appealing to emotion and the

personal beliefs of his audience, Trump reinforced their widespread fear of Islamic terrorism as a rising threat to the Western world. Then, Trump used the emotional resonance with his audience in order to create trust that he is the right person for resolving that problem—in this context, 'minor' issues such as truthfulness of his claims are secondary.

What caused this curious divorce between truth and trust? In her insightful explanation, Sharon Rider takes as her point of departure Peter Thiel's remarks at a meeting of the National Press Club in Washington DC: 'I think one thing that should be made distinguished here is, the media always is taking Trump literally. It never takes him seriously, but it always takes him literally. I think a lot of the voters who vote for Trump take Trump seriously, but not literally' (cited in Rider 2017). Rider's conclusion is not simply that voters are willing to 'forgive' a lie or two to their favourite candidate. Rather, she argues that post-truth creates an intellectual universe wherein the message conveyed is that evaluation according to criteria of truthfulness is irrelevant.

> If Thiel's analysis is correct, Trump's victory is not due primarily to the unleashing of hitherto suppressed sexist, racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic sentiment among white male voters, but in an intuition that Trump's bombastic and seemingly incoherent statements are not statements at all. (…) Lying assumes that what is being conveyed is content, but on Thiel's interpretation, Trump is not conveying content. He's not talking about policy, but rather about an attitude toward policy (Rider 2017).

Obviously, this fundamental rejection of truth results in stark consequences. 'When we retreat from the responsibility of establishing and recognizing a minimal common ground for debate and decision, we implicitly dismiss the possibility of democratic forms and processes' (Rider 2017). By divorcing truth from trust, post-truth does not bring about yet another form of the lying politician modelled in the image of Donald Trump. Instead, it fundamentally threatens traditional conceptions of knowledge, decision-making and politics.

Post-truth and the Philosophy of Trust

The post-truth divorce of truth and trust, combined with the rejection of truth, brings into foreground the questions of trust. In the following discussion, therefore, I will examine the relationships between truth and trust using four main themes: (i) the nature of trust and trustworthiness, (ii) the epistemology of trust, (iii) the value of trust and (iv) trust and the will (McLeod 2015).

(i) Trustworthiness is a human property, while trust is an attitude towards other people. Based on that distinction, Macleod identifies four main requirements for establishing trust.

> Trusting requires that we can (1) be vulnerable to others (vulnerable to betrayal in particular); (2) think well of others, at least in certain domains; and (3) be optimistic that they

are, or at least will be, competent in certain respects. Each of these conditions for trust is relatively uncontroversial. There is a further condition which is controversial, however: that the trustor is optimistic that the trustee will have a certain kind of motive for acting (McLeod 2015).

In the age of the digital reason, we are more vulnerable to betrayal than ever—information can be easily manipulated; identities and messages can be easily falsified. At the same time, however, we are less vulnerable to other forms of attacks; for the most part, technology-mediated hate messages are less hurtful than physical violence.

People strategically, and often unconsciously, manage their online identities in order to meet social expectations (Whitty and Joinson 2008, p. 143), so thinking well of others and believing in their competence can be based on dubious information. Furthermore, even the most correct information is useless without correct interpretation. For instance, my colleague from information services lists the following abbreviations in his e-mail signature: MCP, MCTS, MCSA, MCITP and MCT. The abbreviations look impressive, so I took the effort and found out that they represent a list of Microsoft's certificates (Microsoft 2017). This indicates that I should trust my colleague's competence—after all, he is certified by one of the largest information technology companies in the world. Being a technological novice, however, I do not really understand the meaning of these certificates, so I still do not know whether they will help my colleague to resolve the problem with my computer. Macleod's fourth requirement for trusting, the trustee's motive for acting, is also problematic. In my work environment, I can trust that my colleague is motivated to resolve my computer problem because he gets paid for the job. However, if I seek help from an online company, I have no idea who sits behind the other screen and why. Trust and trustworthiness have never been easy, yet it is safe to say that the digital age has brought about an additional level of complexity—the age of widespread information has brought about increasing difficulties in trusting that information.

(ii) The central question of traditional epistemology of trust is: 'Ought I to trust or not?' (McLeod 2015). Since the dawn of humankind, the philosophical branch of scepticism has brought about valuable insights into this question. In scepticism, however, trust is dialectically intertwined with truth—and post-truth explicitly rejects this relationship. In a post-truth environment, therefore, pragmatist and rationalist approaches focused on problem-solving and action provide a much better fit. For instance, I can meet my brother and unconditionally believe what he told me in person—these things happen between siblings. However, Faulkner shows that trusting and being trustworthy cannot be explained merely by reference to 'person's beliefs and desires' or teleological considerations, and claims that 'in trusting one takes on commitments, not merely to act in certain way, but also to premise one's practical reasoning on a trust-based view of the interaction situation' (Faulkner 2014, p. 1795). Depending on the context, my trust-based view can change. I unconditionally believe my brother, yet I can never be completely sure about

truthfulness of his Facebook posts and e-mails because his accounts might have been hacked. It is easier (and more common) to hack social media accounts than e-mails, so my trust in brother's Facebook post is lesser than my trust in brother's e-mail. As this example illustrates, rationalist context-specific approaches to traditional epistemology of trust are suited to the age of the digital reason.

Traditional epistemology of trust is primarily concerned with the individual. However, post-truth is an inherently social phenomenon, so it should be examined using the approach of social epistemology. For instance, advocates and deniers of climate change often use the same empirical datasets in order to arrive at opposing 'scientific truths' (Gleick 2007). Certainly, the question whether human beings cause global warming has only one true answer—so one of these groups uses pseudoscience to prove own ideological positions. However, what happens when both sides of the debate possess certified 'experts' with proper degrees and credentials? And what happens if we cannot easily identify political, economic and other interests behind the competing 'truths'? According to Goldman and Blanchard (2016),

> A fundamental problem facing the layperson is that genuine expertise often arises from knowledge of esoteric matters, matters of which most people are ignorant. Thus, even when a layperson listens carefully to someone professing great expertise, the layperson may be at a loss to decide whether the self-professed expert merits much trust.

For laypersons faced with stark disagreement between the experts, Goldman and Blanchard list several strategies for finding the truth: (1) 'to arrange a "debate" between the self-professed experts'; (2) 'to inquire which position endorsed by one of them is most common among all (professed) experts'; and (3) to compare 'their respective track-records: how often has each expert correctly answered past questions in the domain?' (ibid). However, these methods are sometimes indecisive and sometimes hard to convey, so laypersons naturally incline to scientific 'truths' which provide a better fit to their overall emotion, personal belief and underpinning motifs and interests.

The testimony of experts is just one possible spin-off of a more general problem of testimony. Social epistemology inquires into the epistemic nature of collective agents, issues pertaining to scientific knowledge, democracy, free speech and ethics. While traditional epistemology illuminates post-truth within a rationalist framework, social epistemology provides various useful tools for analysing the collective production of knowledge and its social consequences.

(iii) Trust is the bread and butter of human civilisation. According to Macleod, 'without trusting or being trusted in justified ways, we could not have morality or society and could not be morally mature, autonomous, knowledgeable, or invested with opportunities for collaborating with others' (McLeod 2015). In the age of the digital reason, many traditionally individual activities are increasingly transforming into the realm of collective thinking and the social production of knowledge (the transition from

traditional humanities to digital humanities is a typical case in point) (Wark and Jandrić 2016; Peters and Jandrić 2017; Jandrić 2017a, b). Thus, trust becomes increasingly important for almost all kinds of knowledge development.

(iv) Trust is cultivated through a history of interactions between the trustees—one cannot wake up one morning and decide to trust someone. Therefore, philosophers have defined trust in terms of belief, emotion and various combinations thereof (McLeod 2015). A decisive take on the relationships between trust and the will is far beyond the scope of this paper, yet the non-voluntarily nature of trust as belief and the complexity of trust as emotion are essential for understanding the nature of post-truth. Post-truth does not care about truth, because it is emotional. Post-truth is non-predictable, because it is not rational. Post-truth strongly influences people, because it appeals to basic human instincts. As can easily be seen from Donald Trump's presidential campaign, the emotional, the irrational and the instinctive cannot be counterbalanced with truth and reason. This conclusion does not imply that truth and reason are unimportant—in the face of blatant lies and stupidity, most people will respond negatively. But this negative response is often instinctive and emotional, which is to say, irrational. Thus, the response confirms the content of the post-truth message, namely, that emotion and instinct are often more powerful than truth and reason.

Post-truth and Digital Trust

Digital information and knowledge heavily depend on trust—they require us to trust the machine, the people behind the machine and the logic within the machine. Digital machines require input information, which can be true or false. With adequate input information, their inner workings consist of numerous adding operations between two distinct electronic states described as zero and one. However, human beings are physically unable to comprehend long lines of numbers, so computers execute many levels of translation between the source code and programming languages. Some computer programs, called algorithms, have certain abilities for personalised, autonomous-like action. For instance, recommender engines such as Amazon.com use buyer's history of browsing and purchases in order to advertise products that might be of interest. This automatic translation and algorithmic manipulation is generally straightforward, and does not raise significant trust issues. For as long as computer programmers do not purposefully implement malicious code, such systems are generally safe to use.

As of recently, however, algorithms are becoming increasingly complex; moreover, the computer industry is strongly oriented towards the integration of various algorithms. For instance, browsing the Internet using Google collects data

about our interests; data from Google Mail reveal our communications; buying on Amazon.com reveals our shopping habits; participating on Facebook reveals our social networks; using Google Maps reveals the history of our physical movement; and using porn websites reveals our sexual fetishes. When cross-referenced, this data ceases to be innocent, and this brings about the emerging field of algorithm studies. The integration of algorithms poses significant challenges, especially regarding the ownership of data and the manipulation of data.

Scientists of the past believed their books and logarithmic tables; scientists of today believe their journal databases and calculators. Arguably, there is no significant difference between publishing an ill-informed book on paper and an ill-informed article online. However, this is where similarities end. In the case of physical books, one could be reasonably sure that the presented text is original; in the case of online articles, one can never be sure whether the content was manipulated by a third party on the long road between publishing and reading. Furthermore, non-manipulated articles can contain true or false statements, authentic or misleading statistics, diagrams or images. Given that most people today find their information online, the trustworthiness of our online searches deserves more focused attention.

Analysing Trump's talk in Florida (Topping 2017), it is easy to check whether a terrorist attack indeed happened in February 2017 in Sweden—such an event would surely provoke wide media coverage. Using standard online search tools, however, some truths are much more difficult to verify. For instance, Adolf Hitler's Propaganda Minister in Nazi Germany Joseph Goebbels allegedly said: 'If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it, and you will even come to believe it yourself'. A simple Google search on this sentence returns an astonishing number of 9,570,000 pages; as an exact quote, it returns 937 results.[1] Reviewing more than 9 million websites is practically impossible for a single person, so the best thing one can do is to look into the first few web pages and hope that Google has picked the most relevant ones. However, we probably do not need all the results anyway: even a brief look at the most popular web pages indicates a serious lack of evidence that Goebbels really made that statement. To the contrary, it is attributed Goebbels, Hitler and others in the randomly revised websites.

The majority of researched pages quote the sentence without questioning its factual correctness. However, some of the found pages do question its validity. For instance, author of 'Think Classical' (2016) blog claims that the quote 'is apocryphal, and there is no evidence that he ever articulates such a principal. It is high irony indeed that the apocryphal quote has been falsely attributed to so Goebbels so many times that people have come to believe it'. Symptomatically, the blog does

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[1]This search was conducted on 21 November 2016 at www.google.com. In the first instance (simple Google search), the sentence 'If you repeat a lie often enough, people will believe it, and you will even come to believe it yourself.' was entered into the search engine without quotation marks, and Google returned ca 9,570,000 web pages. In the second instance (exact quote), the sentence was entered with quotation marks, and Google returned 937 web pages.

not reveal the full identity of its author and does not list (all) the used sources—therefore, this assertion is also far from a proven fact.

Another famous adage with unclear source(s), Segal's law, says: 'A man with a watch knows what time it is. A man with two watches is never sure'.[2] On the Internet, Segal's law multiplies to stunning proportions. Answering my simple query, Google has offered 9,570,000 answers—but none of the web pages I was able to review have provided actual 'facts'. So how do I determine whether Goebbels really made that statement? Perhaps, using more sophisticated search methods, I would eventually find an answer in a reliable source such as an academic book or article. However, if the topic has not been covered in reliable sources, my only recourse is to do my own research on primary data, which could of course take years.

There is no such thing as digital trust—only a mash-up of visible and not-so-visible data and algorithmic functions. Therefore, the trustworthiness of digital sources is always established in relation to the nondigital. Online credit card frauds are resolved by tracing physical goods, online identity theft is resolved by tracing physical documents and trust in online documents (such as journal articles) is established by the reputation of their publishers. The complexity and murkiness of digital technologies widen the ambiguous space between truth and lie, thus providing fertile ground for post-truth. However, the problem of post-truth is not exclusively digital, and understanding it takes us beyond the digital realm.

Post-truth as a Public Pedagogy

In information sciences, the content of the human mind is commonly classified according to the so-called data–information–knowledge–wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy (Fig. 1). 'Data are symbols that represent the properties of objects and events. Information consists of processed data, the processing directed at increasing its usefulness' (Ackoff 1999, p. 170). 'Knowledge builds on information that is extracted from data' (Boddy et al. 2005, p. 9); depending on philosophical traditions, it can take numerous shapes and definitions. Finally, 'wisdom is the ability to act critically or practically in any given situation. It is based on ethical judgement related to an individual's belief system' (Jashapara 2005, p. 17–18).[3]

According to Rowley, 'There is a consensus that data, information and knowledge are to be defined in terms of one another, although data and information can both act as inputs to knowledge. This consensus reaffirms the concept of a hierarchy that links the concepts of data, information and knowledge' (Rowley 2007, p. 174).
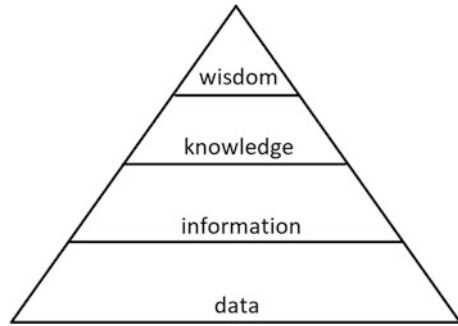
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[2]The origin of this quote is also unclear. For more detail, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Segal's_law.

[3]These concepts have numerous definitions, which are meticulously collected and analysed in Rowley (2007).

As can easily be seen from various analyses in this chapter, post-truth ignores truth
at all levels: data is falsified, information is misprocessed and knowledge is dis-
torted. Post-truth data, post-truth information and post-truth knowledge inevitably
lead to post-truth wisdom. This conclusion has an important temporal dimension.
Data, information and knowledge describe what was and what is—they are focused
on past and present. However, wisdom provides guidelines for human behaviour—
it looks straight into the future. Therefore, post-truth is a poisonous public peda-
gogy oriented towards raising future generations of people with distorted world-
views, opinions and ethical judgements.

The current critical media response to post-truth predominantly seems to consist
of revealing lies and fallacies (Rider 2017). However, this study indicates that
post-truth fundamentally rejects the criterion of truth, and thrives in the curious
space between truth and lies; based on trust, it easily absorbs factual discrepancies
and even blatant lies. The complex relationships between truth and trust can be
analysed using Choo's analysis of transformations between signals, data, infor-
mation and knowledge. According to Choo (2006: 132), physical structuring of
signals and data precedes cognitive structuring of information, which in turn pre-
cedes structuring of belief. Each of these stages provides more opportunity for
human agency, which closes the loop between the structures. Some scenarios for
this loop are as follows:

1. False data will produce false information will produce false knowledge—in turn,
   false knowledge will produce false interpretation of new (correct and false)
   information and data.
2. Correct data will produce false information will produce false knowledge—in
   turn, false knowledge will produce false interpretation of new (correct and false)
   information and data.
3. Correct data will produce correct information will produce false knowledge—in
   turn, false knowledge will produce false interpretation of new (correct and false)
   information and data.
4. Correct data will produce correct information will produce correct knowledge—
   in turn, correct knowledge will produce correct interpretation of new (correct
   and false) information and data.

The loop needs to be expanded by two improbable, but possible scenarios: false knowledge can produce correct interpretation of information and data, and correct knowledge can produce false interpretation of information and data.

The loops listed are based on linear relationships between data, information and knowledge; in reality, however, relationships between these elements are bidirectional and networked. Furthermore, the analysis could be refined by adding questions pertaining to signals and agency. However, even this simplified analysis of relationships between truth and trust clearly explains the futility of typical responses to post-truth focused on revealing lies and fallacies. In order to counterbalance the poisonous post-truth pedagogy, we need a critical pedagogy of trust that pays equal attention to data, information and knowledge.

Conclusion

Post-truth is a complex mashup of signals, data, information, knowledge and wisdom; truth and deceit; fact and emotion; reason and instinct. These concepts and forces have always marked human existence, yet the digital age made their mutual relationships increasingly complex. Truth and reason are as important as ever, yet post-truth thrives in an ambiguous space between truth and lie, reason and instinct —in this space, truth gets replaced by trust. Mainstream analytic philosophy seeks individual solutions in rationalist approaches to trust, and social epistemology seeks collective solutions in areas such as the problem of testimony, social epistemology of science, ethics and democracy.

The era of post-truth came alongside the era of digital reason, yet the trust-worthiness of digital sources can be established only in relation to the nondigital. Trust is the main prerequisite for digitally enabled collective intelligences, yet the inherent untrustworthiness of digital technologies indicates that we should place more value on trust in other human beings. Trust is cultivated from emotion and belief, yet it results in decisions about objective truth. Trust links our past and present (represented by data, information and knowledge) and our future (represented by wisdom). In this way, post-truth becomes a poisonous public pedagogy that can be counterbalanced only by a fully developed critical pedagogy of trust.

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Post-truth and the Journalist's Ethos

George Lăzăroiu

Introduction

Determining what precisely constitutes "news" is challenging. One reason for this is that the social mechanisms involved in that constitution are often ignored or misunderstood. On a basic level, the news is often seen as certain construal of a sequence of events, packaged in such a way as to be interesting and intelligible, and, importantly, identifiable as news. Even if the ideal of neutrality remains at the core of journalism, values and convictions are unavoidable in the selection and prioritization of material. Moreover, there are issues of capacity and impact, i.e., that are must be taken into consideration in any discussion of the role of mass media (Peters 2017a). An accurate reporting of events may well avoid explicit ethical assessments, but it cannot help but depend on judgments about what is out of the ordinary ("newsworthy") or significant. Thus, a given report of events can be both true and factual, at the same time as the choice to report those events is born out of interests having to do with a political agenda, or, more likely, an economic one on behalf of the publisher. But the picture becomes more complicated and the issue of objectivity more complex with the advent of the Internet, social media, and the like. Here, one is tempted to rely on method is evidence of good practice with respect to neutrality. In other words, the aim of objective reporting, even if it is always inevitably a matter of negotiating between competing functions of journalism, must remain a core value (Berry 2016). Ethical norms are thus an essential component of routine journalism. At the same time, reporting is not merely a reflection of occurrences and tendencies in society, but also an important influence on those events and movements (Mihăilă et al. 2016). The public, monitoring the main topics in the press, becomes cognizant of their collective and opposing values. In and through journalism, a society disputes how to restructure its organizations (Lăzăroiu 2010a) and confront the

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future. The vitality of the public realm of the postindustrial society is directly affected by the caliber of its media and the expertise of its journalists. Democratic self-governance relies on organized form of relaying events accurately to the public. Thus, the question of objectivity or neutrality ultimately involves the issue of how journalists are trained, since they produce narratives that shape the public realm. Accuracy, comprehensiveness, neutrality, and autonomy are considered normative standards essential to that training (Ward 2015).

Journalistic Norms and Social Relevance

The ethic of impartiality is a benchmark of good journalism. It affects the character of reporting and regulates the professional performance. But the ideal of objectivity is concretized in different ways. The traditional focal point of impartiality in journalism is the narration of facts; this focus assumes a given perspective on the world and a truthful approach to the representation and communication of facts. This perspective has been fragmented by online platforms, and the multiplicity of forms that it engenders. News blogs and citizen journalism have brought about a reassessment of objectivity as an approach to managing facts, and even as a norm for truthfulness, in an ever-changing setting of variegated usage and consumption (Maras 2013). The question is, then, whether there can or should be generally accepted means of control and, if so, according to which criteria?

The goal of objectivity functions as a mechanism of rational self-control within journalism understood as a pragmatic enterprise. The duties tied to the virtue of neutrality emerge out of agreements. Thus, to identify the responsibilities of journalism is to seek agreement on the appropriate standards for regulating the social routine of journalism. The social contract between the public and the publicist requires journalists to be neutral and autonomous in their work. Traditional journalism is the systematized, socially established undertaking of communicating to the audience, from the detached view of the public good. The newsperson's function is to endeavor to differentiate, amid the dispute of opinions and positions (Lăzăroiu 2010a), what is consistent and accurate and how such pieces of information may impact the public good. Journalism is then the distribution and evaluation of the most relevant facts for an independent polity. Trust, integrity, and consistency are the foundation of this connection (Ward 2015).

By its very nature, the news aims at the novel or extraordinary. In that respect, the news is inherently relative to the status quo. When retelling the course of events, the journalist recreates that course on the basis of subsequent conversations, observations, and/or retrieval of documents. Best practice requires that quotations or secondhand information are corroborated according to standard source criticism. Thus, the further disconnected the reporter is from the occurrence reported, the

greater the responsibility for him to follow assiduously the norms constituting "objective reporting". Proper acknowledgment must be granted to opposing perspectives. Fact-checking is a precondition, especially for the numerous narratives that do not constitute breaking news. The perceived legitimacy of established media outlets would be considerably enhanced if, when sifting through the evidence in their reporting, journalists standardized their selection of authorities and made sure that their sources are not only perceived as reliable sources of information but also see to it that they convey what makes their testimony authoritative (Goldstein 2007).

Journalism is in the end a matter of how journalists reconcile, conceive, and interpolate events and issues, i.e., in how they constitute an intelligible order, on the basis of which the public understands the occurrences in question. In this sense, journalists have a role in establishing apprehensions, propensities, and objectives in the minds of the public. One could say that in clarifying the world in terms of the agenda they set and the order they make, they tell the public who it is. Journalists serve as an elucidatory community (Lăzăroiu 2011a), supplying information and explanations, within particular routines and established practices, which then become integral to the public's interpretation of events. Thus, the public is indirectly but powerfully influenced by the nature of the norms and routines that journalists follow. As targets of attempts to shape news on the basis of particular interests, agendas on the part of media organizations to generate material according of a certain length and in given subject categories stipulated by the owners, etc., the work of journalists is mired in potential conflicts of interest and values. The need for a scoop may lead to a disregard of the requirement to check sources, for instance. Decisions regarding reliability of sources, consistency of information, and news values may have to be made swiftly (Sanders 2003).

Journalism has an underexploited capacity to shore up the status of seeking the truth as a starting point for political discussion (Lăzăroiu 2017). The best way of doing this would be to look for stories that are relevant for the public without merely following the dictates of novelty, economic, or political interests. Rather, the goal would be to turn the tables on established truisms, by bringing to the public eye perspectives and situations that force people to question what they take for granted. The ideal here is to give the audience occasion not merely to scrutinize "power", but also to scrutinize themselves, and their own position. Importantly, this approach may at times require that the journalist himself detach himself from his own self-understanding. It may require, for instance, that he reconfigure his own assumptions about what is important, significant, interesting, or relevant in pursuit of the truth. In the relentless quest for truth, objectivity may require new practices, especially given the new media landscape (Blank-Libra 2017).

The Quest for Truthfulness and the Vagueness of Factual Accuracy

The core question regarding ethics in journalism concerns both production, i.e., approaches to the collection of information, and the manner in which news is shaped for use. To address this question seriously means looking closely at the system of duties and privileges involved in the task. Media ethics is a field developed to address the decline of criteria and the adverse of impact that an unregulated commercial market may have on the press. Journalists need to be made aware of their setting, position, and challenges in the production of news (Lăzăroiu 2011b). Market-driven journalism is grounded on commercial priority rather than professional norms like consequence neutrality, or ethical considerations, such as fairness. Hence, there is a personal moral issue at stake for the journalist, who is at one and the same time engaged in an effort to do well by his paper or journal, and, at the same time, follow the ethics of journalism as a calling (Berry 2016).

Journalism ethics deals with how criteria and values actually affect the complex routine of the press. Journalism produces factual material and establishes views that become components of a social debate that affects public policy. News is used as evidence by various interests and as information by individuals. Journalists are both investigators struggling to find out the truth regarding events, and communicators involved in the discussion. Thus, the journalist is both agent and effect of the system of dissemination of information; his work both influences and is influenced by it. The role of the individual journalist, his professional ethos, demands that he assist in making the dispute on public matters as sound, comprehensive, and impartial as possible, i.e., his role is to elucidate what the issues are, account for different perspectives, and investigate questionable assertions (Nica 2017). He should unmask and combat the forces that stage-manage public discussion, and be a useful instrument in a society's examination of its disorders. Finally, he should expedite the delayed arrival of crucial insights and valuable information. But, as was noted, investigation and assessment in journalism take place in the framework of an economic reality and a media-imbued infosphere, where self-interest, unwarranted beliefs, and group advocacy are the context in which these high aims are to be achieved (Ward 2015).

Journalists have always depended greatly on gossip. If unfettered, the abuse of unsubstantiated information deprives the audience of the means to form well-founded opinions. The public may not be able to identify the source or judge the veracity of his testimony. It is often assumed that the initial answers to journalists' inquiries are more accurate than ones formulated after the interviewee has had the chance to reconsider his answers. For this reason, journalists often will not allow interview subjects to amend their opinions after the fact. At the same time, while this rule of thumb has its virtues, it also has its limitations. While the job of a journalist is to gather and double-check material to ensure credibility, the Internet has created public pressure to disseminative information before it is corroborated, since the latter is a time-consuming task and the social media incline toward

immediacy (Goldstein 2007). So while truth and accuracy are at the center of the journalistic undertaking, it is not clear that they can remain untouched by current demands. One way of dealing with this paradox is to acknowledge that numerous narratives may be constructed from the same information, assimilating a variable degree of truth. Thus, a journalist's activity entails a persistent conflict between cultivating trust (Mihăilă 2017) and preserving skepticism. While trust is the entire foundation upon which the reporting structure is established and legitimated, it can be allowed that a certain degree of suspicion is in order "as the story develops", in real time. But such reporting is only acceptable, again, where it is not invalidated by the goals of impartiality and exactness (Sanders 2003).

The Shifting Nature of Journalism and the Notion of Objectivity

Ordering truthful accounts may involve levels and dissimilarities of representation. Inaccurate representations may be the outcome of (i) value judgments, assumptions, and stereotypes that deform messages intentionally or inadvertently; (ii) conscious efforts to establish an unsubstantiated public agenda and to influence public opinion; and (iii) failure to follow professional standards and procedures for investigation and reporting. In each case, the truth as the primary purpose of investigation and reporting is not undermined in principle, even if it is in fact. Objectivity remains the paragon value in an ethical attitude toward journalism: to be impartial is to satisfy ethical criteria that constitute the starting point of the profession (Berry 2016).

The classical ideal of journalism as a steady gathering of facts that commences as a clutter of unsubstantiated narratives or persuasive claims by unreliable sources is still alive. All first-rate journalism and reporting entail dynamic analysis, inspecting and construing, checking and questioning, comparing and assessing, and portraying and discerning. This may also be said of science and scholarship, but in the case of journalism, the preferred method of verification is a non-systematic mélange of good judgment, disbelief, and off-the-record rules that newsrooms adhere to with unsteady coherence. The ideal of professional journalism is thus a synthesis of an idealistic inclination, a fascination for stimulating narratives and meaningful disclosures (Lăzăroiu 2014), and a disposition toward unbiased thinking, i.e., the carefulness to double-check what the idealistic inclination discovers and to prove that it is impartial. The mechanism of truth-seeking in journalism, ideally, progressively removes incorrectness or misrepresentation from the preliminary accounts of events. The mechanism of truth-seeking works to separate fact from insinuation, detect bias, and focus on what is factual and relevant for the audience. But that means that journalists begin by assembling, combining, and reassessing facts, opinions, probabilities, conjectures, and background knowledge. Pragmatic

impartiality in journalism is nothing more than the attempt at a comprehensive, unreliable, balanced assessment of reports.

Nearly all journalists wish to achieve balance, even when the basic facts obviously point clearly in one direction. But harmonizing conflicting statements may not generate veracity. One does not come closer to the truth of the matter by reiterating falsehoods and inaccuracies as a matter of "opinion". In the infosphere, among bloggers and on social media, likelihood is produced jointly (Peters 2016), not via a pecking order of fact-seekers and verifiers. The material may not be investigated before it is distributed, but it is dispersed through manifold perspectives. The blogging movement has persistently called into question the established values of journalism, which places the highest premium on objectivity. Blogging is determined considerably by the public's appetite to cooperate, a craving that mainstream journalism was slow to realize (Goldstein 2007). Yet again, one might consider that this development is just an extension of practices that have been in place for years. Journalists integrate events into a narrative that is concluded and consolidated. This totality is assembled out of disorganized events. Pictures are frequently truncated, and television reports and documentaries employ reconstructions in which digital technology assists in stage-managing text and image. Staged shots and reconstructions constitute an established component of televisual language. The convenient utilization of televisual reconstruction (or falsification) is as much a part of traditional journalism (Lăzăroiu 2010b) as is unequivocal responsibility to truthfulness. The practices that have been developed around news reporting have the consequence that the pictures accompanying the material are not intended to be visual examples or samples of events. But what are they, then? Where distortion is unreservedly used and not indicated, visual messages lose their role of conveying facts or reliable information (Sanders 2003).

An objective journalist, responsible to the principle of truth (Popescu 2017), would be self-aware and self-critical about his use of word and image. In doing so, he could achieve a higher degree of impartiality by disproving conventions, performing crafty investigations to achieve contextual precision, and concentrating meticulously on the imbalances that disarrange society and the lives of individuals in it. An ethic of responsiveness tied to responsibility could be a facilitator of strong probity.

Conclusions

Debating on the link between journalism and news necessitates a grasp of what signifies news and why it is significant for society's democratic demands. Journalism is a social mechanism of conveying news and moderating their reporting through professional standards. In some cases, the focus on cool detachment actually leads to exaggeration, distortion, and even bias (Peters 2017b), as is witnessed by the critique of "old media" on the Internet for the latter's lack of trustworthiness. The chief justification offered for fact-based news reporting is still and

always the notion that truth is the fundamental goal of journalism. News should perform a particular purpose: to supply the audience with trustworthy content on which informed appraisals concerning events may be formulated. The standard of objectivity is synonymous with the integrity of news organizations. Accomplishing balance is an ethical issue for the reporter, and intimately bound up with the quest for truth. But the news has an exchange value as well as a use value (Lăzăroiu 2012), for the consumer as well as for the producer. Half-truths based on uncorroborated gossip has less value on both scores (Berry 2016). Journalists participate in public life both as individuals with private agendas and as representatives for autonomous investigation of public matters. Journalism, as a profession, is a truth-directed kind of investigation. Objectivity is the gold standard for determining how satisfactorily the inquiry, and the narratives that it generates, conform to shared criteria for epistemic legitimacy. Fairness is an indispensable norm for trustworthy journalistic reporting (Lăzăroiu 2011c) in the public interest. But fairness is an ethical category, although in this case one tied to impartiality as the epitome of communicating knowledge without bias from a global position. Objective accounts, to be precise and unprejudiced, should comprise all significant sources and views. Global neutrality requires that the news media be more attentive and responsive to a global standpoint, and bring these considerations to the fore in their reporting decisions within a truly global news agenda (Ward 2015).

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As a Matter of Fact: Journalism and Scholarship in the Post-truth Era

Mats Hyvönen

Introduction

"Post-truth" was chosen in 2016 as Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year. When the term is used as an adjective, the "post"- prefix does not simply mean "after" but also "beyond", in the sense that "truth" is no longer relevant. As a noun, post-truth indicates the state of being post-truth, an epoch or situation in which "facts have become less important than emotional persuasion" (Horsthemke 2017, p. 274).

The problem with using post-truth as an indication of an era is that it assumes a historical development where we have moved from "the good old days" to the present not so good state of things. Used this way, post-truth risks becoming an epoch-making concept that suggests a shift from an assumed "era of truth" that is now disappearing (Corner 2017). Schlesinger (2017) has pointed out that the rise of post-truth as an idea "has signaled a perception of change both in how the public domain is constituted and in the conduct of major protagonists in the media-political sphere" (p. 603). Most of us would agree that a change does indeed seem to be occurring, and that many aspects of that change are unquestionably disturbing. The surge in fake news and the rise in sentimental rather than reasoned responses to political questions, as opposed to reasoned analysis, are perhaps the most salient examples. But the more closely one focuses on the media-political sphere, "perhaps the less the sense of shock that should be delivered by the phrase given the long and amply documented history of strategic deception here" (Corner 2017, p. 1100).

Not everything is new in today's post-truth society, and the good old days were perhaps not always that good. Historically, there have been many other periods when deliberate falsehoods and emotions prevailed over facts and reason, and media played a major part in those earlier periods as well (radio and cinema, for

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example, were indispensable parts of the Nazi propaganda machine). Nonetheless, digitization and the rapidly changing media environment have undeniably, and not without reason, been the focus of attention. In particular, the crisis in the news media in general and the newspaper industry in particular is often invoked as contributing to the present situation.

Other important societal institutions are, of course, also implicated. Universities are often mentioned in discussions about the post-truth society—sometimes as the cause of problems, and sometimes as the solution to them. In post-truth society, universities and traditional news media, professors and journalists, are targets of populist propaganda. In "alt-right" communities as well as in President Donald Trump's tweets, academics and journalists are portrayed as part of an elitist clique that produce fake news for their own interests and ends, with disdain but no concern for "ordinary people".

In this chapter, I will discuss the consequences of mediatization and marketization for public discourse and debate, and offer a proposal for how the academy and the media can work together to meet the challenges that we face. In the next section, on higher education, I will refer to a number of well-known phenomena regarding the effects of marketization and mediatization of university. In so doing, I want to lay the ground for drawing comparisons with similar effects on journalism and the free press. The purpose of this comparison is to show certain important similarities with regard to professions that one might call truth-seeking or truth-establishing.

The Mediatization and Marketization of the University

Arendt argues that a fundamental precondition for political action is commonality, the sharing of a common public world, the objectivity of which "relates and separates men at the same time" (1958, p. 52). Plurality (a genuine diversity of perspectives on the same phenomenon), a prerequisite for all political action, presumes a minimum of agreement in judgments, practices, and facts. Or, as Horsthemke (2017, p. 275) puts it: "A democratic debate requires provable facts about which there exists agreement. The debate then concerns what actually follows from these facts."

It is often said that modern media is characterized by an abundance of information and a scarcity of attention (Asp 1986). In today's evolving media landscape, there is an overabundance of facts: "there are too many sources, too many methods, with varying levels of credibility, depending on who funded a given study and how the eye-catching number was selected" (Davies 2016). Not only have the experts and agencies involved in producing facts multiplied, so have the communicative fora for their dissemination. In a "mediatized society", the growing importance of the media, old as well as new, in circulating facts and thus shaping public opinion and perceptions, has a considerable impact on other institutions. Private as well as public organizations and institutions are involved in a constant struggle to get

people's attention. Mediatization, then, results from the construction of "public attention as a specific institutional power resource and its consequent distinct meaning in the coordination of institutional action" (Kunelius and Reunanen 2016, p. 381). In short, mediatization describes a process in which institutions become more dependent on, and vulnerable to, public attention.

The university is a societal institution that has generated a considerable amount of attention in recent years, both in research and in media reporting. In particular, there has been a focus on evaluation in general, and rankings in particular. League tables are produced at the global, regional, and national level. New "facts" about the quality and standing of universities are thus produced, disseminated, and consumed almost daily.

This steady manufacturing and communication of facts cannot be ignored by universities, since they are considered, and consider themselves, vital social sectors. But the attention comes at a price. In order to make matters of research and higher education suitable for public consumption, the media have to formulate the very complex and multifaceted activities and operations of universities so as to render them comprehensible and relevant for a broader audience. In other words, the media need to "translate" academic norms and standards into media logic, that is, the institutionalized norms and standards that guide the media in their own operations (Altheide and Snow 1979). Since the media need to emphasize and explain specific aspects of organizations or events, the mediation of research and higher education tends toward oversimplification. These simplified images can only convey a very limited picture of what universities are and what they do; it would be impossible to mediate the work of entire universities or university systems, in all their complexity and diversity. This work of translation, while necessary, runs the risk of undermining the legitimacy of universities as a social institution by weakening the normative grounds that support them. The phenomenon of mediatization makes universities dependent on the media for their recognition and legitimacy in the public sphere. In order to attract students and funding, for instance, universities must meet the expectations placed on them based on the public, which is to say mediated, version of what a university fundamentally is and does. In this respect, the media not only publicize higher education and research but also make them "public" in more profound ways (Hyvönen 2016).

The mediatization of university is intimately tied up with the marketization of the university. Global university rankings, many of which are themselves products created or sponsored by media outlets, are perhaps the prime examples of this connection. In contrast with what is actually involved in ascertaining quality and relative merits in different educational and research contexts, rankings are very simple and straightforward: they seem to provide an objective comparison and evaluation with respect to a limited number of discrete and neutral variables or indicators. The simplicity is itself a consequence of media logic, the aim of which is to produce a coherent and easily grasped image. Thus, "excellence" in teaching or research is whatever the rankings, that is, the framework for the mediation of universities, say it is. From the perspective of mediatization theory, the rankings can be said to produce "excellence" through their effects on regional and national

policy, university management, and even the choices of the individual. The image produced in the rankings, disseminated through media and consumed by the public, becomes the basis for decision-making at all levels. The subsequent reorganizing of systems and institutions of higher education constitutes a shift from a traditional academic organization with collegial autonomy and control over curricula and research toward an organization in which every section is assessed in relation to the university's status in the rankings, that is, how "excellent" it is. This devotion of attention and resources to branding and media benchmarking weakens traditional academic values, criteria, and structures of quality control, which are usurped by the principles and practices of corporate management.

The application of market norms and managerialism on academic organizations has had far-reaching negative consequences, such as the widespread practice of the sloppy and often unintelligent use of bibliometrics even where it is inapplicable or misleading, and the massive zeal for commercialization and collaboration with industry. The overall tendency is to assess and control science and scholarship quantitatively, mechanically, and instrumentally. This state of affairs has been described as a *Breakdown of Scientific Thought* (Rider et al. 2013). According to Rider et al. (p. 11), the breakdown can be understood in terms of four basic elements: (1) as a breakdown of the division between politics and policy, on the one hand, and education and research, on the other; (2) as a breakdown of the division between market and innovation models, on the one hand, and academic norms, on the other; (3) as a breakdown of academic character in research and scholarship and, lastly, (4) as a breakdown of the academic character of higher education. These breakdowns transform science and scholarship in profound ways. Rider et al. (2013) analyze a variety of forces behind the transformations that we have seen, two of which belong under the heading of "marketization": first, there is "the political ambition to make the university more like the economic landscape depicted in a certain model of the market" (p. 201). Second, there is the influence that comes directly from commerce and industry, "which have interests in directing research and higher education to meet the specific needs of globally interdependent business networks" (p. 201). The marketization of science and scholarship is itself, in turn, a force to be reckoned with for the inner life of the university, as well as for the society of which it is a part.

In the light of the mediatization and marketization of the university, there is reason to doubt that academic research and higher education henceforth will serve the different knowledge interests of society as a whole on the grounds that knowledge is a public good. For when market values and functions colonize the academy, they undermine the specific epistemic norms and professional values that constitute its special standing, which is the source of its legitimacy, namely, those grounded on the pursuit of knowledge as something belonging to everyone. The challenge arising out of the mediatization and far-reaching integration of universities and business is how to balance service in the name of universality and the common good with a market model of education and knowledge production, where beating the competition is the aim and crowning achievement of academic labor.

The quantification of academic quality in terms of productivity and impact is related to the invasion of political and economic interests in the inner workings of the academy. At the increasingly businesslike universities, students are treated as consumers and academics are "subject to the same accountability and incentives as, say, a call-center worker" (Roelofs and Gallien 2017). *Productivity* is measured in terms of how many publications are published per year. *Quality* is measured by citations. This kind of quantification of quality with the help of indexing platforms like Web of Science and Scopus is not just a poor way to measure impact (for example, citations can be both positive and negative, the latter of which is particularly common in the humanities and social sciences), it also contributes to what Giacalone (2009) has called the problem of "metricality". He argues that academics are forgetting their responsibilities and instead conforming to logics that have nothing to do with rigorous academic work:

> An unfortunate effect of our professional amnesia is a disconnection with the realities of our world and all that preceded us. Having forgotten the assumptions that were the underpinning of our profession, we redirected our focus from producing quality work toward succeeding within a metrics-based reality, *a metricality*, where quality is narrowly and artificially defined. (Giacalone 2009, p. 124)

These recent changes in the academy have been so extensive that it is justified to ask whether serious scholarship still has a place in today's mediatized, marketized, and micromanaged university. Can they still be trusted as institutions trying to live up their own traditional ethical standards as truth-seeking institutions? And more importantly, what resources do universities have to mobilize in resistance to the anti-intellectualism of the post-truth society?

Serious journalists might ask themselves similar questions regarding the news media institutions and organizations that have historically been important platforms for financing and protecting journalism. In a fragmented media environment, the traditional news media companies are themselves becoming mediatized. Their relative monopoly in controlling public attention is disappearing in a hybrid media environment in which both traditional media and social media, along with different kinds of commercial and activist media, interact and compete to capture and control public attention (Chadwick 2013).

The Mediatization and the Crisis of News Media

In February 2017, *The New York Times* announced that it would launch a new brand campaign to underline the importance of facts and encourage the support of independent journalism. The campaign was ambitious, spanning digital platforms, social media, outdoor, and print advertising; it was first aired on television during the Academy Awards on ABC. The objective of the campaign's central message, "The Truth is… Hard… Hard to find… Hard to know… More important now than ever", was to show that producing independent quality journalism requires

resources, expertise, and commitment, and that it is important that people support it (The New York Times 2017). In an e-mail to his subscribers, Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr, the publisher of *The New York Times*, wrote that the campaign "is based on a fact —that the truth matters, now more than ever. The truth, as our journalists can attest, is also incredibly hard to get to. We remain undeterred in our efforts to reveal and report the facts with integrity and courage" (Guaglione 2017).

The press release from *The New York Times* explained that the campaign, their first major brand campaign in decades, was a direct response to research conducted by the newspaper company itself—research that suggested that people are not fully aware of how quality journalism is produced. However, most commentators saw the campaign as a response to President Donald Trump's attacks on the newspaper, one of the many news outlets he claims spreads "fake news". In a tweet a week before the launch of the campaign, Trump even called the news media the enemy of the people: "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" (Trump 2017). Donald Trump's unceasing denunciation of the news media is without historical precedent; never has a president or prime minister of a liberal democracy openly attacked news media and journalists so combatively. Besides being so pugnacious, Trump is also unique in that he has almost completely bypassed the traditional news media by using Twitter as his main channel for communicating with the world.

With Donald Trump and his tweets, public reason seems finally to have plunged into a state of emergency with dishonesty, non sequiturs, and distortions of fact as the most pronounced disorders (Gitlin 2017). It is easy to see why so many regard his presidency as a repudiation of everything that both journalism and scholarship stand for: free speech, open inquiry, logic, reason, and the pursuit of truth. Maybe that was why the *New York Times* invested so much money into communicating to the public its *raison d'être*, what it does, how, why, and for whom it does it, and what knowledge and resources are required to do what it does. But this kind of public self-promotion or self-legitimation by news media companies is not a new phenomenon, nor is it something that only large global media companies such as *The New York Times* engage in. Campaigns arguing for the democratic importance of traditional news media outlets and for independent journalism are going on everywhere. There is a sense of there being a crisis of trust in accurate information throughout much of the world, a crisis that is felt particularly acutely in the newspaper industry.

In the United States, the number of newspapers per one hundred million people dropped from 1800 in 1945 to 400 in 2014. Over that same period, circulation per capita declined from 30% in the mid-1940s to under 15% (Kamarck and Gabriele 2015). In the last 20 years, the newspaper workforce has shrunk by about 20,000 jobs, or 39%. Digital revenue makes up an increasingly large portion of newspaper companies' ad revenue, but this has more to do with the decline of print revenue than the growth of digital. In other words, gains in digital ad revenue have not made up for the continued decline in print revenue (Barthel 2016). Other traditional news media have also suffered. Since 1980, television networks have lost half their

audience for evening newscasts. During the same period, the audience for radio news shrunk by 40% (Kamarck and Gabriele 2015).

These long-term trends are in no way specific to the United States. The rate and speed of the decline in readership, employed journalists, and revenues may vary between different countries and regions, but the general malaise is international. Internet, the digitization of the media and the public sphere, together with the advent of smartphones and social media, are usually pointed out as catalysts of the crisis. Social media sites are overtaking both newspapers and television as a source for news for young people, at the same time as news organizations have become increasingly reliant on social media platforms for reaching their audiences and generating traffic to their own websites.

It is sometimes said that social media have affected the media ecology more than anything before in the last 500 years. The use of media has changed fundamentally in a short span of time, and public willingness to pay for journalism has dramatically decreased. Newspaper readers have become social media users, and the newspapers have followed their readers by increasingly distributing their journalistic content on Facebook. Thus, publishers have become more and more dependent on Facebook to reach their audiences. One consequence is that the newspaper publishers have lost control over a major part of the distribution of their own news. In social media, the content is broken up into pieces and disconnected from the original content producers' brands. The move to social media has other palpable effects: the data generated by social media users reading the newspaper's articles—the hard currency of a digitized media business—are owned by the social media companies, and not the newspaper publishers.

Digitization has given global actors access to local national markets. While these global actors lack the journalistic ambitions of the local and regional newspapers (Facebook takes little or no responsibility for the content published and distributed through the platform), they are taking an increasing share of the advertising revenues. The advertising revenues that used to finance local journalism now go to global giants such as Facebook and Google. This shift in influence from local to global actors leads to the local actors having a hard time financing the traditional, self-imposed tasks of serving the public, perhaps the most important of which is investigative journalism that scrutinizes those in power.

The changes in technology and society that have led to newspapers losing paid circulation and advertising pose a threat to the survival of the print media that have traditionally been the heart of journalism. This ultimately constitutes a threat to society at large, since the traditional media companies have been the most important platforms for financing journalism. Starr (2012) writes that economic pressures undermine the newspapers' capacity for original reporting, while at the same time, they can no longer amass on a daily basis the broad audience that they were able to create in the past. Consequentially, newspaper publishers will have fewer resources and less influence over public opinion, and hence have a weaker position against powerful interests, be they public or private. According to Starr (2012, p. 240), this "deterioration in institutional capacity" constitutes the primary problem that the news media crisis poses for democracy.

The critical situation described above can be seen from two perspectives. First, the new business models in the news industry threaten more than the financial foundations of journalism. They threaten also public legitimacy, journalism's privileged position throughout much of the twentieth century as the so-called fourth estate. As the publishers developed their services and profitability (or were sustained through public subsidies), they became solid institutions within which journalism could develop its professionalism autonomy:

> Journalists distinguished themselves as a special part of the media labor force that held up particular values and practices. They also distinguished themselves from other social institutions such as politics, on which they reported. Journalists defended their right and public duty to make independent professional judgments about what kind of media attention those other institutions deserve. (Kunelius and Reunanen 2016, p. 373)

The era when professional journalists held a monopoly on news and on the distribution of public attention is coming to an end and. Even if this were to mean a "democratization" of the news industry insofar as many more people can engage in journalistic work, it also constitutes a challenge to the legitimacy and authority of journalism as an independent institution in society. Second, in this fragmented media environment, it is already becoming increasingly difficult to imagine commonality. According to Harsin (2015), the problem is that in a digitized media landscape there is "no main venue in which a trusted authority can definitively debunk truths by suturing multiple audience/market/network segments, since reaching most of them […] in a short amount of time is very difficult" (p. 332). Neither the traditional news media nor Facebook or Google will be able to reestablish any ultimate gatekeeping and truth-telling authority now that free speech has met digital platforms and the social media. The changes that have taken place in the media environment during the last two decades are of course irreversible—there is no going back to the "good old days". This means that journalists and academics who are serious about free speech, open inquiry, logic, reason, and the pursuit of truth must find ways of doing what they are supposed to do in a world that has in the blink of an eye changed beyond recognition.

Journalism Without Newspapers, Scholarship Without an Academy?

In many nineteenth- and twentieth-century societies, the newspaper was "almost sanctified" as a medium; even if its form and content changed more or less dramatically over the course of time, it was consistently thought to perform an essential democratic function (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, p. 1; Lundell 2008). At a time when most media content "came from a limited number of synchronized central sources", and the opportunities for media production "were very limited and tied to the operation and gatekeeping power of those central sources" (Couldry and Hepp 2017, p. 52), a simple transmission model could be applied to imagine a

unidirectional circuit: "the world makes news, the newspaper reports it, the public consumes it" (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, p. 2). Modern electronic mass media made possible simultaneous transmission of media content across vast spaces; through their cyclical production, they generated "shared rhythms of simultaneous experience and new narratives of commonality" (Couldry and Hepp 2017, p. 47).

From a historical perspective, it is obvious that the material limits of the newspaper (the costs of running a newspaper company, in particular) or the radio (spectrum scarcity and regulation, most notably) played an important part in the emergence of the nation-state with a mediated national "public sphere" (Habermas 1989) that was essential to the creation of the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). It was in this historical setting that the newspaper became, like no other medium, associated with democratic, deliberative, and civic values. Newspapers were, and still are to a certain extent, considered something essentially good (consider, for example, the fact that newspaper consumption is used as a measure of the level of democracy and civilization). The fact that individual newspapers and their journalists fail to live up to these ideals, and that they, as for-profit companies, have other aims besides promoting democracy, is commonly acknowledged. The content is rightfully criticized for concealed structures of power, ideological bias, and sensationalism; nonetheless, even the most vocal critics of these failures have not seriously called into question the assumption that the medium serves a "true", and vital, purpose. According to Lundell (2008, p. 6),

> The medium […] supplies the standard against which the content is measured. The standard is, in other words, considered eternal, absolute and universal. The history of the press is, accordingly, often told as a gradual fulfilling of these ideals (in the critical version, to a certain point when a decline begins): from naive forms, it develops towards its true mission (and perhaps its decline).

In recent years, when challenged by changing patterns of media consumption, it has become obvious that specific traditional mass media, be it newspapers, radio, or television, have no given, timeless, roles to play in society, and that no preset goals for their activities have ever existed. It has also become clear, in the light of the developments in the media environment, that the medium and journalism are not the same thing. In both public and academic debate, however, journalism and medium are regularly conflated. Just think of all the debates in which the demise of the newspaper medium is made synonymous with the death of journalism. This confusion has been productive for the traditional media companies, who, "by virtue of their historical roles, ideas and ideological myths, have legitimized themselves as representatives and custodians of the news institution" (Allern and Blach-Ørsten 2011, p. 94).

Picard (2010) argues that journalism is not "a form of media; it is not a distribution platform; it is not an industry; it is not a company; it is not a business model; it is not a job. Journalism is an activity, a body of practices by which information and knowledge is gathered, processed and conveyed" (p. 366). Similarly, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) urge us not to ask whether someone is called a journalist, but whether or not this person is *doing* journalism; does the work that he or she

performs "proceed from a respect for an adherence to the principles of truthfulness, an allegiance to citizens and community at large, and informing rather than manipulating—concepts that set journalism apart from other forms of communication?" (p. 98). They emphasize that the meaning of freedom of speech is that it belongs to everyone: "But communication and journalism are not interchangeable terms. Anyone can be a journalist. Not everyone is. The decisive factor is not whether they have a press pass; rather, it lies in the nature of the work" (p. 98).

In a digitized media environment where, with relatively inexpensive devices, anyone with a modicum of technical know-how can gather, formulate, and disseminate information, the flow of news is likely to broaden, deepen, and accelerate. Entrepreneurs and nonprofits have not only begun to fill in whatever blind spots the traditional media have missed, but also to compete with them at their own game. In other words, there is no risk that there will be a decrease in news due to the changes in the media environment. The problem is not the supply of news, but the future of journalism. As Stephens (2014, p. xiii) puts it: "The future of news […] appears reasonably secure. It is the future of journalism that is looking grim."

Perhaps we ought to consider the crisis of the universities in a similar way. If we view the university as a medium, the same could then perhaps be said about it as about the newspaper: universities are, by virtue of their historical roles, considered something essentially good. The medium supplies the standard against which the content is measured. But just as for journalists, the times are gone when just being a professional in the medium itself gave status and authority to the work one produced. To the contrary, in our current environment, journalists and academics are regarded with suspicion and disdain before they have even presented any.

This situation puts demands on those journalists and academics who take their work seriously. In this era of fake news and post-truth, when political nihilism eclipses reason and power scorns thoughtfulness, journalists and academics have to stand up for the values that are at the core of their professions. Or, at least, in the words of Gitlin (2017), "they don't have time to wallow in self-pity".

Conclusion

The precarious situation of journalism and academic scholarship will not go away. Instead of turning our backs on our age of unreason and sealing ourselves inside the protecting walls of the university, we should regard this situation as a potentially productive one, a situation that makes demands on us to engage with the world in new, creative ways. We are in a state of emergency that demands a response. In a nutshell, it is time to come up with the goods.

> If universities are as essential, as fertile, as entrepreneurial, as brimming with intelligence, as eager to think outside the box, inside the box, or plain without the box, as we claim to be when we are shaking the cup for donors, we need to exercise our imaginations to step up in what is not only an emergency for the republic but also an emergency for the future of public reason itself. (Gitlin 2017)

Gitlin (2017) calls for a "forward strategy" through which the university should broaden its ambitions. As part of this strategy, he offers a number of suggestions about what can be done. One of these proposals is particularly germane to the present context, namely, the suggestion that universities should start cooperating with, and even sponsor, ambitious nonprofit journalism. In his argumentation for this idea, Gitlin poses a justified question: "If state universities operate agricultural research stations to help farmers make improvements, why not journalistic research stations?" If journalism is really "the fourth estate", then the development of its products should be considered as important as the development of the farmers' products. There is a great deal of middle ground to be covered between journalism and academic scholarship, and concrete cooperation projects could contribute to the development of both.

Another argument for more cooperation between scholars and journalists is that they are both in the attention business, and, in the age of post-truth, they have to play to win. Or as Kaufman (2017) puts it: "We who produce knowledge are also in the attention business—competing against everything else for time and place on the screens that we carry around and shuttle to and from every few minutes. To direct attention to the real knowledge that we produce, publishing our material online for free use and reuse is the first step." The key words here are "for free"; by using them, Kaufman points to perhaps the greatest obstacle for scholarship truly being an important part of the resistance against the development of a post-truth society. Scholars and scientists are judged by where they have published, and publishing in the right journals is important when competing for jobs, promotions, tenure, and grant money. But, as an act of resistance, maybe we should start focusing more on what we publish instead of where? The first step, for scholars as well as for journalists, might be to start publishing beyond the paywalls of both scholarship and journalism.[1]

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[1]Portions of this paper have been adapted from material published in Hyvönen (2016).

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Don't Bring Truth to a Gunfight: Pedagogy, Force, and Decision

Derek R. Ford

Many are in shock that today in politics truth doesn't seem to matter. This analysis misses the mark: politics was never about a correspondence with an existing truth, but about the formulation of a new truth. The contemporary moment thus offers up an important opportunity to reclaim the nature of the political, to develop new political positions on that basis and, most importantly, to *assert* those politics. This is a deeply pedagogical task, but it is one to which critical forms of education aren't suited. Critical education is really good at denouncing the present moment. There is no shortage of articles and blog posts condemning our political scene in near apocalyptic terms. At best, these writings end with a vague call for action. This is not sufficient. Those of us in education who want to fight for a better world need to move from critique to politics, from politics to movement. It is to this end that I offer this chapter, in which I diagnose our present moment of the "post-truth" and propose a way out: a pedagogy of clarity, imagination, organization, and force. The task is not to return to some "truth era," but to organize in order to vindicate a new truth, a just truth.

Postmodern Democracy

To be "post-truth" is not to be "anti-truth" or "without-truth." The relationship between the truth and the post-truth, I want to suggest, should be read the way that Jean-François Lyotard formulated the relationship between the modern and the postmodern. For Lyotard, the postmodern is not a negation, annihilation, or supersession of the modern. There is no dialectic of or between either. The post-modern doesn't come *after* the modern, for such a progression would itself be

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decidedly modern. No, the postmodern "is undoubtedly part of the modern," Lyotard (1992, p. 12) tells us. The postmodern inhabits the modern, interrupting it:

> The postmodern would be that which in the modern invokes the unpresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new presentations—*not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unpresentable*. (p. 15, emphasis added)

The modern is that which offers up a narrative of understanding, cohesion, and unity. The modern itself isn't the narrative, but instead takes the form of narrative, and also of institutions, philosophy, science, art, and so on.

The postmodern is that for which the narrative can't account, it's an excess of thought, feeling, and being. At one point Lyotard (1992) writes that "postmodernity is also, or first of all, a question of expressions of thought: in art, literature, philosophy, politics" (p. 79). The postmodern is the surplus of the modern that cannot be tamed, but that certain modes of politics and forms of government attempt to suppress and regulate. While Lyotard is certainly concerned with the Nazi project to annihilate difference, he is just as concerned with liberal democracy, and his critique of liberal democracy is no less damning than that of fascism. With the help of the concept of communicative capitalism, it also, as I show below, helps us make sense of our "post-truth" era.

Writing after the overthrow and dissolution of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, Lyotard labels liberal democracy as "the system." Liberal, imperialist democracy emerges triumphant not because it is the most enlightened system, but because it is the most effective one, the system that adheres best to the performativity criterion. As he writes in one of his fables, "The Intimacy of Terror:"

> It does not permit peace, it guarantees security, by means of competition. It does not promise progress, it guarantees development, by the same means. It has no others. It arouses disparities, it solicits divergences, multiculturalism is agreeable to it but under the condition of an agreement concerning the rules of disagreement. This is what is called consensus. The intrinsic constitution of the system is not subject to radical upheaval, only to revision. (Lyotard 1997, p. 199)

Liberal democracy is based on principles of dialogue, deliberation, transparency, and communication. It is an open system that not only accommodates, but also actively *solicits* differences and disagreements. To be sure, there are limits, not any sort of difference will be acceptable, especially not one that refuses or cannot acknowledge the system and its rules. But differences, in general, are to be variously reconciled, accommodated, tolerated, or tamed.

There is something deeper that democracy cannot tolerate, however, something that betrays all of its principles. Lyotard (1997) calls this "the secret life." The secret life is opposed to the public, democratic life, the life that is visible and open. The secret life in an internal region, an inhuman region that exceeds knowledge, discourse, and representation. The secret life is the realm of the incommunicable and the opaque, a place you go—alone and with others—to "encounter what you are unaware of" (p. 117). Democracy can't condone any secrets, and wages a war

on this region. "Heavy pressures are put on silence, to give birth to expression" (p. 120). Democracy works to produce us as subjects that babble endlessly, express ourselves constantly, who feel that if we are not exposed then we do not exist. In this way, democracy works hand in glove with capitalism, for only once things are expressed can they be exchanged.

Democratic Communicative Capitalism

This brings us to another coalescing of democracy and capitalism that pushes us toward post-truth: communicative capitalism. This is the name Jodi Dean (who got the term from Paul Passavant) gives to our contemporary networked society. The democratic ideals of access, participation, inclusion, diversity, and critique become actualized through capitalist technological infrastructure. Capitalism is the answer to the lack of, or deficiency in, the practice of democracy. New forms of communication technology increase the possibility of democratic participation and discussion by bringing more people into conversation with each other. Anyone with access to a computer or smartphone can start a blog, vlog, Tumblr, Facebook, or Twitter account, gain followers, state their opinions on any debate. We can comment endlessly on others' posts, news stories, pictures, videos, and more. We can post about or file complaints with private entities or government offices across the globe in an instant (in fact, tweeting at a company is the surest way to have your complaint addressed these days). If someone posts something racist or sexist, we can screenshot it, and tweet it at their bosses. Not enough access to information or avenues to voice your participation? There's an app for that!

The proliferation of technologies may enable faster and more expansive communication and deliberation, but it works to solidify the inequality of capitalism. Networked capitalism "coincides with extreme corporatization, financialization, and privatization across the globe" (Dean 2009, p. 23). Increased participation in communicative capitalism enriches the coffers of the global elite at the expense of the global poor. There is not only the massive conglomeration of technologies and gadgets, like data servers, databases, computers, smartphones, cables, and satellites (and the energy that goes into powering them and keeping them cool), but there is also the expropriation of information, data, and social relations generated through the use of such technologies.

Just as importantly, it has done the ideological work of erasing the antagonism that is fundamental to political organization. The constant circulation of ideas, memes, blog posts, and so on contributes "to the billions of nuggets of information and affect trying to catch and hold attention, to push or sway opinion, taste, and trends in one direction rather than another" (Dean 2009, p. 24). The "search for the truth" is crucial to this operation. There is *always* something more to find out, another angle to consider, another source to pursue, another link to follow. And as we are in our search for the truth about one thing, another tragedy starts circulating, another hashtag starts trending, and we are off again. There is always more to learn.

The need to constantly express that Lyotard gives us has a flipside: the need to constantly seek out others' expressions. It's not enough for us to tell our secrets, we need to know everyone else's secrets too. We need to comment on them, rank them, share them. This is the ethos of social media. Democracy produces the subject compelled to express, and communicative capitalism provides the circuits to capture and enthrall that expression and the implacable pursuit of the truth, which, while we may insist is knowable, is eternally deferred. This is how the post-truth relates to the truth: the post-truth is the truth not "at its end, but in a nascent state, and this state is recurrent" (Lyotard 1992, p. 13).

The crisis of symbolic efficiency accelerates the tempo of what I'll call democratic communicative capitalism. Put simply, symbolic efficiency is that which fills in the gaps between signification and substance, allowing for the mobility and transmission of information and meaning. This crisis "designates the fundamental uncertainty accompanying the impossibility of totalization: that is, of fully anchoring or pinning down meaning" (Dean 2011, p. 6). Democracy isn't a master signifier that can tie up these loose ends, but rather a name that gives political form to the drive of communicative capitalism, that provides the ideological belief that makes our contradictory actions and knowledge cohere.

In this scene, to demand democracy is to demand more capitalism, and vice versa. What's more, even anti-capitalist critiques and resistances are flattened and dulled in this configuration. To insist on the pursuit of the truth is a trap that keeps us stuck in the reflexive circuits of democratic communicative capitalism. The right wing knows this. It doesn't make appeals to the truth. It makes appeals to beliefs and convictions. If those beliefs and desires contradict some set of evidence, then that evidence is fake. That is what Donald Trump means when he tweets "FAKE NEWS!" It isn't an assertion of what the truth really is (as if the news had some innate relationship to truth and constituted "the real"); it's an assertion of belief of *what should be*, a performative utterance meant to organize and intensify one side —his side—of the political. To reply that the news isn't fake, that the fake news designation only applies to the news that he doesn't like, news that makes his side look bad, misses the point completely.

This is why the right wing is winning: they know they have enemies and they want to defeat those enemies. To defeat those enemies, they mobilize and organize. They imagine the future they want. They talk to each other, they create their own ideological bubbles from which to act, resist, and take swings. They capture the state and wield it toward their ends. In sum, the right wing has broken out of the drive of democratic communicative capitalism through their embrace of politics.

Left Paranoia and Critical Education

Meanwhile, the Left has retreated from politics, from the antagonism that politics names, and from the force by which politics changes. State power has been off the agenda for a while now. Any actually existing alternatives to neoliberalism have

been ridiculed, demeaned, and denounced. This has been the case with the "educational left" or "critical education" sectors as well. In general, it seems that the educational left has contented itself with repeating the age-old critiques of neoliberalism and capitalism. We pat ourselves on the back when we engage in "public pedagogy," which often means writing a different version of the same blog post over and over again, posts that always end with a few sentences to rouse the masses into action. We embody the prototypical paranoid academic that Sedgwick (2003) diagnosed as we place our full faith in the act of exposure:

> Like the deinstitutionalized person on the street who, betrayed and plotted against by everyone else in the city, still urges on you the finger-worn dossier bristling with his precious correspondence, paranoia for all its vaunted suspicion acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known. (p. 138)

If we just keep on listing—and publicly!—the bad things about neoliberalism (or, in the case of Marxist educational theory, the bad things about capitalism), then things will get better. How can we lose? The truth is on our side! At the same time, however, we insist that we have to keep critiquing: there is always something we are missing, an angle we didn't account for, something out there that can explain why we are in the situation we are.

Merrifield (2011) has made a related criticism of the Marxist Left. He contends that there is a "residual Marxism" that reigns supreme today, one "reduced to a rather effete framework for analyzing bourgeois political economy" (p. 3). This is a Marxism that goes on critiquing, shining light on the operation of the law of value at the heart of everything; it's "a Marxism that's systematic yet sterile, rigorous yet stilted" (p. 3). Merrifield wants to make Marxism *magical*, and he insists that magic is a materialist process. Such a Marxism

> is no longer a Marxist "science," a science of exposing real truth hiding behind false appearance; it's rather about inventing other truths, about expanding the horizons of possibility, about showing how people can turn a project of life into a life-project that blooms… about invention not discovery, about irrationality not rationality. (p. 18)

This is certainly not to say that critique, explanation, or accounting aren't important. Indeed, that's largely what I have done thus far in this chapter. I've argued for a particular understanding of the post-truth era, an understanding that the post-truth is the truth in its continuously intermittent state, and sought to locate these dynamics within the logic of democracy and the configuration of communicative capitalism. And I am yet to find a route out of this impasse for the Left. To get out of this impasse, however, I am not going to *prove* a truth, but assert one: what the Left needs right now is clarity, organization, imagination, and force. And the generation of each of these is, at heart, a pedagogical task. Thus, while we needn't set facts aside—nor, necessarily, the quest for the truth—we must resolutely abandon the myth that the truth, whether existing or invented, is the only or the most effective weapon. Rather, I would posit that critique, or the search for the fugitive of truth—

is useful primarily insofar as it helps us to produce clarity, organization, imagination, and force. Each of these elements can't just be harnessed, *in general*, but must be deployed *in some direction*: for something(s) and against something(s).

Transition

For one, we have to move from critique to the taking of actual political positions. It is not enough to analyze some social phenomena from a few different angles only to state that there are "productive tensions" between such angles, or that we have to wait until the next article to parse through the different valences. This puts us right back into the democratic-capitalist loop. If there is anything that doesn't threaten the current order of things, it's the demand for more analysis. It doesn't matter that we make that endless analysis public. The myth of the hero of the public intellectual is dead. Public intellectuals have proven completely ineffectual against neoliberalism—although they have profited quite nicely from it.

Our political positions have to be imaginative, forward-looking, and inventive. Political positions have to culminate in *political programs*. This is the lifeblood of struggle, what generates conviction, what gathers together desire and melds it to action. Political programs are the ultimate form of praxis. They will be partial, incomplete, imperfect, subject to continuous revision and amendment. Completion and perfection are not prerequisites for political action but barriers to it. Political programs bind us together and forge links of commitment and discipline, as they are products of collective struggle, the artworks of organization. Through critique we can find like minds, but through imagination we find like spirits. We become comrades not by denouncing the present, but by collectively dreaming of the future. In so doing, we gain a critical distance from the present. Whereas critique makes the present *seem* detestable, imagination makes the present *feel* foreign, producing an affective disjointedness and sense of possibility that is key to any political struggle (Ford 2017b).

There are all kinds of political organizations around on the Left today. Pick your cause, pick your strategy, pick your tactic, pick your action, and pick your group. We create affinities that are fleeting and based on the momentary intersection of interest. They don't require any real responsibility, risk, or sacrifice. If we don't commit too much we can't lose too much. But we also can't win. We can't generate enough *force* to assert our imaginations. The assertion of force requires disciplined organizations. This means not just organizations that demand discipline from members, but also organizations that are disciplined by their members. What the Left needs is not better arguments, more inquiry, deeper critique, increased access to information and communication, or heightened dialogue with our opponents. Each of these only serves to defer the possibility of another element that the Left is lacking and that is fundamentally connected to the question of organization and force: political *decision*. Antonio Negri connects organization and decision in the following way. Organization, he says, has two components:

> On the one hand, it is the positive, material and innovative capacity to build—a capacity that insists on the ontological dimensions of the process of transformation and affirms its hold there. On the other, simultaneous to the opening of organization towards the future, it is the capacity to destroy and to deny everything that diffuses death and asphyxiates the old world. It is in the midst of this extremely violent dynamics that decision and organization are affirmed. (Negri 2008, p. 156)

Negri actually helps us thread clarity, imagination, and force through the question of organization. The problem is that his conception of organization is a nebulous network of multitudinous subjects that disavows the fundamental antagonism that constitutes the political. It could be said, then, that Negri's multitudinous organization is of a social, and not a political, character. In the last part of this chapter, I want to propose a specific type of organization that is well suited to intervene decisively in our contemporary moment: the Communist Party.

The Communist Party: Feeling, Fighting, and Force

The Communist Party is a disciplined organization that binds together subjects along the lines of a common political project, that insists on the enactment of imagination, and that generates the force necessary to assert a new truth. The Communist Party is an organizational form founded on discipline. As Lukács (2009) puts it, Lenin's position was that "it was essential for members to take part in illegal activity, to devote themselves wholeheartedly to party work, and to submit to the most rigorous party discipline" (p. 25). And *this* is the crux of the whole debate and the whole purpose of the Party itself: "Other questions of organization— that of centralization, for instance—*are only the necessary technical consequences of this… Leninist standpoint*" (p. 25). This was not just a theoretical conviction for Lukács, who embodied this ethos of revolutionary discipline throughout his life, always being willing to denounce his work and actions when they betrayed the Party line (including his participation in the right-wing Nagy government in Hungary in 1956). As he saw it, the relationship that the Party institutes in the revolutionary mass movement is not between spontaneity and organization, but between spontaneity and discipline. Why is discipline necessary? Because the Party is nothing except the vehicle for working-class power in the revolutionary period, and revolutions are *events*: they are necessarily confusing, chaotic, and unpredictable. There are two reasons for this: one, because of the varying social and class forces that participate in revolutions and, two, because of the complicated nature of the composition of the proletarian class itself.

Discipline is necessary in and before the time of insurrection. The Party member submits to the will of the Party, but this will is not some abstract program; it's instead a living, breathing organism of which the member is a full part. The member and the Party do not relate in a reified way; it is not as if the organization "is divided into an active and a passive group" (Lukács 1971, p. 318). Instead, the Party requires "active participation in every event," and this "can only be achieved by

engaging the whole personality" (Lukács 1971, p. 319). The Party engages the entirety of subjectivity, mobilizing all of the forces of intellect and desire, and in this way, the Party is subjected to the discipline of the proletarian class. Lukács (1971) goes so far as to equate the "discipline of the Communist Party" to "the unconditional absorption of the total personality in the praxis of the movement" (p. 320). This relationship is the key to the Communist Party, and without it membership "degenerate[s] into a reified and abstract system of rights and duties" (p. 320). The Party is not just another organization or coalition; when one joins one makes a commitment to prioritizing revolutionary organizing in their life. This is what Maggie McConnell emphasizes as she recalls her involvement with the Communist Party USA in the 1930s and 1940s. When she was sent to organize in a union, she says:

> What did I know about organizing? Nothing! It was a holding action. I was scared shitless, but the Party said go, and I went. It was always like that, from the very beginning. I believed in the discipline, I believed in the revolution, I believed I was at the center of the world. I've been scared always, but I pulled myself together always, and I pulled myself together for my Party. From the very beginning, the Party came first. (Gornick 1977, p. 127)

The discipline of the Party literally allowed McConnell to cohere (i.e., to pull herself together), overcome her fear, and act regardless of her own presumed incompetence.

The Communist Party unites critique and ideology with affective possibility (see Ford 2016, 2017a). It enhances our imaginations and amplifies our collective desires. McConnell, a working-class woman from a small town in Massachusetts, was able to view herself as a revolutionary "at the center of the world," as an agent of world-historical transformation who was bound to action. Hosea Hudson also locates himself in this nexus of force-program-affect as he recalls his earliest days in the Communist Party. Hudson was a Black sharecropper who joined the Party in 1929 and immediately became an organizer. In the Jim Crow south, Hudson and his comrades risked their lives daily in the organization. He tells one story about the classes he took with his organizing unit while he was in Alabama, where they read the *Liberator*, the Party's newspaper specifically for the Black nation within the U.S.:

> We would read this paper and this would give us great courage. We had classes, reading these articles and the editorials in the *Liberator*. We'd compare, we'd talk about the right of self-determination. We discussed the question of if we established a government, what role we comrades would play, then about the relationship of the white, of the poor white, of the farmers, etc., in this area. (Painter 1994, p. 102)

Hudson is in a class with five other comrades. They are in someone's house in a racist, apartheid dictatorship enforced by military and paramilitary alike. Hudson never went to school. Yet the Party's newspaper and its program gave him and his comrades the force to imagine what their government will look like once they have overthrown Jim Crow. This isn't an intellectual exercise for them, nor is it hypothetical. They are dead serious in their imagination and their commitment. Hudson

says of the Party, "it was freedom in it for me" (Painter 1994, p. 94). This freedom is not just the goal of the Party, but is rather generated in the Party itself (Dean, 2016). The freedom is the freedom to imagine what their government will look like, what their truth will be.

The Communist Party as a Truth Bubble

The Communist Party doesn't seek to build bridges between antagonists, but rather to amplify one side of the antagonism. Instead of talking with our enemies, we have to talk to each other. In Leftist circles, this is often derided as "preaching to the choir." But it is precisely this that we have to do. For one, of course, we have to do this because we have to debate amongst ourselves in order to forge unity. For two, however, we have to do this because we have to make ourselves stronger, bolder, more forceful, individually and collectively. The Party is a sphere, a bubble, that produces an enabling and protective force from which to act in the world. The Party is an oppositional interior in bourgeois society that is generated by the cadre that it protects, that works on the workers who produce it. It's a *shared* interior that isn't hitched to any particular place or time. Fighting against the domination of capital and the state requires a strong oppositional interior, one that protects and enhances its inhabitants, that produces a shared language, a common outlook.

Finally, I want to propose that David Backer's activist theory of language is helpful as we find our way out of the current impasse. Backer develops his active linguistic theory from the ashes of the post-truth era, when political speech is divorced from truth and oriented toward gaining power. Gaining power, he contends, contains within it a theory of truth. He develops, on this basis, "a theory of language whose paradigm stipulates that 'what's true and what's not' are precisely those statements which successfully vindicate one's position or vision of the world under a specific set of political circumstances" (Backer 2016, p. 4). Statements are not true or false, they are *proven* true or false, vindicated through struggle. Backer gives the example of the fight over the length of the working day that Marx details in the first volume of *Capital*:

> The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working-day as long as possible, and to make, whenever possible, two working-days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the labourer maintains his right as seller when he wishes to reduce the working-day to one of definite normal duration. There is, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. (Marx 1967, p. 255)

The worker says "the working-day is eight hours!" as the boss says "the working-day is twelve hours!" Which statement is true depends on which group is able to force the truth, to make their statement correct.

There are strong and weak versions of this theory. The strong version, which Backer calls "simple," demands clear proof and vindication, such as in the struggle

over the working day. The weak version, which he calls "inclusive," allows us to appreciate "one or a combination of naming, condensation, embodying, or calling for appropriate action in a conjunctural struggle when it comes to correctness" (Backer 2016, 1967, p. 8). Through the weak version we can view the advances we make in the war of maneuver, when we are able to frame discourse and the terms of the discussion.

Backer's theory is founded on Marxist analysis, and thus rests on force and struggle, but he doesn't consider the question of organization. The Communist Party is an organization that puts forward political positions so as to advance and vindicate them. It connects ideology and feeling with the organization necessary for strengthening ourselves so that we can formulate an imaginative program, a world that we want to live in, and so that we can act to institute that world. Let's stop all this critiquing, all this debating about what the truth is or isn't, and let's fight for a new truth, a truth that would do justice to our Earth and all of its inhabitants.

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Part III
Pedagogy and Postmodernity

Education in a Post-truth World

Michael A. Peters

The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2016 is *post-truth defined as* "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (The Oxford Dictionaries 2016). In their brief history of the concept, Oxford Dictionaries notes a spike after a decade of use in relation to Brexit and Trump's election as US president and the rise of the compound noun *post-truth politics* as a description for our times. Oxford Dictionaries also notes earlier formations with the *Post* stem like *post-national* (1945) and *post-racial* (1971) and they trace its incidental use in a variety of media before it became a general description and characteristic of our age. It ought not to be a surprise that the 2016 shortlist also included both *Alt-right* —"An ideological grouping associated with extreme conservative or reactionary viewpoints, characterized by a rejection of mainstream politics and by the use of online media to disseminate deliberately controversial content" and *Brexiteer*—"A person who is in favour of the UK withdrawing from the European Union."

The concept of post-truth has certainly been picked up and anchored quickly in mainstream media. *Time* magazine deliciously states as a headline, "It describes a situation in which feelings trump facts." *Time* quotes Casper Grathwohl, president of Oxford Dictionaries as saying "It's not surprising that our choice reflects a year dominated by highly-charged political and social discourse. Fueled by the rise of social media as a news source and a growing distrust of facts offered up by the establishment, post-truth as a concept has been finding its linguistic footing for some time" (Steinmetz 2016).

The Economist devoted two articles to the issue—"Post-truth politics: Art of the lie" (The Economist 2016a) and "The post-truth world: Yes, I'd lie to you" (The Economist 2016b) beginning the latter with the sentence "When Donald Trump, the Republican presidential hopeful, claimed recently that President Barack Obama 'is the founder' of Islamic State and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic

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candidate, the 'co-founder', even some of his supporters were perplexed." Trump has repeatedly told and retold "big lies", such as

- that "The Birther Movement Was Started by Hillary Clinton In 2008," when he both iterated and championed the birther claims.
- that he "was totally against the war in Iraq."
- that "real unemployment rate is 42%."
- that "It Could Be 30 Million" undocumented immigrants currently residing in the United States.
- that because his taxes are under audit, he "can't" make them public.
- that then Secretary of State Clinton "soundly slept in her bed" during the 2012 attack In Benghazi, Libya.
- that "inner-city crime is reaching record levels."
- that Clinton wants to "abolish the Second Amendment."
- that he is "really the friend of" the LGBT community, while supporting anti-LGBT legislation (Fernandez 2016).
- that "the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive" (Dickinson 2016).

Trump has also, as is well known, made multiple false claims concerning immigration and mass deportations (Sargent 2016). These are just the "big lies". *The New York Times* (2016) commented on Trump's technique:

> Donald Trump has come up with something new, which we can call the "big liar" technique. Taken one at a time, his lies are medium-size—not trivial, but mostly not rising to the level of blood libel. But the lies are constant, coming in a steady torrent, and are never acknowledged, simply repeated. He evidently believes that this strategy will keep the news media flummoxed, unable to believe, or at least say openly, that the candidate of a major party lies that much. (Krugman 2016)

Taken together, Trump's triumph in the US elections and Brexit indicates a decided turn against the global liberal internationalist order. It is fueled by the rise of both extreme right and left fractions—a coincidence of older neoconservative values, anti-immigration sentiments, and the plight of white working-class people, especially men, who populate the deindustrialized areas in the US and got left behind when American manufacturing went East in search of cheap labor. Arguably, this group is less educated, more open to conspiracy theories, and less likely to change their deeply seated beliefs in the face of evidence. The style of Trump campaigning and the turn to anti-globalization protectionist policies as a rejection of the liberal global order has led to what has been called "post-truth politics" based mainly on appeals to emotion without any detailed policy specifics, delivered through video and social media, especially Twitter, which are not the fora most suited for argumentation, disputation, reflection and fact-checking. Post-truth politics is a development of an increasingly privatized and fragmented public news that began with the "sound bite" and "photo opportunity" to bypass public discussion in the regime of the 24-h news cycle, whereby news channels take on the mantle of party ideologies often deliberately distorting the truth.

Old Testament accounts of lying viewed it as a sin that admits no reservation, as to lie is deliberately to hide the truth. In *De Mendacio*, Augustine takes a hard line on lying; modern philosophical accounts hold that lying is detrimental to society because it erodes trust as the very foundation of relations among human beings that sustain our institutions (Bok 1999, p. 31). Truth, truthfulness, and truth-telling are seen as a necessary precondition for society. Lying is bad because it harms people through false information and because it is a violation of trust (Rachels and Rachels 2011, p. 42–43). It interferes with the process of self-understanding and perverts our relationship to the world and to other people. In his lectures at Berkeley in the early 1980s, Foucault (2001) investigated the use of truth-telling [*parrhesia*] in specific types of human relationships, as well as the techniques employed in such relationships. In the Ancient Greek, *parrhesia* is a speech activity where there is an exact coincidence between belief and truth, and truth-telling is "a practice which shaped the specific relations that individuals have to themselves" (Foucault 2001, p. 106) (see Peters 2003).

The classic account of "Lying in Politics" is Arendt's (1971) account of political imagination as a reflection on the Pentagon papers that draws interconnections between "lie, the deliberate denial of factual truth, and the capacity to change facts, the ability to act." She argues "the lie did not creep into politics by some accident of human sinfulness; moral outrage, for this reason alone, is not likely to make it disappear." As she argues, "factual truths are never compellingly true"; as contingent facts, they carry no guarantee of truth: "no factual statement can ever be beyond doubt." Arendt goes on to argue, "Facts need testimony to be remembered and trustworthy witnesses to be established in order to find a secure dwelling place in the domain of human affairs" (Peters 2015). Arendt maintains that lying and deception in public life are easy "*up to a point*", and they do not necessarily come into conflict with truth to the extent that facts could always be otherwise (Arendt 1971). One major consideration about the shift to post-truth is the "truth carrying capacity" of new social media and the propensity to disseminate fake news through Facebook, Google, and Twitter, and thereby to create a "bubble world" where algorithmically selected news sources simply reinforce existing prejudices thus compromising the capacity for moral thinking. Does the new social media undermine our ability to recognize truth?

In his article "Regimes of Posttruth, Postpolitics, and Attention Economies", Harsin (2015) follows a Foucauldian line of argument, arguing that we have moved from "regimes of truth" to "regimes of posttruth". In the new regime that characterises postpolitics and postdemocracy, "power exploits new 'freedoms' to participate/produce/express (as well as consume/diffuse/evaluate)," where "resource rich political actors attempt to use data-analytic knowledge to manage the field of appearance and participation, via attention and affect."

As an experienced star of the reality game show TV series, The Apprentice, which ran for 14 seasons and made him a household name, Donald Trump understands contemporary media better than his opponents. He utilizes the same media strategies in his politics: he gets attention; he isn't polished; he promotes unfiltered feelings; he follows a tried-and-true storyline; he encourages a subjective

interpretation of the truth (Goldhill 2016). Trump has mastered Twitter as the ideal medium "unleashing and redefining its power as a tool of political promotion, distraction, score-settling and attack" (Barbaro 2015).

In this new media political landscape, the liberal media and pollsters have fared very badly indeed. How could they be so wrong? How could they consistently overrate Clinton's chances over Trump's? The robust *New York Times* gave Clinton an 85% chance of winning! (Katz 2016) They bought into Trump's politics of mediatization, responding emotionally to his taunts and bullying, desperately wanting to point out his failings and losing their objectivity. They contributed to his success by overestimating Hillary's prospects of success, dismissing Trump's chances, and misunderstanding the electorate and their hatred of the professional political elite.

In this post-truth political environment, Gay Alcorn (2014) notes, "facts are futile". Post-truth is often taken to mean "post-fact". It's not so much that facts are futile, it's just that they take a while to collect and marshal into a knockdown argument. By the time the facts are gathered, the media moment has passed, the headline has been grabbed, and the lie can be modified, apologized for or replaced by another. A leader in the *New Scientist* (2016) comments on the revolutionary results when free speech meets social media:

> the right to free speech has morphed into the ability to say and spread anything, no matter how daft or dangerous. Hence the buzz around the idea of "post-truth politics" – although a cynic might wonder if politicians are actually any more dishonest than they used to be. Perhaps it's just that fibs once whispered into select ears are now overheard by everyone.

There have been some important historical precursors in the lead-up to the post-truth Zeitgeist, most recently in the "science deniers", especially the climate change deniers; in the neoconservative attacks by Lynn Cheney on US history teachers over the rewriting of the American past, the Holocaust and genocide deniers; the Sokal hoax involving *Social Text* and the older "science wars;" and furore that greeted Funtowicz and Ravetz's (1990) "post-normal science" where quality assurance systems replace the search for truth. Ravetz explains the line of argument thus: "We argue that the quality-assurance of scientific inputs into policy processes requires an 'extended peer community', including all the stakeholders in an issue. This new peer community can also deploy 'extended facts', including local and personal experience, as well as investigative journalism and leaked sources" (Ravetz 2005).

It takes little imagination to draw some conclusions from this melange of past examples to understand that the notion of "facts" and "evidence" in a post-truth era not only affects politics and science, but also becomes a burning issue for education at all levels. Education has now undergone the digital turn, and to a large extent been captured by big data systems in administration as well as teaching and research. Criticality has been avoided or limited within education, and substituted by narrow conceptions of standards and state-mandated instrumental and utilitarian pedagogies. There have been attacks on the professional autonomy of teachers as arbiters of truth. If education is equated almost solely with job training rather than a

broader critical citizenship agenda for participatory democracy, we can expect the further decline of social democracy and the rise of populist demagogue politicians and alt-right racist parties. In the era of post-truth, it is not enough to revisit notions or theories of truth, accounts of "evidence" and forms of epistemic justification as a guide to truth; we need to understand the broader Orwellian epistemological implications of post-truth politics, science, and education. More importantly, we need an operational strategy to combat "government by lying", and its role in a global society prepared to accept cognitive dissonance and the subordination of truth to Twittered emotional appeals and irrational personal beliefs. Rather than speaking truth to power, Trump demonstrates the power of the lie.

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A Level Playing Field? Complicit Meritocracy in a Post-truth Era

Liz Jackson and Charles Bingham

When US President Donald Trump announced on 1 June 2017 that the United States would no longer participate in the Paris Climate Accord, he used words that many educators have themselves used implicitly or explicitly, words that fit with a discourse of fairness and meritocracy: 'My job as President is to do everything within my power to give America a level playing field and to create the economic, regulatory and tax structures that make America the most prosperous and productive country on Earth…' (Trump 2017). While these words may signal to many what might be called a Trumpist, post-truth doublespeak, we note in these words a cue that educators may have been setting the tone for such post-truth for quite some time. On the one hand, it is easy to note the duplicity of calling for a level playing field in order for one country to trounce others. On the other hand, though, many educators have themselves, ourselves, long been involved in reproducing meritocratic ideology even though it is common knowledge that such an ideology does not always, if ever, level the field or create fairness.

In this chapter, we investigate two aspects of post-truth in education. The first derives from the philosophical work of Jacques Rancière, and the second derives from an analysis of meritocratic ideology in contemporary education. In both cases, we find that education has been producing a certain 'truth' about truth. Rancière's work contrasts the hidden explanatory function of education, which presupposes a collective or shared sense of truth, with the arbitrariness of language as the social mechanism for understanding or determining such truth. This understanding is useful when applied to the case of meritocracy, as we discuss in the second part of this essay, as meritocratic ideology lays a framework in schools for the production

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of truth. Schooling bolsters, explains and emulates a meritocratic view of the world. In doing so, truth itself gets linked to meritocracy. We conclude this chapter by returning to the example of Donald Trump's notion of the level playing field, briefly commenting on how the persistence and strength of meritocratic ideology in education are tied to a post-truth order.

Jacques Rancière and Education's Truth Production

Jacques Rancière has detailed in his major work on pedagogy, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, that it is possible to reconstruct pedagogy not as subservient to Enlightenment truth, but as a form of 'ignorant' intersubjectivity leading to a radical form of intellectual emancipation (Rancière 1991). To get at Rancière's analysis of truth in school, it is most helpful to look at his more general analysis of the school's explanatory function. Arguably, Rancière's most important contribution to educational theory lies not in the more obvious description of 'universal teaching' one finds in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, but in his attention to the form of the school in the context of Western democracies and Western political philosophy. The importance of this contribution can be restated succinctly by saying that the school, and by extension pedagogy in general, has a function that commonly goes unnoticed in educational theory. It has an *explanatory* function. That is to say, the school does something by the very fact of being a school at the same time as it affords an opportunity for teaching and learning.

The school, Rancière argues, promulgates a model described in Plato's *Republic*. The republic 'is a city in which legislation is entirely resumed in education—education, however going beyond the simple instruction of the schoolmaster and being offered at any moment of the day in the chorus of what is visually and aurally up for grabs' (Rancière 1999, p. 68). The republic runs smoothly because it establishes schools that explain an 'archipolitical' order (Rancière 1999, p. 65). The school, in Western democracies, continues this explanatory function. It thus has a double role according to Rancière. The school not only educates citizens—whether that education be traditional, progressive or critical. It also *performs*, in the arena of knowledge acquisition, an ordering that echoes the political ordering of society. As Rancière points out, '… the idea of a master who transmits knowledge to a student or a learner who is in front of the master, and who doesn't know something, this idea is in reality a cosmology and not simply a method' (Rancière 2004). The school gives order by performing *explanations*.

Rancière's work on the explanatory order is best linked to the concept of truth by noting that when one uses explanation, one assumes that truth can be arrived at by a sequence of propositional statements. During the explanation, one uses language to present the truth. One establishes a certain linguistic relation with truth. When one uses language to explain something, one draws a direct line from the word to truth, from the word that explains, to the truth of the thing explained. For Rancière, this direct line from language to truth is the basis of an explanatory folly that drives

every form of the school. The propensity to explain ignores a central aspect of language, an aspect that Rancière emphasizes in many of his writings, not only in his educational work—that language is arbitrary. Because language is arbitrary, one can never draw a direct line from the word to truth. 'Truth is not told', writes Rancière, 'It is whole, and language fragments it; it is necessary, and languages are arbitrary. It was this thesis on the arbitrariness of languages—even more than the proclamation of universal teaching—that made Jacotot's teaching scandalous' (1991, p. 60). The folly of the school is that it misconstrues the relation between language and truth. This is because the school ignores the arbitrary nature of language, treating language as if words cement signifier to signified in some steadfast way.

In order to more clearly understand the folly of the school's educational/explanatory relation to truth, it is useful to juxtapose it to Ranceire's unschooled analysis of language's arbitrary relation to truth. Rancière's work in political theory, in aesthetics, as well as in education are committed to this understanding of language's arbitrary nature, and thus to language's incommensurable relation to the truth. With regard to political theory, in *On the Shores of Politics*, Rancière posits the arbitrary nature of language as an 'unreality of representation' (1995, p. 51). This is to say that language cannot directly represent reality. It cannot say truth. But far from being disappointed with the arbitrariness of language, Rancière uses representation's unreality as a hopeful point of departure for those who would truly aspire to participate in a democratic order. Thus, 'the democratic man' is 'a being capable of embracing a distance between words and things that is not deception, not trickery, but humanity' (Rancière 1995, p. 51). While language is too arbitrary to access truth directly, this fact is not cause for dismay for one who would participate in a true democracy. It is instead a point of hope.

That language is arbitrary means that there is always hope to reconfigure the sensible. If language were not arbitrary, if words were already fixed to truth, then there would be little space for human beings to insert themselves *differently* into the sensible's distribution. There would be no opportunity for subjectification (Bingham and Biesta 2010, p. 33). Thus, Rancière notes in *On the Shores of Politics* that the arbitrariness of language 'turns both every utterance and every reception into an adventure which presupposes the tense interaction of two wishes: a wish to say and a wish to hear, each threatened at every moment by the danger of falling into the abyss of distraction, above which is stretched the tightrope of a will to meaning' (p. 81). People can ignore the arbitrariness of language's relation to the truth. But in doing so, they ignore the possibility of true democratic interaction that reconfigures the social order.

Rancière notes that each person who participates in politics, as opposed to 'policing', actually acknowledges, either wittingly or unwittingly, this arbitrariness of language. For, the person who participates in politics knows that language entails two levels: one that ostensibly connects language directly to truth, and one that proves just the opposite, that language is not fixed to truth. The second level of language is invoked every time a political subject acknowledges that the terms for understanding another are subject to redistribution rather than being fixed. Thus, in

Disagreement, Rancière writes, 'In any social discussion in which there is actually something to discuss, this structure is implicated, a structure in which the place, the object, and the subjects of discussion are themselves in dispute and must in the first instance be tested' (p. 55). The political actor is not a person who takes language to be fixed to truth. Rather, such an actor is one who understands that utterances are always contestable rather than tethered to particular truths. The political actor has 'this second-degree understanding' (Rancière 1999, p. 46). Such an understanding entails 'the constitution of a specific speech scene in which it is a matter of constructing another relationship by making the position of the enunciator explicit' (Rancière 1999, p. 46). The political actor knows that language is arbitrary, and he or she will make such arbitrariness understood.

Rancière also insists that the arbitrariness of language is a matter of aesthetics. It makes poets of those who would accept its arbitrariness. 'The democratic man is a being who speaks, which is also to say a poetic being', writes Rancière in *On the Shores of Politics* (p. 51). This is so because one who accepts the arbitrariness of language, yet who goes on to communicate certain truths nevertheless, such a person must engage in the sort of translation that is both the joy and the burden of the artist. The artist knows how difficult yet necessary it is to convey truths that one takes to be universal, truths that have never been precisely articulated before. As Rancière notes in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, the poet works 'in the gap between the silent language of emotion and the arbitrariness of the spoken tongue' (p. 68). Yet Rancière also generalizes this artistic element of arbitrary language. Such work is also no different than the work of any reasonable being who must struggle with the arbitrariness of language in an effort to convey one's thoughts to another. He notes that 'Each one of us is an artist to the extent that he carries out a double process; he is not content to be a mere journeyman but wants to make all work a means of expression, and he is not content to feel something but tries to impart it to others' (1991, p. 70). When one conveys one's thoughts to others through language, one must give order anew to a handful of signs. These signs will form a work that will be interpreted by another. This order-giving, this work and this interpretation indicate the extent to which *each* person is an artist.

Once again, only this time in an aesthetic rather than a political sense, an insistence on language's arbitrariness is cause for celebration rather than remorse. This is because language's arbitrariness pushes the poet to *demonstrate* his or her confidence in the *commonality* of human experience, a demonstration that will be cobbled out in spite of language's inadequacies. While language is not *naturally* attached to this or that truth, the poet attempts to translate truth from one person's experience to the experience of an interpreter, all the while knowing that language is never up to the task of such a translation. Language is thus seen to be arbitrary in the sense that it is not fixed directly to the truth, but this does not mean that language is destined to be the solitary assignation of one's own personal, and random, experience. As Rancière puts it in *The Ignorant* Schoolmaster, the poet 'strives to say everything, knowing that everything cannot be said, but that it is the unconditional tension of the translator that opens the possibility of the other tension, the other will…' (pp. 69–70). In this way, 'we understand what Racine has to tell

us, that his thoughts are not different from ours, and that his expressions are only achieved by our counter-translation' (Rancière 1991, p. 70). The poet asks us to prove, through our own translation of the work, that while language may be arbitrary, it can still be cause for a commonality based on the translations and counter-translations of the poet and those who read the poem.

Truth in Schooling

The school as it generally functions cannot allow language's arbitrariness to be exposed because such exposure would undermine its explanatory teachings on truth. For education to function smoothly, and for its various methods to be employed according to the latest innovative research, the school insists that truth must be accessible through language. For the school, it cannot be the case that 'truth is not told. It is whole, and language fragments it, it is necessary, and languages are arbitrary' (Rancière 1991, p. 60). If such were the case, then the school would be relegated to an unhappy mutism. Neither could subject matter be explained, nor could there be explanations of how to avoid, how to make experiential, or how to demystify, explanations of subject matter. It cannot be the case that 'truth settles no conflict in the public place' (Rancière 1991, p. 90). If this were the case, then the pedagogical improvements that are recounted ad nauseam in newspapers and in journals would need to be stricken from the record. On the contrary, the school must, and does, teach something about truth, something that keeps the school apart from political actors and poets. The school must explain things, thus demonstrating that truth is accessible through language, and that folly resides not in front of this curtain but behind it. The school, because it is believed to be the most effective place for teaching and learning to happen, stands as proof positive that the truth can be explained and that language is not arbitrary.

Informed by Rancière's insights, it is reasonable to conclude that no form of education has a linguistic path to truth. Rather, education itself, as an explanatory form of social order, compels one to talk about truth in such a way. Rancière presents an account of truth that is immanent to education. In contrast, Rancière's own perspective on truth is connected to his understanding of the arbitrariness of language, dependent upon language's inability to access truth directly. On the flip side of this linguistic non-approachability of truth, stands Rancière's presentation of truth itself, and of truth's indifference to people: 'Truth doesn't bring people together at all. It is not given to us. It exists independently from us and does not submit to our piecemeal sentences' (1991, p. 58). And as noted earlier, 'Truth settles no conflict in the public place' (Rancière 1991, p. 90). Such an agnostic understanding of truth once again underscores the folly of explanation. It underscores the truth-folly of traditional, progressive and critical education. School does not lead to truth, in spite of popular and theoretical claims to the contrary.

Truth and Meritocracy

Because meritocratic ideology in contemporary schooling is ubiquitous, it stands to reason that the school's version of truth is shored up, if not reinforced, by merit. An analysis of meritocracy thus adds to the explanatory insights on truth and language in education provided by Rancière. First, at the broadest level, the commonplace self-contradictory use of meritocratic discourse by educators today suggests the potential advent of a post-truth era (Jackson and Bingham 2018). Widespread recognition can be observed among liberal and left-wing thinkers in Western societies that meritocracy, as the earning of social rewards based on merit, is not, nor has it ever been, a functional, effective working system (McNamee and Miller 2004; Kozol 2012). Instead, the ideal of meritocracy around the world arguably remains hindered by ongoing unjust inequities that retrace lines of historical advantage and disadvantage, of gender, race, socioeconomic and national status, and more. Yet educators and others continue to use meritocracy to explain the workings of society and to undergird education, while knowing the current schooling system and society are far from standards of meritocracy.

Sociologists and critical educators tend to concur that meritocracy is not the way any society functions. Speaking from an American context about meritocracy, McNamee and Miller (2004) note that 'there are a variety of social forces that tend to suppress, neutralize, or even negate the effects of merit in the race to get ahead', including education. Kozol's work (2012) exposing impoverished schools in the United States is cited by sociologists as proof that education is a non-merit aspect of society. In critical educational scholarship, this may be taken as something to work against or fight, while in critical pedagogy meritocratic discourse itself might be problematized, in a class in educational foundations, for example.

Yet at the same time, in academics' individual affairs, this truth of meritocracy's precarious standing to social reality is neglected, and a myth of meritocracy is taken as a more useful explanatory point of departure in guiding personal behaviour (Jackson and Bingham 2018). Here we are reminded, for instance, of critically minded university colleagues who conduct strong work in social justice education, yet fall back on a discourse of meritocracy when talking about their own students. Such colleagues want to attract the 'best and brightest' students, even among early scholars who are purportedly canvassed to ameliorate the inequities of meritocracy. As another example, teachers and professors must give grades, however loathsome this requirement may be to many critical educators. That meritocracy explains societal functioning is seemingly accepted or believed here at the personal level, while it is seen at the abstract level as not yet tenable, problematic and ideological.

Several other significant aspects of meritocratic discourse which intersect with notions of truth and objectivity in philosophy and society are worth systematic analysis. First, there is the notion that educators can know *quality* student *work*, and that words such as learning outcomes, standards, competencies, performance, achievement and the like—even quality and work—have a universal and singular meaning which is objectively verifiable. Educators, indeed a society which takes an

educational system to be valid and based on merit, are relationally bound to treat this as truth, and to regard educational judgements of passing or failing work thereby as valid truth claims. Yet each of these words can be deconstructed in ways that illuminate the precariousness of schooled truth as indicated by Rancière. Is it student *work* that is wanted—apparent effort or labour? Or is *work* to denote instead some kind of product, such as a piece of paper or a speech, which may or may not correlate to a determination of work by the former standard?

As academics, we are familiar with the arbitrariness of standards at a higher level of scholarship, in the case of peer review. It is hardly uncommon, but today more or less typical, to receive contrasting reviews of one's paper for submission to a journal or conference from his or her appropriately qualified peers: for example, one reviewer may deem the work worthy of publication only after minor revisions, while another considers it much less publishable. The encouragement of grade moderation in higher education, wherein assignments such as dissertations and theses are marked by more than one reader, is another clue that while each of us may well have in mind something called standards of quality, notions like 'excellence', 'rigour', 'contribution', and the like are arbitrary rather than fixed across individuals even within a single field or context. The ideology of meritocracy shores up the supposed truth about standards and quality in education. If we understand such notions as arbitrary rather than fixed, this exposes a weakness to the explanatory value of meritocracy in understanding the current social system.

A second, related aspect of meritocratic discourse intersecting with ideas of truth and objectivity is that willpower, determination and hard work frame the contemporary social order. In schools, the unequal structure of society is explained in traditional educational discourse as essentially caused by differential applications of hard work by individuals, despite aforementioned sociological findings to the contrary. This can be seen as reflected in discourse in schools on such topics as the American Dream (as an ongoing phenomenon), and the importance of grit, resilience, persistence and more in such areas as civic and moral education and education for personal or social development. As we have personally found in a recent conference presentation, even anxiety is seen in Western society as a positive motivator of excellence in education, with many educational researchers regarding it as useful and productive in the first case, within a framework where educational achievement or performance has as its prerequisite student work, physical, intellectual and even emotional.[1]

There are two variants of this claim: The first, traditional structuralist view, is that hard work leads to wealth accumulation. This is the basic societal view of meritocracy which, as suggested above, has been shown to be far from evidenced

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[1]At the Philosophy of Education Society Annual Conference of 2017, we presented a paper on relational affect and meritocracy, which addressed the negative and positive feelings expected of (taught to?) students by educators in relation to educational achievement and mediocrity (Jackson and Bingham 2018). Some members of the audience suggested that anxiety and stress at the thought of meritocratic failure can serve as motivational to students. Emotional strain was thus articulated as a positive part of the 'work' of education.

while it nonetheless continues to strongly influence personal behaviour. Though critical scholars, such as those with a Marxist orientation, may work against this claim as educators, this view is strongly endorsed in neo-liberal orientations. For instance, the fame and worldwide recognition given in recent decades to Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, both famously known to be university dropouts, supports the view that you can work hard to be wealthy, within or outside education. United States Republican Presidential contenders over the last few election cycles who competed to distinguish themselves as less elite-educated than others also reflect widespread attitudes that wealth stems from hard work, regardless of education or knowledge.

One might argue that this tenant of meritocratic discourse is taught only in traditional schooling, and that it is far from being the focus of progressive schooling. Or that in critical schools, the false claim of meritocracy is de-bunked. Yet even in a critical school, it is an implication of the persistent commitment to meritocratic quality that there is rigour and a standard to truth claims, and that critical claims are thus those claims that are most truthful, certainly not to be understood as arbitrary. This is the second variant of the meritocratic assumption that work leads to power: that rigour steers one correctly and, in the philosophy of Freirean praxis, can culminate in a shared truth and shared understanding that leads to benefits and empowerment of all. As Freire describes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one should have faith that despite the challenges, people have power through dialogue to constantly recreate the world through naming it (1970). Thus, critical or emancipatory education is seen not only to explain inequity, but to create equity at the same time, through a search for and conscientious, labour-intensive reconstruction of truth and reality.

Although some progressive and critically minded educators may be sceptical about notions like 'evidence' and 'rigour', which are increasingly seen by leftist thinkers as problematic buzzwords of neo-liberalism, their work implies a dedication to scholarly notions of consistency and coherency, and a sense of commitment to forms of truth, particularly about understanding power and oppression in society (Peters 2015). For instance, educational researchers with a critical orientation have described as resistant, denying or ignorant those young people who do not approach or appreciate a critical orientation to societal problems related to labour, justice and power, and they often elaborate what is needed for understanding reality properly in terms of students *working through* resistance, denial, ignorance (which is often claimed as false), and the like (see for instance Applebaum 2007, 2015; Steinberg and Kincheloe 2009). To achieve powerful discourse, according to a critical educational perspective, takes hard work; it may be unpopular or painful; and it may require a specific kind of labour on or disciplining of self, rather than more obvious or simple action (for instance, Warren and Hytten 2004). In this sense, the paradox is reversed from traditional to critical schooling: while traditionalists may teach meritocracy (for example, the American Dream) knowing well that it is far from precise or truthful as a description of society, critical educators may teach that (elite) power is disconnected from work, all the while working hard and asking their students to work hard, to create and internalise powerful counter discourses.

A final major aspect of meritocratic discourse that intersects with truth and objectivity in society is that education without a basis in meritocracy is impossible. Considered historically, this view obscures the very idea of what makes a 'school' a 'school'. More specifically the view that education requires meritocracy is tautological, in the sense that 'schooling' or 'formal education' is defined in Western societies against the forms of education that have and do exist outside of Western schooling, which are described as nonformal or informal education, such as adult education, community education, apprenticeship and the like. In these latter systems, education is not for certification, sorting or for comparison and accounting purposes; it has intrinsic or other pragmatic instrumentalist aims, such as learning to farm or engage in a valued craft or trade. In this sense, education has been defined as requiring meritocracy, and the individualism and competitiveness essential within it. This view makes it difficult to imagine what is possible, lacking allegiance to the ideology of meritocracy in education, without appearing to be backwards-looking or desiring a so-called 'primitive' utopia.

Reflecting once more on the individual and relational implications of the discourse, imagine a professor walking into a program meeting announcing their desire to do away with all grades. Colleagues might be sympathetic, and yet note that they are as educators accountable to students, parents and funding bodies of the institution that have demands to understand what they have achieved with students, and diverse students specifically. The best example of formal education doing away with grades is Montessori education. Yet these schools nonetheless rely upon standards, and most parents cannot remove the school from the society of which it is, and seemingly must be, one echoing part: Ultimately, they feel responsible for their children succeeding in a multi-tiered society which is described, even arbitrarily, as meritocratic. Teachers likewise cannot escape this discourse but are pressured through relations with each other, supervisors, parents and children, to appeal to and pledge allegiance to meritocracy despite its serious deficiencies, which arguably negate its status as a functional system (Jackson and Bingham 2018). Thus, the truth that meritocracy is not the system tracing the relationship between educational experiences and societal outcomes is obscured by the arbitrariness of language, which in this case conflates formal schooling with meritocracy to preclude the possibility of a truly just form of education.

Conclusion

Rancière's insights are helpful in understanding the challenge educators face in a post-truth era increasingly marked by relativism, intersubjective mediation of reality, and subjectivity and emotional appeal, in contrast with democratic participation and the autonomy of scholarship (Peters 2017). As our analysis here indicates, meritocracy is clung to in society today due to intersubjective relations as an ideology in education, serving explanatory and mirroring functions, in ways that appear to deny the many ways that the system is lacking and inoperable today. The insight from

Rancière that schools serve to explain and enact truth can hardly be divorced from the problematic workings of meritocracy, which is presumed rather than justified, through appeals to themes such as hard work, power, quality, rigour, excellence and the like. That we are not encouraged to play with these themes in an aesthetic or even political sense today is one significant indicator of the way we now find ourselves in a post-truth era, wherein powerful forces discourage us from questioning whether the 'truth' presented by schools, and promulgated by meritocracy, is in any way just.

Returning to the words of Donald Trump, one might now make the following observation: Certainly, Trump stands accused, and rightly so, of fostering a post-truth regime. The words we cited at the beginning are nothing if not contradictory and misleading. Yet it may be no coincidence that his populist, nationalist rhetoric in this case shows more than it tells. Might Trump's version of truth have something to do with the school's claim to truth? At the very least, both employ merit, with its conceit of creating a level playing field, to double down on truth. Perhaps Trump learned this technique in school.

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Beyond Truth and Non-truth

Nesta Devine

The insistence on the validity of 'alternative facts' can be seen as simply lying, and lying in the support of a particular form of interest—or it can be seen as a more significant reflection on the status of truth in a world that is neither entirely modern, nor entirely post-modern: a world in which education, science, economics and religion have all failed to deliver on their promised truths.

To the certainty of these various truths, the post-structuralist narrative of scepticism towards meta-narrative offered critique but not content, or much of a way forward except by juxtaposing 'one truth' against another.

Is it possible to think beyond these binaries of truth and non-truth, perhaps with the growing literature of post-humanism? How would education look if the emphasis shifted away from the conventional subject of humanist thought, which is foundational both to the liberal way of thinking, as epitomised by the Obamas and Clintons, and to Trump and both his corporate and blue-collar supporters?

Government, Truth, Power

Contemporary journalism has taken a very uncompromising line towards Donald Trump, Sean Spicer and Kelly-Anne Conway with regard to their disregard for truth, with some (huge) justification, as they have shown huge disregard for 'fact' and have presented a view of world events which is at the least strange, and at its wildest, dangerous. Yet I am going to argue, in a contrarian way, that there is some

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justification for their ignoring of scientific and historical evidence, and that education, in forms of commission or omission, has some responsibility for their stance, and for the public success of their stance.

To go back in time somewhat, it can be argued that before the fourteenth century—before the printing press actually—there was, in the 'European' world, at least, only one truth, usually a form of revealed truth, and that its probity was both protected and guaranteed by local and trans-local forms of government—whether in the forms of chieftains, monarchs, republics or tyrants. This is clearly the case in the 'western world' after the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, and its various successor forms. No matter how much disrepute the Papacy fell into, the Word of God was understood to be Truth, and its interpretation was in the hands of priests. Much of our subsequent respect for Truth, in my opinion, can be seen to be derived from that medieval certainty, from a time when the truth was singular, indisputable and guarded both by a huge (papal and later governmental) bureaucracy and the inculcated belief systems of the population at large.

The imbrication of Government, monarchy and 'truth' is not accidental. Charlemagne's deal with Rome in 800 (Painter 1968) brought about an association so advantageous that subsequent governments to some extent still utilise it. By aligning himself with the Pope, Charlemagne abrogated to monarchy the religious guarantee of the Church's privileged access to God and truth. Despite the claimed secularism of the Western democratic state in modern times, there is still that extra frisson of anger/fear when the state and its office holders are exposed as liars.

Subsequently, of course, Revealed Truth has been replaced by more contested truth: that of science in both its positive and its social forms. Since it is inherent to modern science to be sceptical of 'truth' that is to say, to demand evidence, to test efficacy, to try out other theories, in fact, to expect 'progress' in relation to truth as to other things, the nature of truth in a scientific world must be always changing. It might be said then that scientific truth fails the great test of absolute truth, in that it is always provisional, not permanent, eternal, fixed, certain—and yet this element of permanence is still a kind of popular desire. Popular expectations of truth as an absolute reflect the heritage of revealed truth.

We could argue that the phrase 'Research says' has replaced the Word of God, but problematically, Research is always saying something different. The hold on the popular imagination of what Research says can be seen in the anxious tenacity of the Anti-Vaxxers, who hold onto discredited research and claim more substantiation than is the case to support their view. Although scientists may be able to move on easily from one form of truth to another, it is not so easy for those who do not understand the provisional nature of science and who become invested in a particular truth-claim to do so.

Post-structuralism and Its Embrace of the Impossibility of Knowing the Truth

It is common for opponents of post-structuralism to take a sneering attitude towards post-structuralists and their distance from the truth. From a post-structural viewpoint, there may indeed be a truth, even an absolute truth, but no one can get sufficiently outside their own context to be able to see it. We are driven back, therefore, on a perspectival world, to use Nietzsche's term, in which it is essential that speakers identify their own positionality in order to allow the listener to make allowances for that in their own personal effort to winnow 'truth' from a necessarily biased perspective.

But in a political world where there is still a belief that truth per se is possible, revealing positionality is precisely what politicians and lobbyists cannot do, for fear of discrediting themselves. If it is revealed that advice came from ExxonMobil, or from the Russian Embassy, or from the Adam Smith Institute, then reporters tend to regard this as an admission of weakness or venality—which it well may be, but rather than examining the advice itself for its weakness it becomes a moral attack on the politician for not, somehow, being able to formulate ideas and policies without any input at all.

Educational Culpability and Exculpation

Education is not innocent of a certain culpability in this state of affairs. When History is taught either as a list of significant events without acknowledgement of the writers who positioned those events as significant in a particular story, or as a contest between points of view of equal value, and Science is taught for the purpose of training technicians rather than scientists, then the tentative, provisional nature of these forays into knowledge is lost. I have seen high-school students abandon their laboratory results and copy down some one's results—because the 'someone else' got the 'right' results. In other words, the laboratory exercise is not an experiment, since deviant results are not permitted or acknowledged, but an illustration of a kind of revealed truth. Good teachers, of course, are aware of these issues and do their best to teach beyond them but high stakes testing, with its emphasis on right answers, makes their efforts more difficult.

Given these practices—and history and science are chosen as illustrative, not exhaustive examples of the problem, our students grow up believing still that there is a truth, a form of validated knowledge, beyond all doubt.

This might have been an acceptable state of affairs when knowledge was mediated through the priestly figures of experts. But given high levels of literacy and widespread access to media (not all of it social) in which veracity or justification has little place and tentativeness none at all, then the filtering effect, for good or bad, is lost, and the unfiltered intentions of individuals, organizations, politicians,

and even states have immediate potency. This is not altogether a bad thing as it can allow for the voices of those seldom heard to be raised, but to a large extent, such voices are drowned out by the urgency of greed, narcissism and political advantage.

Teaching a level of ability to critique may be possible, but is probably no competition for the desire to align with the like-minded: the need for friendship and confirmation for many people would outweigh the somewhat masochistic desire for discomfiture in the shape of a challenge to beliefs and assumptions.

The Problem with Facts

'Facts' are innumerable, inconceivably numerous: they are created at every instant in their millions. Big data reduces facts to manageable generalisations, algorithms create a logic out of factoids that enable their productive recruitment to other purposes, imposing their own forms of truth as they do so. But 'facts' as popularly understood are the standout events and the processed statistics which alter public opinion and history.

The notion of 'fact' as being beyond question is a fine one, and fact-checking of the Trump speeches and tweets is undoubtedly a useful public service. But the whole purpose of the spin industry, or public relations, is to assemble facts into a different order so as to create a different form of knowledge, a story that will have predictable and desirable consequences rather than adverse ones. There is a substantial difference between spin and post-truth precisely in that post-truthers simply ignore facts (or create new ones), while spinners reconstruct their significance. Spinners might take a fact—let us say the United States' failure to win the Vietnam War—and reconstruct this as evidence of the interference of other states, or the perfidy of Asian allies; but only a post-truther can demand to see a US birth certificate, and having seen it continue to proclaim that the owner was born elsewhere. Nonetheless, the line between spin and post-truth is thin, and it is no wonder that people who have become inured to, accepting of, spin, should readily accept being lied to.

Post-truth

I object, profoundly, to the use of 'post' to mean 'anti' or 'un' here: it reflects a real misunderstanding of the particle 'post' in post-structuralism or post-modernism which means something like 'beyond but built upon'. Post-truth, or the application of alternative facts, is generally an unapologetic delivery of statements that are not true (in the sense then they have no justification) in order to sway opinion. The practice, in terms of mass communications, goes back to Bismarck's careful editing of the Ems telegram, an innocuous message reporting the Prussian King's conversation with the French Ambassador. Bismarck was able, by judicious deletion, to

convert this into a message inflammatory enough, given the geopolitical context of the time, to start a war between Prussia and France (Taylor 1954, pp. 204–206).

Russian government-endorsed trolling and fake news production can be seen as having similar patriotically inspired foundations, perhaps even similar purposes (Sanovic 2017).

Alongside these colossi, Trump, because he is so easily fact-checked, looks like a novice, yet, for those already inclined to believe him, Trump's comments are true, and fact-checking reveals only the strength of the conspiracy to discredit him. There is no easy way out of this conundrum.

Impeaching, sidelining, even voting Trump out at the next election will not change the fact that one-third of the US voting public find his 'alternative facts' more cogent than 'mainstream facts' aka 'fake news'. We can speculate endlessly as to why, but my preferred argument is that—with some justice—they feel that 'mainstream facts' have let them down: they have not shared in the predicted prosperity that was to come from the neo-liberal reworking of the economy: people have not been able to move easily from sunset industries to the new technological scenarios; free trade has not trickled down to them in the form of higher wages or better conditions. Indeed to a large extent they quite rightly see that their jobs have been exported. So, political promises and economic nostrums have both failed to be honest or successful, and Trump, with almost complete disregard for facts, is able to satisfy his own egoistic needs and the needs of his Base for comfort and hope without any recourse to justification or verification. He can offer plenty of recourse to emotional energy, rejection of what appears to be the common foe, and appeal to nostalgia for a shared, more benevolent past.

But there seems to be something more to this than nostalgia and shared dog-whistles. There is, in fact, some theoretical basis for believing that Trump might—truthfully—be the perfect President. The architects of Public Choice Theory argue for the primacy of markets in politics, and in doing so they point out that collective decision-making is inefficient: the most efficient form of decision-making is the sole individual making decisions, without the impediments of discussion, debate, vote-gathering and so on (Buchanan and Tullock 1965, pp. 97–116; Devine 2004, pp. 25, 75–92). And clearly, the person best able to operate a government modeled on the market is a businessman/CEO. To the extent that this extreme form of neo-liberalism has permeated contemporary political thought, Trump, clearly not a person to whom consultation or negotiation comes easily, is its ideal manifestation. If the test of government is not honesty, efficacy, or equity but efficiency in decision-making, then at one level, Trump passes that test. To the extent that the test concerns being a certain kind of person (businessman) or making decisions in a particular way (top-down decision-making), truth-telling is irrelevant.

The Binary Problem

By characterising the beliefs of those he does not agree with as 'fake news', Trump sets up a dichotomy: there is news that is 'true' or 'real', and news that is fake. To a certain extent, this maps onto a view of the world in which there are truth and non-truth, i.e. a binary conception of truthfulness.

What further makes the Trumpian conception of truth interesting is that he has no respect for what are commonly regarded as 'facts'. So is Trump denying the correspondence between truth and reality, which is the position that seems to be held by many of his critics? I suspect not: if Trump's adherence to 'truths' which do not square with 'facts' can be shown, at least in part, to relate not to a sophisticated rejection of a one-to-one relation between utterance and reality, but to actual ignorance of reality, then we are looking at a different philosophical (and educational problem).

And I think we can do that, without overlooking the family tradition of preference for extreme right politics and racist positions. Some of Trump's statements simply show a disregard, born of ignorance, for history. One commentator points out that North Korean policies and positions can only be understood in the light of the US carpet-bombing of North Korea 50 years ago (Cummings 2017): Trump would not know that. His lack of knowledge is often made public with the preface 'No one knows' or 'They don't tell you' meaning *he* did not know.

So, in this case, we have both a disposition to prefer a certain view of events, which has a tenuous connection with reality, as in the view that the Charlottesville riots were attributable to both alt-right and a neologistic 'alt-left', and an expression of ignorance that precludes a kind of 'knowing' that would frame the world in a historically accurate and explanatory way.

An epistemological lack becomes an ontological lack: because a person does not know the history of the present circumstances, s/he can comfortably ignore those inconvenient truths. Yet it is simply not possible to educate all persons about all the historical evidence s/he might need to act responsibly in the present world. A shortcut must be found to educate the person without recourse to all the available historical and sociological material which might (ever) impact on his or her life.

This then becomes something similar to the problem of self that Foucault discusses in the *History of Sexuality.* There he draws attention to two techniques: the confessional and the diary, i.e. speaking and writing with reference to the self. I think we could draw on this for teaching purposes: if the student can be encouraged to see a sample of historical/sociological circumstances in relation to self, both through discussion and scribing, in a context of the application of something like a Kantian imperative to conceive of others as having value unto themselves, perhaps we might be able to break through the carapace of blind self-interest and inherited prejudice. Certainly, lecturing will not do it, but rather drive young people into evasion, both physical and mental.

'Alternative facts' are a way of framing an epistemology that is acceptable to Trump, and lead us to a possible philosophical blind. So incensed do we become

that we want to shout back 'No! We have the real facts: you have the alternative facts', so that we become embroiled in a binary from which there is no easy escape. We run the risk of claiming the ability to know what the facts are: the hubristic position of modernity. Ethically speaking, this leads us to become Trumpian ourselves, shouting at the world that we have the corner on truth. Our forms of 'truth' may correlate better to the facts as we see them: they don't correlate better to a world permeated with conflicts about racial privilege and economic advantage corresponding to a certain range of beliefs (Huang 2017).

Beyond the Binary

So how do we get *beyond* this binary position? Clearly, we would like a situation in which we had better educational systems, which would preclude some of the claims based on a lack of historical knowledge, but in general the kind of students we would most like to educate historically either leave school early or go to schools which confirm their world-views. Moreover, inherited racism, bolstered with junk science, is difficult to undo by teaching real science. But in most cases, where there's a will, there's a way. Unfortunately, neo-liberal economics with its inevitable divisions into richer and poorer, tends to reinforce the conditions of deprivation, whether absolute, relative or just anticipated, thus reinforcing the anxiety that underpins the insistence on racial entitlement.

To think beyond the binaries of truth and non-truth means abandoning the privileged position of being able to adjudicate what truth is. It does not mean, however, abandoning a proper respect for interrogating truths and demanding justification. To the certainty of these various dichotomous truths, the post-structuralist narrative of scepticism towards meta-narrative offered critique but not content, or much of a way forward except by juxtaposing one 'truth' against another. To some extent, we are dragged down by our own willingness to concede that others may have insights that we lack, in that we have lost the kind of adamant conviction in our own rightness that allows for crusading correctness. But this crusading correctness leads to antagonism, and even war. On the other hand, we do not want to allow the 'alternative facts' to overwhelm us because we are not prepared to rule out possibilities.

To extricate myself from this difficulty I want to appeal to the Marxist/Leninist, or more properly, the Cicerian principle of looking to see 'who stands to gain from this?' It is a relatively easy way to teach critical thinking, to evaluate truth-claims. But we need now to go beyond looking at competing claims of personal and group factions to the claims of a struggling planet, as well as to the claims of non-human forms of life. What implications does this claim have for ecology? The claims of the environment might be a reasonable way of rethinking the Marxist question. There is no point in righting human wrongs in a dying world, and Trump, perversely, may have strengthened this argument precisely by not so much ignoring it as defying it.

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Changing the World One Premise at a Time: Argument, Imagination and Post-truth

Tracy Bowell

Introduction

The dangers of giving ground to a new, post-truth, order of discourse are recognised in former President Obama's recent call to arms:

> If we are not serious about facts and what's true and what's not, if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems. (e.g. Solon 2016)

On the face of it, there is an urgent need, in response to such a call, to reassert the value of good argument and of critical thinking. In the present environment, in which governments present *alt facts,* and mainstream journalism is disparaged by some politicians, critical thinking is being seen by some as a form of activism. Indeed, when I teach and write about critical thinking, I often present critical thinking as transformative and as a source of empowerment, a means of acquiring knowledge and habits of mind that enable one to speak truth to power. But the echo chamber of social media sourced news and current affairs coverage makes it harder to acquire and employ the skills and habits of mind of which responsible and critical inquiry are comprised. In critical thinking instruction, we emphasise that reaching the true or most likely belief involves examining candidate claims against a background of evidence, testing whether you would be justified in holding them. But if the evidence is sourced solely from within our own echo chamber, it is likely simply to reinforce our beliefs. And thus the oft-cited goal of what Paul (1992) calls "deep sense" critical thinking, that of taking and performing a critical stance towards our own deeply held beliefs, is undermined by the echo; within the chamber we encounter only those claims that resonate with us.

Another issue that this new political order brings into relief is a need to acknowledge the role of emotion as part of our response to the world and of our

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lived experiences of it. Many of the responses that we have when thinking about and discussing socio-political issues are both cognitive and affective. The need to acknowledge and accommodate this contrasts with the traditional approach to argument and to standard critical thinking instruction, according to which emotion has no place in critical thinking, but is instead the preserve of rhetoric. This does not mean that we should also become teachers of rhetoric. Rather, instead of simply identifying and calling out falsehoods and teaching others to do the same, we need to harness the potential of emotion and the facts of lived experiences as a route to reason—as a means of opening up the mind to considering alternative ways of thinking and of being. Fiction and story-telling, in general, have historically provided us with the means both to make sense of our experiences and to countenance possibilities other than the realities of our actual lives. Moreover, socially shared fictions can play a constitutive role in binding a group of individuals together, enabling us both to maintain existing and to create new ways of being.

In this essay, I address the challenges to good argumentation and reasoning posed by the post-truth order and argue that there is an acute need for argumentation theory to re-present ways in which emotion and reason work together to form, scrutinise and revise deeply held beliefs. I begin by considering deeply held beliefs, discussing the types of beliefs that tend to be deeply held and the ways in which they are acquired. Focussing on deeply held beliefs that are relevant to our socio-political imaginaries, beliefs that are prone to prejudice, bias and stereotyping associated with gender, race, sexuality, disability, class and other markers of difference and marginalisation, I consider the ways deeply held beliefs play a framework role in reinforcing our ways of being within the world.

With inspiration from Moira Gatens' and Genevieve Lloyd's Spinozistic take on the role of the imagination in changing our ways of being, as well as from Iris Marion Young's work on asymmetrical reciprocity, in what follows I will discuss approaches to critical thinking that involve *showing* rather than stating alternatives to deeply held beliefs. In particular, I will focus on those involving narratives that provide alternative pictures and make epistemic use of lived experiences to shift and transform our imaginations by offering insights into the lives of others. I argue that such approaches offer more effective means of opening deeply held beliefs up to critical scrutiny and possible revision than approaches that seek simply to state the truth of contrary beliefs.

Deeply Held Beliefs

It is compelling to think that argument can be transformative, that it can work in the service of social justice, that we can, if you like, change the world through argument. Indeed, many of us who teach and write about argument and critical thinking not only hope for transformative outcomes, but also tell our students that they are possible. Some of us have written to that effect:

It is a good reflection of the importance of the skills you are developing that those in power sometimes fear the effects of those who can think critically about moral, social, economic and political issues. The ability to think critically, then, is essential if one is to function properly in one's role as a citizen. (Bowell and Kemp 2015, p. 6)

While I don't reject these claims outright, I have come to the view that what it takes to think critically and to experience and interact with the world in a way that can be transformative is a good deal more challenging and complex than standard critical thinking textbooks and courses may lead us, and more importantly, those who read them, to believe. We have entered an era of post-factual public discourse in which experts are spurned—see, for instance, the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign and its ongoing aftermath in the UK, or the 2016 US and 2017 UK election campaigns. Lies and misrepresentations of the facts are ignored even when they are demonstrated to be such. It seems to me crucial therefore that we come up with ways to encourage intellectually responsible participation in socio-political discourses and in democracy more generally.

Of course, there is emotional and social comfort in holding onto beliefs shared by those around us and with whom we regularly interact. If friends, both actual and digital, neighbours, family and colleagues express and share the view that migrants are stealing jobs, pushing wages down, engage in crime and terrorist acts, and so on, then that position is entrenched in our social interactions and understanding of the world; we thus take an emotional and social risk if we attempt to challenge that view. Moreover, our beliefs and opinions are reinforced in the echo chambers of our social media feeds. These echo chambers shelter us from socio-cultural and political difference; their digital (dis)locatedness shields us from an encounter with the distant other, who is demonised in the absence of any challenge to our prejudices and fears that could be gained from the experience of an actual, embodied, encounter. As Plato reminded us, the illusions of the cave offer more comfort than the confrontations of reality. Lorraine Code's Aristotelian characterisation of the intellectually virtuous person shows the epistemic flaws inherent in our tendency to remain within the shelter of the cave.

The intellectually virtuous person […] is one who finds value in knowing and understanding how things really are. S/he resists the temptation to live with partial explanations where fuller ones are attainable, the temptation to live in fantasy or in a world of dreams or illusion, considering it better to know, despite the tempting comfort and complacency that a life of fantasy or illusion (or well-tinged with fantasy or illusion) can offer. (Code 1984, p. 44)

Although critical thinking pedagogy does often emphasise the need for a properly critical thinker to be willing (and able) to hold up their own beliefs to critical analysis and scrutiny, and be prepared to modify or relinquish them in the face of appropriate evidence, it is has been recognised that the type of critical thinking instruction usually offered at first-year level in universities frequently does not lead to these outcomes for learners. Paul (1992) uses the term "strong sense critical thinking" to refer to a level of criticality at which a person is able to apply the processes and principles of argumentation assessment to their own beliefs and

commitments, particularly towards their own deeply held beliefs, and to remove any bias towards their own beliefs, turning critical thinking inwards, if you will. Taking critical thinking to this level is important if it is to become a real-life skill and to equip us to participate in our communities in the ways we hope (and tell students) it will, that is if it is properly to become an aspect of our ability to reason practically.

It seems there are no necessary or sufficient conditions for a belief's being deeply held (Kingsbury and Bowell 2016). Deeply held beliefs are acquired in various ways, and their content is diverse. Some markers may be present, but are not necessarily. Thus a deeply held belief may be held passionately and defended dogmatically, and it may play a fundamental role in the way we represent the world to ourselves. It can form part of our symbolic framework and of our ways of being in the world and with others, influencing our social and political actions. By way of example, all and any of the following beliefs could be candidates for deeply held status:

- This building is not about to fall down.
- Here is a hand.
- Jesus died for our sins.
- Women are equal to men in all respects.
- Immigration is a threat to our way of life.
- Human activity is not a principal cause of climate change.
- The left is soft on terrorism.
- Conservatives are heartless and don't care about social inequality.

We are often emotionally attached to our deeply held beliefs. This may be because of the way they have been acquired and reinforced via our upbringing and by people who have been influential in our lives—parents and other family members, teachers, religious and cultural leaders, our social or professional peers, or because they have been formed on the basis of our own lived experiences that serve consistently to reinforce them. They are part of the mythology that provides the narrative environment within which our cognitive and affective development takes place (Wittgenstein 1969, §s95, 97). Thus, we often feel invested in such beliefs, and they form part of our identity. Unsurprisingly, given the ways in which they tend to be acquired and our unwillingness to subject them to critical scrutiny, deeply held beliefs are prone to prejudice, implicit bias, confirmation bias, and stereotypes. They are also easily manipulated, since we are often unaware that we have them. Our tendency to cling tightly to them, coupled with an unwillingness or inability to subject them to reflection, demonstrates a lack of open-mindedness, that is to say, a resistance to different points of view, and, consequently, a resistance to change.

My experience as a critical thinking teacher is that it is difficult to bring students to a place where they are able and willing to reflect critically on their own beliefs. The difficulty involves broader issues than critical thinking pedagogy itself. It is partly a question of the right motivation, partly of students' understandings and

expectations of themselves as learners. In a small research project by Goldberg et al. (2015), students who had taken our first-year, one-semester critical thinking course were interviewed about the extent to which their thinking had become more critical after having completed the course. They were then asked about the extent to which their reflection on their own deeply held beliefs had become more critical. This question was explored in more depth by setting up conversations with the interviewer in which they were encouraged to use critical thinking skills to reflect on and defend their own deeply held beliefs. The result was that, overwhelmingly, participants thought they had become more critical, yet very few were able or willing to reflect critically, properly speaking, on their own beliefs. They tended to defend their beliefs fallaciously, often with appeals to tradition or employing the naturalistic fallacy. This result was troubling, of course. It seemed to indicate that our course (and textbook) failed in its task to help students to develop this kind of practical wisdom. More profoundly, in light of these results, the expectation that transforming deeply held beliefs can be achieved via standard critical thinking methods and approaches appears unreasonable and naive. Several participants talked about beliefs that they had "imbibed with their mother's milk", i.e. beliefs that formed part of the framework from within which they thought about and sought to understand the world. In short, such beliefs constituted part of the ethos with which they engaged with the world and with others—they were their habitus.[1] These kinds of admissions make clear that the genealogy of certain of our deeply held beliefs, involving family and other influential figures in our early lives, are often so embedded in our ways of being that they go unremarked and unreflected upon. Thus, we may be inclined to defend such notions emotionally when challenged—they are associated with our relation to people we love, respect and admire. They form part of our intimate identity.

Argument and Emotion

In philosophy generally, and in argumentation theory more specifically, as a rule, emotion and identity are considered out of place in good reasoning; indeed, emotion (bad) is usually represented as juxtaposed to reason (good). In argumentation theory, we see a family of these juxtapositions: mythos versus logos, emotion versus reason, rhetoric versus argument, convincing versus persuading (as others have noted, these oppositions are also conceived of along gendered lines, e.g. Lloyd 1984; Jaggar 1989; Gilbert 2004; Linker 2015). Recently, however, theorists such as Michael Gilbert and Maureen Linker have recognised and argued for the

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[1]David Lodge's 1980 novel, *How far can you go?* (published in the USA as *Souls and bodies*) traces the lives of a group of Catholic university students through the decades of the 50s, 60s and 70s. The novel conveys a strong sense of the pervasiveness of deeply held beliefs about contraception, the lived effects of those beliefs, and what happens when they are challenged. See especially pp. 142–143.

legitimacy of emotion within reasoning and argument, and against the standard conception of emotion as opposed to reason and a hindrance to good reasoning. On such a view, emotion is considered a legitimate part of reasoning rather than a response that replaces reason. So, for example, while on the one hand, fear and anger can be stoked to an extent that reflective assessment is difficult and judgement is clouded, on the other, fear and anger can be warranted and can have a role to play within effective practical reasoning. As Linker (2015, pp. 71–72) notes, for example, indignation plays an important and justified role in our responses to social injustices. Indeed, anger or indignation is often the rational response to social realities in such cases, and can be a trigger for taking appropriate actions or changing the way we think about the world and about others. For Gilbert (2004), when evaluating someone's reasoning or making a judgement call on their route to a particular conclusion, emotion is just one of several factors that it is rational to consider.

As I have acknowledged, there is some truth in the traditional view that emotion *can* impede clear and productive reflection and judgement. The affective aspects of our cognitive schema also mean that our deeply held beliefs can be prey to confirmation bias. Linker's example makes the problem clear: imagine two young children learning the concept "dog", but from within different cognitive schema. One child grows up in a family of dog lovers. She experiences a great deal of contact with dogs, dogs are talked about positively, and her experiences of dogs are the main happy ones. Once she has grasped the concept "dog", that is, once she is able to distinguish dogs from all the other, non-dog, things she encounters, and can discern relevant similarities between the dog things—her understanding of dogs, reinforced by her experiences and the behaviour of her family, is of something positive. The other child grows up in a family in which one (or more) of the adults have had a traumatic experience with dogs, perhaps having been attacked as a child. While she acquires the concept and is able to use it properly, distinguishing dog things from non-dogs and so on, her experience of dogs and all that she learns about dogs develop within a negative cognitive schema; she comes to understand dogs as a negative thing. Her beliefs about dogs—that they are frightening and to be avoided, say, have been reinforced by her family and her upbringing. In order to modify her understanding of dogs, she would need to be exposed to dogs in more favourable circumstances, which would, ideally, result in more positive experiences. These new experiences provide opportunities for her to revise her long-standing beliefs that dogs are dangerous and to be avoided (Linker 2015, pp. 36–38).

This example can be applied to the sorts of deeply held beliefs that someone may form and hold about socio-political issues. Someone whose upbringing and broader social contacts engender and reinforce an understanding of people from a different background—people who are a different race or ethnicity, have different religious beliefs, are from a different social class, are richer or poorer, are disabled, whose sexuality is different—as people to be feared and mistrusted will likely form negative deeply held beliefs. They may well be emotionally attached to those beliefs, which are confirmed by their experiences and are understood within the cognitive

framework of their upbringing. By contrast, someone whose upbringing and broader social contacts are characterized by positive exposure to difference is less likely to develop the same sort of fears toward others. Someone raised in a community in which the variety of people and ways of living are just part of everyday life will be less inclined in general to think in terms of "us" and "the others". Without a framework of "us" and "them" already in place, the idea of treating individuals as representatives of groups would likely be foreign, even incomprehensible. It seems probable that deeply held beliefs such as these, which clearly guide our social interactions, are not held consciously. They play a guiding role in the way we live our lives, but they are not something we call to mind on a regular basis; to the contrary, we are likely first aware of them when they are called into question or become the subject of reflection in some other way, just as the assumptions that underpin our interactions with the physical world, such as "the building is not about to fall down", go unnoticed and unchallenged in the normal course of our lives. They only come to the fore when in unusual situations, such as, in this case, in the immediate aftermath of an earthquake.

There are, then, several features that may be displayed by deeply held beliefs that make us less likely to hold them up to critical scrutiny so that inconsistencies and relevant evidence can be brought to light. Because they are so much a part of our way of thinking about and experiencing the world, revising them might cause reverberations throughout the web of our beliefs and practices. Since they are formed within a particular, enduring framework, they are often prey to confirmation bias, to being reinforced by the shared beliefs of our communities and by our experiences within that cognitive schema, even in the face of evidence that disconfirms them. As a consequence, when we encounter challenges to our deeply held beliefs, and when we question those of others, we often do so in a less than open-minded way, engaging in the call and response of adversarial assertion and denial, rather than actually listening to what others are saying.

Maureen Linker's work on intellectual empathy offers a starting point for a way out of this impasse for argumentation and for critical thinking pedagogy. In her book, *Intellectual Empathy: Critical Thinking for Social Justice* (2015), she draws on her own practice as an educator negotiating methods for effective and potentially transformative discussions of socially divisive issues often taking place across often extensive social, cultural and political difference.[2] As her case studies demonstrate, when critical thinking is performed in the way that Linker argues for, it manifests traits and practices that realise intellectual responsibility: it is virtuous inquiry. Whereas the adversarial practice of argument in which we fire contesting facts at one another or question each other's moral or intellectual capacity does not lead to the opening of hearts and minds, what Linker calls "intellectual empathy", which is

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[2]Linker teaches at the University of Michigan—Dearborn. Dearborn, close to Detroit, is the home to the largest Muslim community in the USA. For a short documentary featuring the diverse voices of Dearborn residents see https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2017/aug/04/dearborn-michigan-divided-muslim-american-donald-trump-documentary.

the soul and substance of her approach, has both cognitive and affective appeal. Linker characterises intellectual empathy thus:

> Intellectual empathy, then, assumes that reason and understanding must be supplemented with emotion and experience so that we can *know* in the fullest possible sense. This means knowing about ourselves and knowing as much as we can about other people's circumstances, particularly people whose circumstances are different from our own. In this way, intellectual empathy is not a psychological prescription for changing individual beliefs. It is a means of examining both the wide scope of social institutions and social inequality and the narrow scope of our own beliefs. When we employ intellectual empathy in our reasoning about social differences, we are not so much interested in gathering information about people and their respective beliefs as we are in *looking at situations people face through their eyes.* (Linker 2015, p. 13)

Traits such as these are absolutely necessary for a fuller understanding of complex social issues. Argument that is disconnected from the reality of lived experiences, where social position and power relations are neglected, ignored or obscured, lacks the nuance that is the hallmark of deeper comprehension. When deeply held beliefs are radically different, or even directly opposed, there is often a failure to see anything in common and differences are foregrounded instead. Linker's approach is thus in the first place to seek commonality.

She also points to the way in which many of the responses that we have in inquiry about social issues are both cognitive and affective, as is intellectual empathy itself. This contrasts with the traditional approach to argument and critical thinking (and standard critical thinking pedagogy), according to which emotion has no place in critical thinking and argumentation, but belongs rather to the preserve of rhetoric.

Asymmetric Reciprocity

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to consider how we might start to develop an understanding that takes proper account of the other; how we might come to be able to understand empathetically in a manner that does not undermine our ability to reason critically, but rather improves our criticality. But first I draw on the resources offered by Iris Marion Young's notion of Asymmetrical Reciprocity to consider some of the limitations we face in working to understand each other empathetically across socio-cultural and political differences. I then draw on the resources offered by Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens' Spinozistic picture of the social imaginary and the possibilities that offers for our coming to imagine different ways of being in the world and with others. These may be different ways in which the world is for others, or they may be different ways in which the world *could* be for us, and for others. That is, there are prospects here both for better understanding the realities of the lives of others as well as prospects for imagining different, and better, lives for ourselves with others.

Young ([1997](), p. 38) reminds us that an injunction to practice symmetrical reciprocity is common in ordinary moral practice. In the course of moral practices, we are often questioned or enjoined in the following ways:

- Look at it from his position.
- Try to walk in her shoes.
- How would you like it if someone did that to you?
- There but for the grace of God, go I.

Often these and similar propositions form the content of deeply held beliefs about behaving morally. Morality does seem to demand of us that we show respect to others in part by considering their standpoint, and doing so is a way of performing open-mindedness, humility and empathy. Empathy and reciprocity feature in our deeply held beliefs about how we should behave towards each other, beliefs that we could say are commonly part of a moral imaginary. Young doesn't deny the role of empathy and reciprocity, but she does dispute the morphology of reciprocity, problematizing the extent to which it is really possible to imagine ourselves into the lived experiences of another. Learning from others' experiences, she argues, is central to moral engagement (and to deliberative discourse in the context of democracies), but it is not achieved through the imaginative move of imagining oneself in the other's position. Instead, we should seek to learn *from them* what it is like *for them*, rather than trying to imagine what it would/could be like for ourselves. So we should try to focus on a third-person perspective rather than slipping into a first-person perspective. We can't imagine *ourselves* as others, only as other versions of ourselves and there is much in the literature on conceivability and possibility and on the phenomenon of imaginative resistance that supports Young's position in this respect (e.g. Gendler [2000](); MacKenzie [2006](); Scarry [1998]()). So rather than trying to imagine ourselves into the position of the other, we should commit to learning as much as we can about the lived realities of other people from their own testimonial accounts of how they experience, negotiate and live their lives; how they live their gender, race, class, disability, sexuality, culture and religion. This requires that we listen properly and take seriously others' testimony in order to learn about their lived experiences and about how it is to be them in this world.

For example, my husband is deaf. Together we negotiate the practical, moral and emotional tensions of his lived reality every day in our own relationship and interactions, and in those with others both within and outside of our immediate family. I have no real sense of what it is like to be him in his position, to experience the isolation and exclusion and frustrations that he does. Recently, I was temporarily deaf in one ear. For a short while I gained some insight into what it is like not to be able to hear properly, and I think it's fair to say that my *sympathy* for his position expanded slightly (at least for a while), although I couldn't legitimately claim to know deafness from his position or to have walked in *his shoes.* Rather, I have to take his word for it with respect to what it's like for him to live as a deaf person. Thus, encountering and listening to the other are placed front and centre of attempting empathetically to understand and know the other properly.

Linker recounts an instance of productive encounter that occurred when she was leading a project for students who wanted to make some kind of positive contribution to the lives of the homeless in their area of Michigan. It was approaching winter, and the students assumed that homeless people would need mittens. They set out to collect mittens that could be donated to a local shelter, but Linker reminded them that they hadn't contacted anyone to check that their assumption was correct. As it turned out, the shelter had plenty of warm winter clothing which had been donated by others who had reasoned in the same way as the students; what the shelter needed was help sorting the clothing into sizes, and so on. The students duly volunteered for that task, and in the process had the opportunity to visit the shelter and work there for the day, gaining the chance to learn directly about its programmes and the lives of its clients (Linker 2015, pp. 178–179).

Linker's story illustrates the limitations of understanding others' needs on the basis of our own perspective, as well as how direct encounter with the other offers a way of correcting and overcoming misunderstandings. But direct, embodied encounter is often not possible, which is where imagination can come into play. Young points to the ways in which different histories and positionalities bear on, and place limitations on, the ways in which we both experience the world and each other, and in which we interact with and try to understand each other. For example, all other things being equal, given my privileged and safe life as a professional in New Zealand, it is unlikely that I would experience what it is like to be so desperate to escape war or poverty, that I would abandon my home and my way of life, gather up my family and trek across dangerous terrain or use my life savings to buy passage on a crowded vessel that may or may not make it to safer shores. Moreover, unless I actively seek out opportunities for direct encounter with people who have had these kinds of experiences, such as becoming involved as a volunteer with an organisation that works with refugees, it is unlikely that I can come to know and understand the realities of their lives via direct encounter.

Young emphasises the need to listen across the distance of difference, recognising that while crossing boundaries can lead to productive understanding, we must still respect those boundaries. In striving to understand others, I never really transcend my own experience; I can never be out of my own skin, but I can learn something new, while acknowledging that there will always be conceptual residues and resistances to understanding despite overlaps in interests and understandings. So while there are commonalities that may form a starting point for transformative dialogue, we should attend to particularity and avoid eliding differences in background, life histories, lifestyles and positionalities. Young emphasises the importance of questions. Questioning demonstrates respect, acknowledges ignorance and demonstrates a desire to learn from others. Contrast this with argument which tends to proceed by the making of assertions rather than the posing of questions. Dialogue that recognises the asymmetry of others in this way offers two possibilities for extending and deepening our understanding and knowledge: it enables me better to understand myself because my own assumptions and point of view become relativized when positioned reflectively in relation to those of others. It enables me

better to understand others, because I put myself in a position where I can learn how their lives are and how the world is for them.

Asymmetric reciprocity requires sympathetic imagining, a trying to see what it is like *for them*, while acknowledging that one does so from within the limits of one's own positionalities. Sympathetic imagining can offer a means of extending our third-person perspective on the lives and experiences of others. The experience of properly encountering others often involves attentively listening to and engaging with their stories. Narratives, both real and fictional, offer a way of overcoming imaginative resistance.

Thus far I have considered the way in which asymmetric reciprocity might be performed through encounter with the real-life stories of others. In the remainder of the paper, I want to extend that thinking by drawing on the resources of the idea of the social imaginary to consider a way in which engaging critically with fictions can also offer a way of coming to understand other ways of being in the world and with others. I also want to highlight the role of lived experiences in (re)shaping social imaginaries, creating new, and better, fictions.

Re-imagining the (Social) World: The Imaginary

An imaginary is a loosely connected set of images embedded in social practices, or throughout texts. It consists of

> imaginary forms that are constitutive of our experience of the world, bearers of effective significance, the means by which we not only think, but feel our way around the world (Gatens and Lloyd 1999, p. 111)

It can serve as a device for changing perceptions and understandings of others' experiences and ways of being in the world. Our socially shared fictions play a constitutive role in binding a group of individuals together; they are constitutive of our identities. Thus, the fictions of which our imaginary is comprised maintain and create a way of life. Despite some of the connotations associated with the term in its standard use and with the notion of a fiction, the imaginary is not illusory. Rather, the central tenet of the concept of the imaginary is that the imagination is both structured by and includes the symbolic. This symbolic framework includes socio-cultural and political representations, including stereotypes and biases, and our deeply held beliefs are part of those representations. It thus determines social and political action and the ways we are perceived and perceive others. The world we encounter comes to us always already represented. It has an imaginary form that yields the salience and significance that the world has for us. The imaginary, then, is our way of making cognitive and affective sense of the world.

These sense-making thought patterns are perspectival and embodied, and thus shaped and potentially altered by our experiences and our positionalities. As Gatens and Lloyd (1999, p. 25) explain, experiencing something via a different image or form can give rise to a different mode of feeling and a different response. A simple

example is provided by Spinoza: a horse's hoof prints in the sand lead a soldier to think of horsemen and of war, a farmer of ploughs and fields. The meaning and salience we attribute to our experiences and to the aspects of the world with which we interact is a consequence of the social and cultural mediation of our responses. Thus, in our encounters with each other, salience is often afforded to difference—to bodies that look different, be they black, pregnant, or with a disability, to bodies that sound different by dint of accent or language, to lives that are lived in ways that differ from ours.

The resources of the idea of the imaginary offer transformative potential because they offer the possibility of dislodging false and misleading representations, creatively replacing them with better ones, thus creating images that open up alternative ways of being in the world. For instance, while we cannot modify damaging representations of women simply by claiming they are false or by asserting their negation (women *can* reason, women can carry heavy loads), if the way women are imagined can be changed, responses to female bodies open up to the potential for change.

Changes might be brought about by the experience of concrete, embodied examples of alternatives to the status quo. For instance, I was recently involved in interviewing young women who were candidates for scholarships for refugee daughters (young women who are either refugees themselves or the daughters thereof). A young Muslim woman, originally from Afghanistan, talked about her ambition to be a pilot. She had seen media coverage of a recent flight from Brunei to Saudi Arabia on which the entire flight crew were women. The stereotype-challenging images of these women had enabled her to imagine the possibility of a career as a pilot for herself. In similar vein, the courageous Saudi women who, first, dare to drive cars themselves and then, even more transgressively, film themselves doing so and upload the videos to the internet, offer new, alternative memes—alternative imaginary forms—that shift thinking about what women can do, and should not be prevented from doing. While they show the far-from-normal, they offer possibilities for what could become normalised. To reinforce the point, as we go to press, King Salman has issued a decree permitting driver's licences to be issued to women and allowing women to drive without a male guardian present.

Stories and other texts—films, plays, visual art, songs—also carry socio-cultural transformative potential through their ability to bring about shifts in the social imaginary by offering glimpses of different lives and ways of being, be they actual lives of others that we better understand through those stories and images or possibilities manifested via fictional narratives. Take Virginia Woolf's example of the "angel in the house" that appears in her essay "Professions for Women" (cited in Lloyd 1998, p. 170). The angel is a phantom that visits as she writes; a fiction governing the interactions between men and women. The angel is sympathetic, charming, utterly unselfish and self-sacrificing. She takes the leg of the chicken, she sits in the draft. Woolf's imagery enables us to recognise something that is embedded, but not clearly visible, in our social practices. The fiction brings it to light, enabling us to see it more clearly, but rather than stating these truths as such,

it shows them, by making certain aspects of the scenario pertinent and salient to us, precipitating a process of coming to see and better to understand. Moreover, stories and images such as these evoke affective reactions—Woolf's readers feel justified anger or irritation (or resignation?) as they first encounter and then recognise these aspects of our social practices. The recognition then prompts cognitive responses: it's wrong that women are expected, and expect themselves, to make these sacrifices. Finally, on the basis of such reflections, we can eventually move towards changing such practices.

The narratives and characters in Loach's (2016) film about living with unemployment and negotiating the benefits system, *I Daniel Blake*, play a similar role of first making certain truths perspicuous by evoking emotional responses and then triggering a better understanding of lives such as these. The film shows what it is like to be a mother trying to bring up two children on her own in a city to which she has been relocated by the benefits agency and where she knows no one; or a widower who has a chronic health condition that is deemed insufficiently severe to prevent him from working, but who cannot find a job in part because he isn't healthy enough to work. The portrayals dislodge the fiction of the lazy, feckless, benefits scrounger who wants something for nothing and is not deserving of our empathy or our care and consideration. When viewing the film, we get a sense of the frustration, indignity and eventual despair that is experienced by its characters. The shame of the mother caught eating baked beans straight from the can at the food bank to assuage the hunger that has built up from foregoing meals to give her children all the food she can afford is made so perspicuous through image and narrative that we feel a justified, a *righteous*, anger at the way she is treated by a state and a system that should be helping and supporting her. Of course, a text won't affect every viewer or reader in the same way and, indeed, *I, Daniel Blake* will have had none of these effects on any number of viewers. But for some, those who may have tended to think of benefit claimants not as individual humans with similarities to themselves, the narrative, characters and images can provide a means by which it is possible to reimagine benefit claimants and dislodge the grip of stereotypes and unconscious biases, replacing their (mis)understandings with a conception of people as actual individuals with life histories, relationships, interests, loves and hates not dissimilar to their own. By depicting the characters as individuals—by filling them out—the film rehumanises them, giving the audience the opportunity to imagine the world in the ways it really is for them and thus to see and come to understand the reality of the lives depicted more clearly. Moreover, in gaining this clarity of vision and understanding, and reacting with anger, the viewer may be moved to some kind of action aimed at improving people's lives, or to working for socio-political change.

Stories, then, provide us with a way into understanding the realities of the lives of others and can work to modify and change our imaginaries. Furthermore, we can become part of stories. Stories help us to imagine ourselves in situations similar to those depicted, and energise our non-cognitive responses in ways that can be productive within contexts involving not just the affective, but also reason and judgement. Stories are a means of changing minds in terms of how we come to

understand the world and others, as well as in terms of the way we then come to make judgements about them. They can also offer up possibilities for coming to imagine different ways of being in the world and with others.

In Gatens' and Lloyd's development of the Spinozistic idea of the imaginary, we can find the resources for a harmonising of emotion and argument. Rational reflection on the imaginary is possible. The appropriateness of images can be challenged and fictions can be changed or replaced by better fictions. This process is not one of checking fictions against the real, but rather of seeing if the world and subject can bear this signification. Through that assessment, we gain the opportunity to confront "different ways of inhabiting our world and living affectively and effectively within it" (Gatens and Lloyd 1999, p. 120).

> The challenge is not to transcend them [fictions], but to use reasons to see through, improve and replace, destructive, oppressive fictions with others judged better able to sustain individual and collective *conatus*. (Lloyd 1998, p. 166)

Reason and imagination, then, are not conceived of as related via an ascending hierarchy as in Plato's account, according to which there is epistemic and metaphysical ascent from the world of appearances to the world of forms. Instead, imagination is seen as coexisting with reason to generate unified pictures of the world. If fictions structure both individual behaviour and social practices, then, argues Lloyd, identifying and confronting them is the core of education. It is this critical intelligence that serves as the critical element of proper critical thinking, schooling both the imagination and our ability to reason so as not to allow fictions to lead us astray. While one of Spinoza's own targets was religious superstition, the contemporary challenge lies in confronting the fictions perpetuated by all manner of ideologies that influence deeply held beliefs and the ways in which we conduct ourselves and our relationships with others. In particular, genuinely fake news stories, as distinct from ones that we simply disagree with or wish were not true, are concocted specifically to discredit the opposition and deliberately mislead the audience, rendering common ground utterly impossible.

In Practice

I end this essay with a brief discussion of how these ideas might translate in an educational context. A recent article in the *New York Times* offers a case study of how a teacher might successfully negotiate a situation in which learners' beliefs on a topic that is being studied are deeply held, yet false (Harmon 2017). A science teacher in Wellston, Ohio, found that almost his entire class of 17 senior students in biology were climate change sceptics. Wellston is a coal-mining district, and many of the students come from families in which parents, uncles and other relatives, friends and neighbours had lost jobs in the mines. The students' deeply held beliefs that the emissions from burning coal and other fossil fuels were not causally responsible for climate change had been formed in the environments of their

families and their communities. At first, the teacher used scientific evidence to demonstrate the falsity of the students' beliefs, but loyalty to family meant that their affective response was stronger than any cognitive response elicited by the data and other evidence they were shown. They felt that it would be disloyal to distance themselves from or question the consensus opinion of their upbringing. Realising the source and role of the students' deeply held beliefs, the teacher switched from trying to work directly against those beliefs by disproving them with statistical evidence. Instead, he appealed to their lived experience of the local climate, first as the winter produced fewer snow days and the spring brought floods. He then reinforced that by creating a new lived experience for his students, taking them to the woods close to the school where they observed the destructive effects of an invasive insect that used to die off in the winter but now survives because of the warmer weather. By recognising and acknowledging the emotional weight of the students' deeply held beliefs about climate change and their suspicion toward scientists and the evidence they produce, the teacher found a way to disrupt those beliefs, not by exposing them to yet more statistical evidence, as though they might eventually bow to authority under its weight, but rather by enabling them directly to experience the effects of climate change in their immediate environment.

I emphasised earlier the value of narrative and fictional characters in enabling people to encounter the realities of lives other than their own and in dislodging misleading fictions about the lives of others and replacing them with more faithful representations. In the tertiary education sector, some teachers are using story worlds and games to provide digitally enhanced experiential learning that appeals to and engages learners who have grown up and have their habitus in digital spaces. A story world might be built around a narrative involving complex social or environmental situations that encourage critical enquiry and working towards practical and policy solutions. A story world can involve a fictional community in which learners take on roles and become characters within the story world. Augmented and virtual reality tools offer the possibility for digitally (re)creating environments that resemble real worlds, giving students a richer experiential learning environment that promotes both a cognitive and an affective response. Learning about environmental politics and activism, for example, could be enhanced if, through the use of augmented reality tools, learners could be immersed within the communities and worlds of the Dakota Access Pipeline activists and the Standing Rock Sioux tribe.

I have argued that transformational learning experiences that involve open-mindedness with respect to one's own shibboleths require more than developing good reasoning skills and dispositions; they require acknowledgement that deeply held beliefs can be motivated by emotional responses that are not unjustified, and that our affective responses to certain situations can, themselves, be reasonable responses. In order better to make space for emotion as part and parcel of transformative social enquiry and critique in the educational context, it seems to me that we should be offering learners more opportunities for encounter with the other, for experiential and immersive learning that both amplifies and challenges the theoretical approach, while calling into question some of the received attitudes and

assumptions produced and disseminated by media and advertizing. Students studying economics, for instance, can complement their theoretical studies by being confronted first hand with the negative consequences of the theory's application, say, by meeting and talking to laid-off factory workers, whose jobs were sent overseas to low-wage countries. Students learning about social policy could be well served as learners if given the opportunity to encounter eventual beneficiaries (or victims) of policy, learning about the effects it has had for them, and so forth.

While we should indeed remain serious about facts and about what's true and what's not, this moment of post-truth—and let's work as educators, scholars and activists to ensure that it is just a *moment*—requires us also to take affective responses as seriously as cognitive ones, and to find ways to elicit new imaginative responses that confront misrepresentation, dissembling and lies.

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The Complexity of Post-truth in Research: An Indigenous Speculation

Carl Te Hira Mika and Jacoba Matapo

It seems that most academics take issue with post-truth because it appeals to the masses through style, not substance. This demise of truth places research in danger, because verifiable and correspondence notions of truth are meant to be absolutely crucial for its objectivity and its continued survival. If post-truth really is so radical a departure, then, we would be on the brink of an utterly new—and possibly painful —set of discourses that threaten to force us to describe the world as one rather large celebrity, not as an intra-dependent entity with its own integrity.

We bring into relief two discussions of post-truth from Samoan and Maori perspectives. The Samoan writer indicates that post-truth in research actually consists in the denial of more than one way of conducting research. A grand truth is a post-truth to the extent that 'truth' through a Samoan lens is the ability to hear the world as an interconnected phenomenon, and to respond in synchronicity with the non-human world: post-truth is thus a latecomer through colonisation. Where research in the social and educational sciences denies this complexity and instead opts for entrenched humanistic approaches, it is post-truth. The Maori writer also acknowledges that this sophisticated relationship between world and self exists for the Maori researcher, but argues for a research method of 'oblique response' that does not dispense with academic objectivity and yet rejects the Western ontology of presence that exists in the practice of referencing another's utterance.

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Introduction

At what point does truth become a pale version of itself, as if the former never possessed aspects of its facsimile? For some indigenous peoples, truth and post-truth are never far away from each other, and we may be just as sceptical of the former as we are of the latter, although for different reasons. Most academics, it seems, are especially critical of post-truth because it threatens a perceived notion of objectivity and privileges 'what-I-feel-at-this-moment'. If it is indeed attaining the status that it appears to be in the media, it signals danger to established truth: the two cannot work together, as if they are merely different voices that can never-theless add to one another. A side must be taken, where one is either with or against truth, and at issue here is the livelihood of the academic.

Indigenous academics, however, have to consider whether the issue is so clear-cut. In an ontological sense, 'truthful' Samoan research is that which works within the full interplay of the world. The Samoan contributor argues that coloni-sation, however, delivers a notion of research that is human-governed, that privi-leges a foreclosure of all things in the research method and outcome. The Maori author agrees and notes that there must be a space for objectivity in the research process, which at the same time must indeed approximate the full world, or at least grapple with its possibilities. To completely eschew objectivity would be to give way to the self's desires, which seems to be the crux of post-truth in its more conventional form. He suggests that there is a place for a sort of research that reacts to another's utterances but does not yield to the grand truth of referencing that initial voice. He advocates that there are other ways to denote the initial utterance (or text, or theorist) within one's own indigenous writing that do not interrupt the current process of thinking but that still validate it. To put it most briefly: the indigenous academic must deal with two types of post-truth and must navigate both in order to avoid allegations of post-truthism.

A matter of style: throughout the discussion, we are aware of the backdrop of recent events and phenomena (the advent of Trump as American president and Brexit loom large in our minds here) and their potential for satire, and we acknowledge that some of our propositions are coloured by these larger-than-life phenomena and that our writing is sometimes influenced by absurdities as we explore this nevertheless important theme.

Speculations on Post-truth: Its Connections and Manifestations

Post-truth appears to be intimately connected with spectacle and audience. While the hermetic post-truth advocate might indeed be post-truthful, s/he is unlikely to be recognised as such unless there is a willing onlooker. Quantity is also quality for the post-truthist, and post-truth is especially effective when it has a large group in its

thrall—when it stands before the seeing or listening *other*. It is here that sensationalism steps in; we see its role most clearly in recent times, with such telling comments as that of Banks', that '[t]he remain campaign featured fact, fact, fact, fact, fact. It just doesn't work. You have got to connect with people emotionally. It's the Trump success' (Worley 2016). In many cases, the commentator is a powerful individual who has the capacity to make outrageous statements that are especially seductive because they try to counter orthodoxy. Conventional wisdom has always had it that only those trained and educated in the tools and ideology of (ostensible) objectivity can make a statement about a discipline or concern, but the Banks and Trumps can overturn that expectation through both their status and their massive and powerful reaches. Post-truth does introduce an antidote to the stifling impact of fact. Moreover, it can often be associated with a rise to popularity, with a world in which glitz outdoes substance. With Gare's (2006) book, *Triumph of the Airheads* in mind, we suspect that it is the 'ohmigods' and 'wotevs' that have a particular affinity with emotional utterances, because post-truth deliberately apotheosises how one feels at the time.

These remarks and others of their kind clearly have huge repercussions as they are played out on powerful fronts, but they are not necessarily limited to members of the G7, with sensational audiences also having their place in New Zealand. We speak anecdotally but quite confidently (and thus begin our own post-truth journey!) in our observation that Maori and Pasifika have been as deeply influenced by the celebrity fad as any other group. The effect of the media-enhanced 'Famous Person' on both Maori and Pasifika is understudied, but it is reasonable to assume that the New Zealand Idol/Masterchef/Bachelor phenomenon has just as much allure for the indigenous person as it does for Pakeha/Palagi, providing an audience much more readily than 'It's in the Bag' ever could have. The lure of the big-time and its potential to solve instantly any socioeconomic problems that the contestant and his or her family may be constantly confronted with, would surely contribute to the drive to attain quick fame. One can see a certain kind of precedence in the Maori showbands of the 50s and 60s, but the lack of Internet and social media never promised them the sort of fame that is held out to current winners. The immediate circulation of the self in these forums holds the thrill of overnight success; it is unsurprising, then, that Maori and Pasifika do put themselves forward in these glamorous settings—often with a fruitful outcome, it should be noted. There is also something deeply seductive about instant stardom, with its capacity to endow the winner not just with money and the promise of being the toast of the town, but also potential access to a hitherto expert domain. In modern times in New Zealand, the celebrity has been given an audience on serious matters, to the extent that they have become experts on cancer treatment, life insurance and so on. For just a while at least, the common man gets to have a say on a *cause célèbre*.

We are aware that stardom and instant fame are not realistic outcomes for most academics, and in any case we have to look at other ways post-truth could take its form here. We are also aware that the broadest parameters of post-truth itself need rethinking from indigenous perspectives. This reconsideration of the problem runs the risk of itself being labelled a post-truth exercise, because it has the potential to

throw into doubt that most exalted entity in dominant Western scholarship—truth. Truthfulness in indigenous thought may be an ability to step away from what has become an apparently 'truthful' method of research, through well-worn techniques or simply by a dominant epistēme. By this second notion of 'truthful' here, we mean 'default research method'; this default has not simply appeared incidentally and it may have arisen through a confluence of events that are beyond the scope of this chapter. But any implication that it is superior is in fact a post-truth because it closes off other, in numerous ways more authentic and truthful, encounters with the world. Fully engaging with the world, even in research, also sits well with an overall indigenous metaphysics of interconnection (Mika 2017). The concern here is primarily not so much with a *particular* research method as with challenging a threatening dogmatism *as* itself a post-truth, so that the fullness of the world can be considered in all its complexity and variety.

Post-truth in its unadulterated, celebrity form has not yet taken hold in research in New Zealand, but its milder and more post-modern version certainly has. This latter does not profess to govern by emotion, but it might encourage an unorthodox encounter with a statement or an utterance in research—and, perhaps paradoxically, it has given us the means to identify that there is a post-truth at work in the first instance (see e.g. Jones 2016). In universities, there now seems to be more openness in some disciplines to students describing their feelings in their answers, with some assignments specifically calling for a student's emotional response to a question or situation. Many academics might resist the incursion of that sort of thinking, yet employ research methods that cannot help but rely on *their* own instinctive reactions. These points of distraction (Charteris 2014) quite often form the mainstay of much post-qualitative research, which contain method components such as embodied approaches and new materialism. It's not quite post-truth; it is rather more postmodern, and it saves itself from post-truth by still grounding itself in some aspect of rigour—perhaps by referring to other published material as a form of justification, or by simply offering a very well-considered argument, and remaining faithful in certain respects to correspondence notions of truth, broadly construed. For the Maori author of this chapter, it is important to avoid post-truth accusations by grounding any research that could otherwise be considered post-truth in at least one of those established modes of scholarship. Thus, one can indeed react to text or data in an emotional or associative way; however, this reaction is then brought into the context of a published Maori ontology and can be argued within the influence of that predetermined basis. Or it could be moored by a subtext of facts or published material that is strategically placed so it doesn't undermine the voice or reaction of the Maori researcher but simply signals a form of support. We recognise that, without some form of anchor, any 'emotional research' simply slides off into self-indulgence. We turn now to these two interpretations of, and at times ambivalent reactions to, the problem of post-truth within research from two Maori and Samoan perspectives.

Post-truth in Research: Maori and Samoan Perspectives

What is truth and what is the relationship between truth and knowledge for an indigenous Samoan/Pasifika social or educational scholar? At the centre of knowledge, the power of truth presents as epistemic: What does it mean to know? What are the criteria for determining valid knowledge for an indigenous researcher? What or whose knowledge matters, or matters most? There remains a privileging of knowledge over being and becoming, to the extent that knowledge is more important than the desire to know and the processes of concept creation (Matapo 2016). Tamasese (2005), a Samoan indigenous philosopher, has argued this in his own theorising of Samoan knowledge systems, with particular reference to the significance of coming to know as an ontological position that is never static or fixed. There is a regard for the unknown; what is unknown is inextricably implicated in the known. In Pasifika and Samoan thinking, knowledge is not value free and universal, yet the ethics, forms and procedures of social and educational research in and by Pasifika seem to assume a certain universality in how researchers must engage with Pasifika people(s). This universalising of methods, protocols and practices suggests a return to master narratives, while celebrating difference (Braidotti 2005), identity, religion and culture. In short, from a Samoan perspective, this fixed approach itself is an instance of post-truth.

The replacement of the diversity of local knowledge cultures with universalizing truth regimes can be tied to both the evolution of academic research and the consequences of colonisation. In that light, one might also question how religion and theology have influenced Pasifika research methodology and notions of truth in research, and how the politics of truth are historically situated. The erasure of traditional indigenous knowledge(s) systems for some Pacific Island nations includes the loss of language and traditional social structures. This is not to say that Pasifika researchers are concerned with a return to traditional 'truths'; rather, as Tui Atua (2009) advocates, Pacific and Pasifika researchers must be open to critical appraisal of Pacific traditions and the direct influence of Christianity upon Pacific values and beliefs systems (Rakuita 2014). Many Pacific indigenous research frameworks and methodologies foreground Pacific values, knowledge and ethics in an attempt to decolonize indigenous Pacific studies (Thaman 2016). Critical theory presented in both Pasifika and Pacific indigenous research—by way of decolonizing power-structures, regimes of colonisation and truth—tends to emphasise marginalisation and social justice from within a human-centred position (Matapo 2016). What is being called into question here is the position of the human subject in Pasifika research. As Tui Atua (2008) has explained in his Samoan reference, Pacific peoples are not, strictly speaking, individuals; there is a shared divinity with ancestors—including the waters, land and skies, all integral parts of the cosmos. The challenge of Pasifika research lies in how to think collectively in our relation to the world, while regarding the knowing subject as affective, open to inter-relationality, including forces, flows and locations (Braidotti 2006).

Pasifika methodologies have gained influence in recent scholarship. The Ministry of Education has drawn attention to the increasing success of Pasifika learners in policy documents, and values-based engagement continues to be encouraged in Pasifika education and Pasifika education research (Airini et al. 2010; Ministry of Education (MoE) 2012). A Pasifika framework that encourages the coming together of Pasifika research and education policy is *teu le va*, which again encourages the unification of shared values in Pasifika research (Airini et al. 2010). Common Pasifika values presented in research frameworks are spirituality, reciprocity, respect and belonging (MoE 2012). While the term Pasifika is highly contested and engagement in Pasifika research, as stipulated by Pasifika education research guidelines (Anae et al. 2001), encourages ethnic specific values and culturally appropriate practices, one might ask if, or to what extent, values presented in Pasifika methodologies have become new 'truths' in determining researcher engagement. If Pasifika researchers are limited by a notion of agency that centres upon transcendental ideals (of objectivity, for instance), then the outcomes of research risk closing off opportunities for difference, emergence and becoming. The world is not particularly acknowledged as a valid contributor to the research process or its outcome, and the Pasifika research is engaging, as a fully present and privileged self, with a post-truth idea of the world.

We argue in what follows for an approach to research engagement and ethics based on a notion of truth that is 'ontological' rather than 'epistemological', i.e. that is based on forms of life rather than ideas and ideals of universality. In this spatio-temporal (past, present, future) unfolding, the aim is wisdom, not knowledge, which is to say that the moral and the epistemic are not distinct. Coming to know the self in relation to the others past and present, the cosmos, the land, seas and skies, is something done within a collective that understands itself as part of a greater whole (Meyer 2014). Within and for the collective, thinking is not synonymous with agency, i.e. it is not something performed by individual human beings; entrenched research regimes, on the other hand, privilege the latter epistemic model.

In evoking wisdom and contesting post truths by way of present past thinking collective, we conclude this section with a poem of Konai Helu Thaman (2003, p 14–15):

Thinking

you say that you think
therefore you are
but thinking belongs
in the depths of the earth
we simply borrow
what we need to know
these islands the sky
the surrounding sea

the trees the birds

and all that are free

the misty rain

the surging river

pools by the blowholes

a hidden flower

have their own thinking

they are different frames

of mind that cannot fit

in a small selfish world

Post-truth in Research: Maori and an Indigenous Speculation on the Response

Post-truth for the indigenous scholar may hence relate to the ascendancy that comes with one way of doing research and its narrow focus on human agency. In this section, we are also keen to address its more conventional guise and note that this version is valid, as indigenous researchers *do* need to retain some aspect of objectivity in their work. There is a balance at stake here: Thaman's poem alerts us, as indigenous writers, to the possibility that our responses are not entirely our own and that they may approximate an initial idea in a faint way. We are not a static and discrete 'we', so much as a 'we as elements in the vast interplay that is the world', and this complexity should be reflected in our research. But research in the social and educational sciences normally consist of data collection—primarily through interviews—followed by a thematic analysis. This method can, of course, yield useful *information*, but it has become so dominant that it has closed off alternative fruitful paths to the research terrain, and blocked off the view of indigenous practices related to the truth (see Cooper 2012). The problem we pose thus concerns both the object of study, i.e. the nature of the external phenomena (data) *and* the assumptions in place in the researcher when studying the phenomena.

In a world that is in significant turmoil, one can feel as if the sort of misreading that characterises post-truth is becoming increasingly frequent and normal. What is called post-truth thinking, conventionally at least, may be just a more extreme or honest version of subjectivism that academics revert to from time to time. Can we as indigenous interlocutors be more deliberate in research—purposely misread another's 'truthful' utterances, for instance, and submit them to something else on the basis of our own indigenous truths? The pressing question is: is it becoming *preferable*? If misinterpretation or misreading is taken seriously as worthy on its own merits, we have undoubtedly entered a post-truthful era. We might balk at the nonsense of a world where an individual interpretation or reaction to a specific

element of an utterance is given overriding importance, but such deliberate misunderstandings have underpinned momentous events—tortuous interpretations of the Treaty of Waitangi, for example, by which the Maori version has been consistently covered over or even denigrated in favour of its English counterpart, despite the doctrine of *contra preferentem*, which should, theoretically, endow the Maori version with greater currency. To Maori, the disregard of their version of the Treaty, along with other instances, is post-truth *writ large*; it invokes a jarring silliness that has exemplified Maori experience since colonised contact, sometimes propelling them into a Pythonesque parallel universe.

Despite these concerns—or perhaps because of them—it is the role of the indigenous academic to deliberately *un*-conform and dislodge themselves from a dominant research method, but to do so in a way that puts objectivity in its place without entirely deleting it. Thus, our summation of post-truth draws on our scepticism towards any idea that there is a total truth, but it also takes into account that objectivity must have a place in research. What to do with objectivity is key in this exercise and is indeed equally as important as the novelty of the method. For instance, a Maori researcher could lay the grounds of their thinking on a single theorist's work, but how would they respond in their *own* way, rather than having their thinking constantly punctuated by that theorist—and yet show that an anchor exists through that other thinker? A kind of silent or oblique referencing happens here, and it is up to the reader to discern the influence of that thinker. It is not unusual in indigenous settings to hear a response to another's *korero* without the initial speaker or his/her thinking (what we call here the 'previously-said') being directly addressed, and yet to also be able to discern vestiges in the subsequent work. It is presently not enough in academic rigour, however, to simply assume the reader can trace the original source, and the writer must be able to show quite clearly the influence of the informing theorist, so that it can be reasonably assumed there is a logical connection between them. We are not saying that indigenous settings promote completely ignoring the initial impetus. Rather, we are arguing that subsequent utterances build on the first, with an unstated connection which, if it were made explicit, would meet the requirements of a logical discussion. For the indigenous academic, it may be a matter of strategy: for instance, devising a visible 'subtext' that sits at the bottom of the page, containing the informing theorist's works where appropriate as footnotes but not allowing them to interrupt the indigenous academic's register. While this might seem an ordinary way of doing things in scholarship—simply a form of justification for an argument—for the indigenous academic, it is most important as an approach because it does separate out his or her philosophical development from what are sometimes quite inimical sources: an opposing philosopher, for instance, who is extremely useful but as an indirect device.

The question does nevertheless arise: could a type of response that evolves in traditional meeting places be credible in academic circles without attracting the label 'post-truth'? In a sense, in those traditional forums, any subsequent utterance relies on a philosophy that highlights what is, for the moment, unsaid: the previous utterances. Thus, the latter are certainly highly visible without being alluded

to—possibly more so because they have been settled over. What may be key here is an indigenous academic philosophy that focuses on carrying the previously said (visibly hidden) through into the currently said, and the challenge would be to make the hidden thoroughly visible whilst maintaining its obscurity. If a subtext or similar device weren't utilised, then it may well be up to the group to decide if the previously said was present. Currently, academic treatises, including graduate and postgraduate theses, are self-contained, standalone pieces of work and accorded merit on that basis; the previously said is directly referenced therein. In the approach we are proposing, however, the validity of the unspoken is decided on by a group familiar with an overall indigenous philosophy of obscurity and hiddenness in language.

Making visible the obscure meaning and intention of the original impetus for thinking, the Maori/indigenous scholar would certainly have to establish the legitimacy of the random response through some rigorous theorising before simply reacting to another's utterance in whatever way feels right at the time.

Conclusion

The subject of post-truth can be amusing but it is also hugely consequential, and we would be missing the point if we simply dismissed it as a blight affecting the airheads or the stuff of satire. It looks as if an indigenous notion of post-truth has already impacted research, with its mythical attempt at promoting a truthful approach to research. The role of the critical indigenous researcher is to suggest methods that destabilise the certainty that comes with human-centred research, while preserving some forms of objectivity. Proposing something against truthful research (which, as we have noted, is actually post-truthful) demands a degree of courage from the indigenous scholar, as s/he may be awakening the old stereotypes of the irrational native. Indigenous discussions about post-truth offer another point of access to rethinking research and its tendency to narrow the influence of the world, but always within the context of the colonised self who must rethink tradition. Post-truth, therefore, opens up far more extensive parameters of debate than simply ignoring what is taken to be 'truth'.

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What Is the Role of Higher Education in the Age of Fake News?

Henry A. Giroux

Donald Trump's firing of James Comey as the director of the FBI caused a firestorm around the United States, but for the wrong reasons. Rather than see Trump's actions as another example of the unraveling of a lawless and crooked government, the mainstream press largely focused on the question of whether Trump or Comey are lying, in spite of Trump's long standing history of producing falsifications and maligning the truth. Even worse, the debate in some quarters has degenerated into the personal issue and question of whose side one is on regarding the testimony. Testifying before a Senate Intelligence Committee, Comey claimed that in meetings with the president, Trump had not only asked him if he wanted to keep his job, but also demanded what amounted to a loyalty pledge from him. Comey saw these interventions as an attempt to develop a patronage relationship with him and viewed them as part of a larger attempt to derail an FBI investigation into National Security Adviser Michael Flynn's links to Russia. What Comey implies but does not state directly is that Trump wanted to turn the FBI into the loyal arm and accomplished agent of corrupt political power.

Comey also stated that he did not want to be alone with the president, going so far as to ask Jeff Sessions, the Attorney General to make sure in the future that such meetings would not take place because he did not trust Trump. Comey also accused Trump of lying about the FBI being in disarray, slandering him, and misrepresenting the reasons for his firing. And most importantly, Trump had possibly engaged in an obstruction of justice. In fact, Comey was so distrustful of Trump that he took notes of his exchanges with him and leaked the content of some of the memos to a friend at Columbia University who passed on the contents to a reporter at the New York Times. Comey stated outright he leaked the information because he thought Trump would lie about their conversations and that he wanted to prompt the appointment of a special counsel.

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Suffering from what appears to be malignant narcissism and a pathological contempt for the truth, Trump has tweeted that Comey's testimony had vindicated him and that Comey was a liar and a leaker. Of course, Trump made no mention of the fact that Comey leaked non-classified information because he did not trust anyone at the Department of Justice, especially because it was lead by Trump's crony, Jeff Sessions. Since it goes without question that Trump is a serial liar, there is a certain irony in Trump accusing Comey, a lifelong Republican and highly respected director of the FBI, of lying. As Mehdi Hasan, appearing on *Democracy Now,* observes:

> From a political point of view, we know that one of the biggest flaws in Donald Trump's presidency, his candidacy, his ability to be president, is that he's a serial fabricator. Now you have the former top law enforcement officer of this country going in front of the Senate, under oath, saying he—that, you know, "Those are lies, plain and simple," he said, referring to Trump's description of his firing. He said, "I was worried he would lie." He says, "I was worried about the nature of the man."…And there was a quite funny tweet that went viral last night, which said, you know, "Trump is saying he's a liar. Comey is saying Trump's a liar. Well, who do you believe? Do you believe an FBI director who served under two—who served under three presidents from two parties? Or do you believe the guy who said Obama was born in Kenya?" And, you know, that's what faces us today. (Goodman 2017)

Trump cannot be trusted because he not only infects political discourse with a discourse of hate, bigotry, and lies, but also because he has allowed an ideology to take over the White House built on the use of a species of fake news in which the truth is distorted for ideological, political, or commercial reasons. Under the Trump administration, lying and fake news have become an industry and tool of power. All administrations and governments lie, but under Trump lying has become normalized, a calling card for corruption and lawlessness, one that provides the foundation for authoritarianism. What is crucial to remember is that state violence and terrorism starts with words and under Trump language is undergoing a shift: it now treats dissent, critical media coverage and scientific evidence as a species of "fake news". This is language in the service of violence and is more characteristic of fascist states than democracies.

A democracy cannot exist without informed citizens and public spheres and educational apparatuses that uphold standards of truth, honesty, evidence, facts, and justice. Under Trump, fake news has become a weaponized policy for legitimating ignorance and civic illiteracy. Not only has Trump lied repeatedly, he has attacked the critical media, claimed journalists are enemies of the American people, and argued that the media is the opposition party. There is more at stake here than the threat of censorship or the normalization of lying, there is also an attack on traditional sources of information and the public spheres that produce them. Trump's government has become a powerful disimagination machine in which the distinction between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy are erased. Trump has democratized the flow of disinformation and in doing so has aligned himself with a culture of immediacy, sensationalism, and theater where thoughtful reading, informed judgments, and a respect for the facts disappear. Trump's propagation of fake news as a way to discredit facts, if not thinking itself, operates in the service of violence because it infantilizes and depoliticizes the wider public creating what Viktor

Frankl has called in a different context, "the mask of nihilism" (McWilliam 2015, p. 41). Trump capitalizes on a digital culture of immediacy and short attention spans in which complexity collapses in a barrage of tweets and the need for a narrative that offers a sense of consistency, a respite from fear, and a vision of the future in which people no longer experience a sense of invisibility.

Trump's attack on Comey goes beyond a personal insult and act of egregious lying if not an obstruction of justice, it is also a register of his attempt to discredit criticism and the shared public reality among institutions that is central to a democracy. In an age in which the dissolution of public goods and the public sphere have been underway since the late 1970s, Trump attempts to both depoliticize and bind the American people through a kind of dystopian legitimacy in which words no longer matter and anything can be said functions largely to undermine the capacity for truth telling and political speech itself. Under the Trump regime, consistent narratives rooted in forms of civic illiteracy and a deep distrust of the truth and the ethical imagination has become the glue of authoritarian power. All of which is reinforced by a disdain for measured arguments, an embrace of the spectacle, and an alignment with a banal theater of celebrity culture. In these contexts, rumors are more important than truth telling and in this theater of the absurd society loses its auto-immune system as a safeguard against lies, corruption, and authoritarianism. In a culture of short-attention spans, Trump provides the lies and theater that offer up a tsunami of misrepresentations and values in which thinking is done by others, power is exercised by a ruling elite, and people are urged to dispense narrating their own experiences and give up their ability to govern rather than be governed. Trump offers his followers a world in which nothing is connected, diversion functions as theater, destabilized perceptions reinforce a politics that turns into a pathology and community becomes dystopian, unconnected to any viable democratic reality.

Roger Berkowitz in a critical analysis of Trump and his followers that draws upon the work of Hannah Arendt argues that his supporters don't care about his lies or immunity to facts. What they prefer is a consistent narrative of a reality of which they are a part. Berkowitz is worth citing at length. He writes:

> The reason fact-checking is ineffective today — at least in convincing those who are members of movements — is that the mobilized members of a movement are confounded by a world resistant to their wishes and prefer the promise of a consistent alternate world to reality. When Donald Trump says he's going to build a wall to protect our borders, he is not making a factual statement that an actual wall will actually protect our borders; he is signaling a politically incorrect willingness to put America first. When he says that there was massive voter fraud or boasts about the size of his inauguration crowd, he is not speaking about actual facts, but is insisting that his election was legitimate. 'What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part.' Leaders of these mass totalitarian movements do not need to believe in the truth of their lies and ideological clichés. The point of their fabrications is not to establish facts, but to create a coherent fictional reality. What a movement demands of its leaders is the articulation of a consistent narrative combined with the ability to abolish the capacity for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, between reality and fiction. (Berkowitz 2017)

As important as the Trump–Comey affair is, it repeats a patter in the Trump administration of running the risk of both turning politics into theater and reinforcing what Todd Gitlin refers to as Trump's support for an "apocalyptic nationalism, the point of which is to belong, not to believe. You belong by affirming. To win, you don't need reasons anymore, only power" (Gitlin 2017). Trump values loyalty over integrity and he lies in part to test the loyalty of those who both follow him and align themselves with his power. The Trump–Comey affair must be understood within a broader attack on the fundamentals of education, critical modes of agency, and democracy itself. This is especially important at a time when the United States is no longer a functioning democracy and is in the presence of what Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis refer to as "the emergence of modern barbarity" (Bauman and Donskis 2016, p. 79). Trump's discourse of lies, misrepresentations, and fakery give new meaning to what it means to acknowledge that education is at the center of politics because it is crucial in the struggle over consciousness, values, identity, and agency. Ignorance in the service of education targets the darkness and reinforces and thrives on civic illiteracy. Trump's fake news machine is about more than lying, it is about using all of the tools and resources for education to create a dystopia in which authoritarianism exercises the raw power of ignorance and control.

Artists, educators, young people, and others need to make the virtue of truth-telling visible again. We need to connect democracy with a notion of truth-telling and consciousness that is on the side of economic and political justice, and democracy itself. If we are going to fight for and with the powerless, we have to understand their needs, speak to and with them in a language mutually understandable, and create narratives in which they can both identify themselves and the conditions through which power and oppression bear down on their lives. This is not an easy task, but nothing less than justice, democracy, and the planet itself are at risk. In what follows, I want to extend this argument about fake news by looking at both Trump's dystopian mode of governance and what it suggests about the role of higher education in addressing a post-truth era and an emerging authoritarianism.

Trump's ascendancy in American politics has made visible a plague of deep-seated civic illiteracy, a corrupt political system, and a contempt for reason that has been decades in the making; it also points to the withering of civic attachments, the undoing of civic culture, the decline of public life, and erosion of any sense of shared citizenship. Galvanizing his base of true-believers in post-election rallies, the world is witnessing how a politics of bigotry and hate is transformed into a spectacle of fear, divisions, and disinformation. Under President Trump, the scourge of mid-twentieth century authoritarianism has returned not only in the menacing plague of populist rallies, fear-mongering, hate, and humiliation, but also in an emboldened culture of war, militarization, and violence that looms over society like a rising storm.

The reality of Trump's election may be the most momentous development of the age because of its enormity and the shock it has produced. The whole world is watching, pondering how such a dreadful event could have happened. How have we arrived here? What forces have allowed education to be undermined as a

democratic public sphere, capable of producing the formative culture and critically engaged citizens that could have prevented such a catastrophe from happening in an alleged democracy? We get a glimpse of this failure of civic culture, education, and civic literacy in the willingness and success of the Trump administration to empty language of any meaning, a practice that constitutes a flight from historical memory, ethics, justice, and social responsibility. Under such circumstances and with too little opposition, the government takes on the workings of a dis-imagination machine, characterized by an utter disregard for the truth, and often accompanied, as in Trump's case, by "primitive schoolyard taunts and threats" (Gopnik 2017). In this instance, Orwell's "Ignorance is Strength" materializes in the Trump administration's weaponized attempt not only to rewrite history, but also to obliterate it. Moreover, Trump's cries of "fake news" work incessantly to set limits on what is thinkable. Reason, standards of evidence, consistency and logic no longer serve the truth, according to Trump, because the latter are crooked ideological devices used by enemies of the state. Orwell's "thought crimes" are Trump's "fake news". Orwell's "Ministry of Truth" is Trump's "Ministry of Fake News". What we are witnessing is not simply a political project but also a reworking of the very meaning of education both as an institution and as a cultural force. Trump's contemptuous and boisterous claim that science and evidence-based truths are fake news, his dismissal of journalists to hold power accountable as the opposition party, and his willingness to bombard the American public with an endless proliferation of peddled falsehoods reveal his contempt for intellect, reason, and truth.

The dark times that haunt the current age are also exemplified in the deeply antidemocratic forces that have come to rule the United States and now dominate the major political parties and other commanding political and economic institutions in the United States. Truth is now viewed as a liability and ignorance a virtue. Under the reign of this normalized architecture of alleged commonsense, literacy is now regarded with disdain, words are reduced to data, and science is confused with pseudo-science. All traces of critical thought appear only at the margins of the culture as ignorance becomes the primary organizing principle of American society. For instance, two-thirds of the American public believe that creationism should be taught in schools and a majority of Republicans in Congress do not believe that climate change is caused by human activity, making the U.S. the laughing stock of the world (Ellingboe and koronowski 2016). Politicians endlessly lie knowing that the public is addicted to exhortation, emotional outbursts, and sensationalism, all of which mimics celebrity culture. Image selling now entails lying on principle making it all the easier for politics to dissolve into entertainment, pathology, and a unique brand of criminality. The corruption of both the truth and politics is made all the easier since the American public has become habituated to overstimulation and live in an ever-accelerating overflow of information and images. Experience no longer has the time to crystalize into mature and informed thought. Opinion now trumps reasoned and evidence-based arguments. News has become entertainment and echoes reality rather than interrogating it. Popular culture revels in the spectacles of shock and violence (Evans and Giroux 2016). Too many colleges and universities have become McDonalized as knowledge is increasingly subject to

image of a commodity resulting in curricula that resemble a fast-food menu (Beck 2010, pp. 53–59). Unsurprisingly, the educational force of the larger culture has been transformed into a spectacle for violence, trivialized entertainment, and a tool for legitimating ignorance. As education becomes central to politics itself, it becomes essential to the formation of an authoritarian politics that has gutted democratic values and a compassion for the other from the ideology, policies, and institutions that now control American society.

I am not talking simply about the kind of anti-intellectualism that theorists such a Richard Hofstadter, Ed Herman, Noam Chomsky, and Susan Jacoby have documented, however insightful their analyses might be. I am pointing to a more lethal form of illiteracy that is often ignored. Illiteracy is now a scourge and a political tool designed primarily to make war on language, meaning, thinking, and the capacity for critical thought. Chris Hedges is right in stating that "the emptiness of language is a gift to demagogues and the corporations that saturate the landscape with manipulated images and the idiom of mass culture" (Hedges 2009). Words such as love, trust, freedom, responsibility, and choice have been deformed by a market logic that narrows their meaning to either a relationship to a commodity or a reductive notion of self-interest. We don't love each other, we love our new car. Instead of loving with courage, compassion, and desiring a more just society, we love a society saturated in commodities. Freedom now means removing one's self from any sense of social responsibility so one can retreat into privatized orbits of self-indulgence and self-interest.

The new form of illiteracy does not simply constitute an absence of learning, ideas, or knowledge. Nor can it be solely attributed to what has been called the "smartphone society" (Aschoff 2015). On the contrary, it is a willful practice and goal used to actively depoliticize people and make them complicit with the forces that impose misery and suffering upon their lives. At the same time, illiteracy bonds people, offers the pretense of a community bound by a willful denial of its celebration of ignorance. How else to explain the popular support for someone like Donald Trump who boldly proclaims "I love the poorly educated!" (Stuart 2016).

Illiteracy no longer simply marks populations immersed in poverty with little access to quality education; nor does it only suggest the lack of proficient skills enabling people to read and write with a degree of understanding and fluency. More profoundly, illiteracy is also about refusing to act from a position of thoughtfulness, informed judgment, and critical agency. Illiteracy has become a form of political repression that discourages a culture of questioning, renders agency as an act of intervention inoperable, and restages power as a mode of domination. Illiteracy both serves to depoliticize people because it becomes difficult for individuals to develop informed judgments, analyze complex relationships, and draw upon a range of sources to understand how power works and how they might be able to shape the forces that bear down on their lives. Illiteracy provides the foundation for being governed rather than how to govern.

It is precisely this mode of illiteracy that now constitutes the modus operandi of a society that both privatizes and kills the imagination by poisoning it with falsehoods, consumer fantasies, data loops, and the need for instant gratification. This is

a mode of manufactured illiteracy and education that has no language for relating the self to public life, social responsibility or the demands of citizenship. It is important to recognize that the rise of this new mode of illiteracy is not simply about the failure of colleges and universities to create critical and active citizens; it is about a society that eliminates those public spheres that make thinking possible while imposing a culture of fear in which there is the looming threat that anyone who holds power accountable will be punished (Furedi 2006). Under such circumstances, the attack on education as a public good and literacy as the basis for critically engaged agents is less of a failing, as many conservative pundits claim, than a deliberate policy to prevent critical thinking on the part of both teachers and students. At stake here is not only the crisis of a democratic society, but a crisis of education, memory, ethics, and agency (McChesney 2015; de Zengotita 2006).

What happens to democracy when the President of the United States labels critical media outlets as "enemies of the people" and derides the search for truth by disparaging such efforts with the blanket term "fake news"? What happens to democracy when individuals and groups are demonized on the basis of their religion? What happens to a society when critical thinking becomes an object of contempt and is disdained in favor of raw emotion or disparaged as fake news? What happens to a social order ruled by an "economics of contempt" that blames the poor for their condition and subjects them to a culture of shaming? What happens to a polity when it retreats into private silos and becomes indifferent to the use of language in the service of a panicked rage that stokes anger but not about issues that matter? What happens to a social order when it treats millions of illegal immigrants as disposable, potential terrorists, and criminals? What happens to a country when the presiding principles of a society are violence and ignorance? What happens is that democracy withers and dies, both as an ideal and as a reality.

In the present moment, it becomes particularly important for educators and concerned citizens all over the world to protect and enlarge the formative cultures and public spheres that make democracy possible. Under a relentless attack on the truth, honesty, and the ethical imagination, the need for educators to think dangerously is crucial, especially in societies that appear increasingly amnesiac—that is, countries where forms of historical, political, and moral forgetting are not only willfully practiced but celebrated. All of which becomes all the more threatening at a time when a country such as the United States has tipped over into a social order that is awash in public stupidity and views critical thought as both a liability and a threat. Not only is this obvious in the presence of a celebrity culture that collapses the distinction between the serious and frivolous but it is also visible in the proliferation of anti-intellectual discourses and policies among a range of politicians and anti-public intellectuals who are waging a war on science, reason, and the legacy of the Enlightenment. How else to explain the present historical moment with its collapse of civic culture and the future it cancels out? What is to be made of the undermining of civic literacy and the conditions that produce an active citizenry at a time when massive self-enrichment and a gangster morality at the highest reaches of government undermine the public realm as a space of freedom, liberty, dialogue, and deliberative consensus?

Authoritarian societies do more than censor, they punish those who engage in what might be called dangerous thinking. At the core of thinking dangerously is the recognition that education is central to politics and that a democracy cannot survive without informed citizens. Critical and dangerous thinking is the precondition for nurturing both the ethical imagination and formative culture that enable engaged citizens to learn how to govern rather than be governed. Thinking with courage is fundamental to a notion of civic literacy that views knowledge as central to the pursuit of economic and political justice. Such thinking incorporates a critical framework and set of values that enables a polity to deal critically with the use and effects of power, particularly through a developed sense of compassion for others and the planet. Thinking dangerously is the basis for a formative and educational culture of questioning that takes seriously how imagination is key to the practice of freedom. Thinking dangerously is the cornerstone of not an only critical agency and engaged citizenship, but the foundation for a democracy that matters.

Any viable attempt at developing a democratic politics must begin to address the role of education and civic literacy as central not only to politics itself but also to the creation of individuals capable of becoming critical social agents willing to struggle against injustices and fight to reclaim and develop those institutions crucial to the functioning and promises of a substantive democracy. One place to begin to think through such a project is by addressing the meaning and role of higher education and education in general as part of the broader struggle for and practice of freedom.

The reach of education extends from schools to diverse cultural apparatuses such as the mainstream media, alternative screen cultures, and the expanding digital screen culture. Far more than a teaching method, education is a moral and political practice actively involved not only in the production of knowledge, skills, and values but also in the construction of identities, modes of identification, and forms of individual and social agency. Accordingly, education is at the heart of any understanding of politics and the ideological scaffolding of those framing mechanisms that mediate our everyday lives.

Across the globe, the forces of free-market fundamentalism are using the educational force of the wider culture to reproduce a culture of privatization, deregulation, and commercialization while waging an assault on the historically guaranteed social provisions and civil rights provided by the welfare state, higher education, unions, women's reproductive rights, and civil liberties, among others, all the while undercutting public faith in the defining institutions of democracy.

This grim reality has been called by Axel Honneth a "failed sociality" characteristic of an increasing number of societies in which democracy is waning—a failure in the power of the civic imagination, political will, and open democracy (Honneth 2009, p. 188). It is also part of a politics that strips the social of any democratic ideals and undermines any understanding of education as a public good and pedagogy as an *empowering* practice, a practice which acts directly upon the conditions which bear down on our lives in order to change them when necessary.

One of the challenges facing the current generation of educators, students, and others is the need to address the role they might play in educating students to be

critically engaged agents, attentive to addressing important social issues and being alert to the responsibility of deepening and expanding the meaning and practices of a vibrant democracy. At the heart of such a challenge is the question of what education should accomplish not simply in a democracy but at a historical moment when the many democracies are about to slip into the dark night of authoritarianism. What work do educators have to do to create the economic, political, and ethical conditions necessary to endow young people and the general public with the capacities to think, question, doubt, imagine the unimaginable, and defend education as essential for inspiring and energizing the citizens necessary for the existence of a robust democracy? In a world in which there is an increasing abandonment of egalitarian and democratic impulses, what will it take to educate young people and the broader polity to challenge authority and hold power accountable? This is a particularly important issue at a time when higher education is being defunded and students are being punished with huge tuition hikes and crippling finance debts, all the while being subjected to a pedagogy of repression that has taken hold under the banner of reactionary and oppressive educational reforms pushed by right-wing billionaires and hedge fund managers (Saltman 2016; Ravitch 2014; Giroux 2015a, b).

Given the crisis of education, agency, and memory that haunts the current historical conjuncture, educators need a new language for addressing the changing contexts and issues facing a world in which there is an unprecedented convergence of resources—financial, cultural, political, economic, scientific, military, and technological—increasingly used to exercise powerful and diverse forms of control and domination. Such a language needs to be self-reflective and directive without being dogmatic and needs to recognize that pedagogy is always political because it is connected to the acquisition of agency. In this instance, making the pedagogical more political means being vigilant about "that very moment in which identities are being produced and groups are being constituted, or objects are being created" (Olsson and Worsham 1999). At the same time, it means educators need to be attentive to those practices in which critical modes of agency and particular identities are being denied.

In part, this suggests developing pedagogical practices that not only inspire and energize people but are also capable of challenging the growing number of antidemocratic practices and policies under the global tyranny of casino capitalism (Ness 2015). Such a vision suggests resurrecting a democratic project that provides the basis for imagining a life beyond a social order immersed in massive inequality, endless assaults on the environment, and elevates war and militarization to the highest and most sanctified national ideals. Under such circumstances, education becomes more than an obsession with accountability schemes, an audit culture, market values, and an unreflective immersion in the crude empiricism of a data-obsessed market-driven society. In addition, it rejects the notion that colleges and universities should be reduced to sites for training students for the workforce and that the culture of higher education is synonymous with the culture of commercialization, commodification, and narrow market-driven values. I think that the Nobel Prize winner J. M. Coetzee is right in criticizing the current collapse of

education into training when he points out that "All over the world, as governments retreat from their traditional duty to foster the common good and reconceive of themselves as mere managers of national economies, universities have been coming under pressure to turn themselves into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy" (Coetzee 2013).

At issue here is the need for educators to recognize the power of education in creating the formative cultures necessary to both challenge the various threats being mobilized against the ideas of justice and democracy while also fighting for those public spheres, ideals, values, and policies that offer alternative modes of identity, thinking, social relations, and politics. But embracing the dictates of making education meaningful in order to make it critical and transformative also means recognizing that cultural apparatuses such as the mainstream media and Hollywood films are teaching machines and not simply sources of information and entertainment. Such sites should be spheres of struggle removed from the control of the financial elite and corporations who use them as workstations for propagandizing.

In this instance, education as the practice of freedom emphasizes critical reflection, bridging the gap between learning and everyday life, understanding the connection between power and difficult knowledge, and extending democratic rights and identities by using the resources of history and theory. At the core of analysing and engaging culture as a pedagogical practice are fundamental questions about the educative nature of the culture, what it means to engage common sense as a way to shape and influence popular opinion, and how diverse educational practices in multiple sites can be used to challenge the vocabularies, practices, and values of the oppressive forces that are at work under neo-liberal regimes of power. Consequently, any discussion of pedagogy must be attentive to how pedagogical practices work in a variety of sites to produce particular ways in which identity, place, worth, and above all value are organized and contribute to producing a formative culture capable of sustaining a vibrant democracy (Giroux 2015a, b).

There is an urgent political need for both Canada and the United States, among other countries, to understand what it means for an authoritarian society to both weaponize and trivialize the discourse, vocabularies, images, and aural means of communication in a society. How is language used to relegate citizenship to the singular pursuit of cravenly self-interests, legitimate shopping as the ultimate expression of one's identity, portray essential public services as reinforcing and weakening any viable sense of individual responsibility, and, among other, instances, using the language of war and militarization to describe a vast array of problems often faced by citizens and others.

I do not believe it is an overstatement to argue that education can all too easily become a form of symbolic and intellectual violence, one that assaults rather than educates. Examples of such violence can be seen in the forms of an audit culture and empirically driven teaching that dominates higher education, especially in the United States, but increasingly in other countries such as the United Kingdom and more and more in Canada. These educational projects amount to pedagogies of repression and serve primarily to numb the mind and produce what might be called dead zones of the imagination. These are pedagogies that are largely disciplinary

and have little regard for contexts, history, making knowledge meaningful, or expanding what it means for students to be critically engaged agents. Of course, the ongoing corporatization of the university is driven by modes of assessment that often undercut teacher autonomy, treat knowledge as a commodity, students as customers, and impose brutalizing structures of governance on higher education. Under such circumstances, education defaults on its democratic obligations and becomes a tool of control, powerlessness, and deadens the imagination.

The fundamental challenge facing educators within the current age of an emerging authoritarianism worldwide is to create those public spaces for students to address how knowledge is related to the power of both self-definition and social agency. In part, this suggests providing students with the skills, ideas, values, and authority necessary for them to nourish a substantive democracy, recognize antidemocratic forms of power, and to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systemic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities. As Hannah Arendt, once argued in "The Crisis of Education", the centrality of education to politics is also manifest in the responsibility for the world that educators have to assume when they engage in pedagogical practices that lie on the side of belief and persuasion, especially when they challenge forms of domination.

Education in this sense speaks to the recognition that any pedagogical practice presupposes some notion of the future, prioritises some forms of identification over others, upholds selective modes of social relations, and values some modes of knowing over others (think about how business schools are held in high esteem while schools of education are often disparaged and an object of contempt). Moreover, such an education does not offer guarantees as much as it recognizes that its own policies, ideology, and values are grounded in particular modes of authority, values, and ethical principles that must be constantly debated for the ways in which they both open up and close down democratic relations, values, and identities.

At the same time, any critical comprehension of those wider forces that shape public and higher education must also be supplemented by an attentiveness to the historical and conditional nature of pedagogy itself. This suggests that pedagogy can never be treated as a fixed set of principles and practices that can be applied indiscriminately across a variety of pedagogical sites. Pedagogy is not some recipe or methodological fix that can be imposed on all classrooms. On the contrary, it must always be contextually defined, allowing it to respond specifically to the conditions, formations, and problems that arise in various sites in which education takes place. Such a project suggests recasting pedagogy as a practice that is indeterminate, open to constant revision, and constantly in dialogue with its own assumptions.

The notion of a neutral, objective education is an oxymoron. Education and pedagogy do not exist outside of ideology, values, and politics. Ethics on the pedagogical front demands an openness to the other, a willingness to engage a "politics of possibility" through a continual critical engagement with texts, images, events, and other registers of meaning as they are transformed into pedagogical practices both within and outside of the classroom. Education is never innocent and is always implicated in relations of power and specific visions of the present and

future. This suggests the need for educators to rethink the cultural and ideological baggage they bring to each educational encounter; it also highlights the necessity of making educators ethically and politically accountable and self-reflective for the stories they produce, the claims they make upon public memory, and the images of the future they deem legitimate. Understood as a form of educated hope, education in this sense is not an antidote to politics, a nostalgic yearning for a better time, or for some "inconceivably alternative future". Instead, it is an "attempt to find a bridge between the present and future in those forces within the present which are potentially able to transform it" (Eagleton 2000, p. 22).

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the notion of the social and the public are not being erased as much as they are being reconstructed under circumstances in which public forums for serious debate, including public education, are being eroded. Reduced either to a crude instrumentalism, business culture, or defined as a purely private right rather than a public good, our major educational apparatuses are removed from the discourse of democracy and civic culture. Under the influence of powerful financial interests, we have witnessed the takeover of public and increasingly higher education and diverse media sites by a corporate logic that both numbs the mind and the soul, emphasizing repressive modes of ideology that promote winning at all costs, learning how not to question authority, and under-mining the hard work of learning how to be thoughtful, critical, and attentive to the power relations that shape everyday life and the larger world. As learning is pri-vatized, depoliticized, and reduced to teaching students how to be good consumers and obedient workers, any viable notion of the social, public values, citizenship, and democracy wither and die (Wolin 2008).

Conceived as an important democratic public sphere, education, in its various forms, when linked to the ongoing project of democratization can provide oppor-tunities for educators, students, and others to redefine and transform the connections among language, desire, meaning, everyday life, and material relations of power as part of a broader social movement to reclaim the promise and possibilities of a democratic public life. Education is dangerous to many people and others because it provides the conditions for students and the wider public to exercise their intel-lectual capacities, embrace the ethical imagination, hold power accountable, and embrace a sense of social responsibility.

One of the most serious challenges facing administrators, faculty, and students in colleges and universities is the task of developing a discourse of both critique and possibility. This means developing discourses and pedagogical practices that connect reading the word with reading the world, and doing so in ways that enhance the capacities of young people as critical agents and engaged citizens. In taking up this project, educators and others should attempt to create the conditions that give stu-dents the opportunity to become critical and engaged citizens who have the knowledge and courage to struggle in order to make desolation and cynicism unconvincing and hope practical. But raising consciousness is not enough. Students need to be inspired and energized to address important social issues, learning to narrate their private troubles as public issues, and to engage in forms of resistance that are both local and collective, while connecting such struggles to more global issues.

Democracy begins to fail and political life becomes impoverished in the absence of those vital public spheres such as public and higher education in which civic values, public scholarship, and social engagement allow for a more imaginative grasp of a future that takes seriously the demands of justice, equity, and civic courage. Democracy should be a way of thinking about education, one that thrives on connecting equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good. The question regarding what role education should play in democracy becomes all the more urgent at a time when the dark forces of authoritarianism are on the march all across the globe. As public values, trust, solidarities, and modes of education are under siege, the discourses of hate, racism, rabid self-interest, and greed are exercising a poisonous influence all across the globe, and is most evident in the discourse Donald Trump and his merry band of anti-intellectuals and white nationalists. Civic illiteracy collapses opinion and informed arguments, erases collective memory, and becomes complicit with the militarization of both individual, public spaces, and society itself.

Yet, all across the globe, there are signs of hope. Far from being normalized, fake news is increasingly seen as a weapon of power, one that makes clear that education can function in the wrong hands as a practice of violence. Alternative public spheres and what a generation of younger radicals called the creating of a parallel polis, which are emerging on social media and a variety of other alternative spaces in order to educate people, raise political consciousness, and rescue thoughtfulness and civic literacy from the clutches of armed ignorance. At the same time, young people are protesting against student debt; environmentalists are aggressively fighting corporate interests; teachers in a variety of countries extending from Canada and Brazil to the United States are waging a courageous fight against oppressive neoliberal modes of governance; young people are bravely resisting and exposing state violence in all of its forms; prison abolitionists are making their voices heard, and once again the threat of a nuclear winter is being widely discussed. In the age of financial and political zombies, casino capitalism has lost its ability to legitimate itself in a warped discourse of freedom and choice. Its poisonous tentacles have put millions out of work, turned many Black communities into war zones, destroyed public education, undermined the democratic mission of higher education, flagrantly pursued war as the greatest of national ideals, turned the prison system into a default institution for punishing minorities of race and class, pillaged the environment, and blatantly imposed a new mode of racism under the silly notion of a post-racial society.

Reviving the Social Imagination

I want to conclude by pointing to a few initiatives, though incomplete, that might mount a challenge to the current oppressive historical conjuncture in which many societies and their respective colleges and universities now find themselves (Aronowitz 2016). At issue here is the question of how do we begin a meaningful

conversation about how to define the mission of colleges and universities. In doing so, I want to address what I have attempted to map as a crisis of memory, agency, and education and reclaim what I call a pedagogy of informed critique and educated hope that is central to any viable notion of change that I am suggesting. At the level of critique, I have argued both explicitly and implicitly that educators, students, and others concerned about the fate of higher education need to mount a spirited attack against the managerial takeover of the university that began in the late 1970s with the emergence of a market-driven ideology, what can be called neoliberalism, that argues that market principles should govern not just the economy but all of social life including education. Central to such a recognition is the need to struggle against a university system developed around the reduction in faculty power, the replacement of a culture of cooperation and collegiality with a shark-like culture of competition, the rise of an audit culture that has produced a very limited notion of regulation and evaluation, and the narrow and harmful view that students are clients and colleges "should operate more like private firms than public institutions, with an onus on income generation" (Hill 2016, p. 13). In addition, any movement for reforming colleges and universities must both speak out against modes of governance that have reduced faculty to the status of part-time employees and join the fight to take back the governing of the university from the new class of managers and bureaucrats that now outnumber faculty, at least in the United States and increasingly in Canada.

At the level of educated hope, I have argued that informed citizens are crucial to a democracy and that the university must play a vital role in creating the formative cultures that make such citizens possible. In part, this would mean creating intellectual spaces free of coercion and censorship and open to multiple sources of knowledge in the pursuit of truth, the development of critical pedagogies that inform, energize, inspire, empower, and promote critical exchanges and dialogue. At the same time, there is a need for not only enabling learning from below but also for guarantees of full-time employment and protections for faculty while viewing knowledge as a public asset and the university as a public good. With these issues in mind, let me conclude by pointing to six further considerations for change.

First, there is a need for what can be called a revival of the social imagination and the defense of the public good, especially higher education, in order to reclaim its egalitarian and democratic impulses. This call would be part of a larger project "to reinvent democracy in the wake of the evidence that, at the national level, there is no democracy—if by 'democracy' we mean effective popular participation in the crucial decisions affecting the community" (Aronowitz 2016). One step in this direction would be for young people, intellectuals, scholars and others to go on the offensive against a conservative-led campaign "to end higher education's democratizing influence on the nation" (Nichol 2008). Higher education should be harnessed neither to the demands of the warfare state nor the instrumental needs of corporations. Clearly, in any democratic society, education should be viewed as a right, not an entitlement. Educators need to produce a national conversation in which higher education can be defended as a public good and the classroom as a site of engaged inquiry and critical thinking, a site that makes a claim on the radical

imagination and a sense of civic courage. At the same time, the discourse on defining higher education as a democratic public sphere would provide the platform for moving onto the larger issue of developing a social movement in defense of public goods.

Second, I believe that educators need to consider defining pedagogy, if not education itself, as central to producing those democratic public spheres capable of producing an informed citizenry. Pedagogically, this points to modes of teaching and learning capable of enacting and sustaining a culture of questioning, and enabling a critical formative culture that advances at least in the schools what Kristen Case calls moments of classroom grace (Case 2014). Pedagogies of classroom grace should provide the conditions for students and others to reflect critically on commonsense understandings of the world, and begin to question, however troubling, their sense of agency, relationship to others, and their relationships to the larger world. This can be linked to broader pedagogical imperatives that ask why we have wars, massive inequality, and a surveillance state. There is also the issue of how everything has become commodified, along with the withering of a politics of translation that prevents the collapse of the public into the private. This is not merely a methodical consideration but also a moral and political practice because it presupposes the creation of critically engaged students who can imagine a future in which justice, equality, freedom, and democracy matter. In this instance, the classroom should be a space of grace—a place to think critically, ask troubling questions, and take risks, even though that may mean transgressing established norms and bureaucratic procedures. Such pedagogical practices are rich with possibilities not only for understanding the classroom as a space that ruptures, engages, unsettles, and inspires, but also extend the meaning of the classroom into wider cultural apparatuses in which education functions often by stealth to shape subjects, identities, and social relations, often so as to mimic the values of a market-driven society. Education as democratic public space cannot exist under modes of governance dominated by a business model, especially one that subjects faculty to a Walmart model of labor relations designed "to reduce labor costs and to increase labor servility" (Chomsky 2015). In the U.S., over 70% of faculty occupy nontenure and part-time positions, many without benefits and salaries so low that they qualify for food stamps. Faculty needs to be given more security, full-time jobs, autonomy, and the support they need to function as professionals. While many countries do not emulate this model of faculty servility, it is part of a neoliberal legacy that is increasingly gaining traction across the globe.

Third, educators need to develop a comprehensive educational program that would include teaching students how to live in a world marked by multiple overlapping modes of literacy extending from print to visual culture and screen cultures. What is crucial to recognize here is that it is not enough to teach students to be able to interrogate critically screen culture and other forms of aural, video, and visual forms of representation? They must also learn how to be cultural producers. This suggests developing alternative public spheres such as online journals, television shows, newspapers, zines, and any other platform in which different modes of representation can be developed. Such tasks can be done by mobilizing the

technological resources and platforms that many students are already familiar with. It also means working with one foot in existing cultural apparatuses in order to promote unorthodox ideas and views that would challenge the affective and ideological spaces produced by the financial elite who control the commanding institutions of public pedagogy in North America. What is often lost by many educators and progressives is that a popular culture is a powerful form of education for many young people and yet it is rarely addressed as a serious source of knowledge. As Stanley Aronowitz has observed, "theorists and researchers need to link their knowledge of popular culture, and culture in the anthropological sense—that is, everyday life, with the politics of education" (Aronowitz 2008, p. 50).

Fourth, academics, students, community activists, young people, and parents must engage in an ongoing struggle for the right of students to be given a free formidable and critical education not dominated by corporate values, and for young people to have a say in the shaping of their education and what it means to expand and deepen the practice of freedom and democracy. At the very least college and university education if taken seriously as a public good should be virtually tuition free, at least for the poor, and utterly affordable for the affluent. This is not a radical demand and countries such as Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Brazil already provide this service for young people.

Accessibility to higher education is especially crucial at a time when young people have been left out of the discourse of democracy. They are the new disposable populations who lack jobs, a decent education, hope, and any semblance of a future better than the one their parents inherited. Facing what Richard Sennett calls the "specter of uselessness", they are a reminder of how finance capital has abandoned any viable vision of the future, including one that would support future generations. This is a mode of politics and capital that eats its own children and throws their fate to the vagaries of the market. The ecology of finance capital only believes in short-term investments because they provide quick returns. Under such circumstances, young people who need long-term investments are considered a liability. If any society is in part judged by how it views and treats its children, the United States by all accounts is truly failing in a colossal way. This is not a script to be repeated in Canada. If young people are to receive a critical and comprehensive education, academics might consider taking on the role of public intellectuals, capable of the critical appropriation of a variety of intellectual traditions while relating their scholarship to wider social problems. This raises questions about the responsibility of faculty to function as intellectuals relating their specialized knowledge to wider social issues, thinking hard about "how best to understand how power works in our time," and how education might function in the interest of economic and social justice (Robbins 2016).

Fifth, in a world driven by data, specialisms, and the increasing fragmentation of knowledge, educators need to enable students to develop a comprehensive vision of society that "does not rely on single issues" (Aronowitz 2008, p. 50). It is only through an understanding of the wider relations and connections of power that young people and others can overcome uninformed practice, isolated struggles, and modes of singular politics that become insular and self-sabotaging. In short, moving

beyond a single-issue orientation means developing modes of analyses that connect the dots historically and relationally. It also means developing a more comprehensive vision of politics and change. The key here is the notion of translation; that is, the need to translate private troubles into broader public issues and understand how systemic modes of analyses can be helpful in connecting a range of issues so as to be able to build a united front in the call for a radical democracy.

Sixth, another serious challenge facing educators who believe that colleges and universities should function as democratic public spheres is the task of developing a discourse of both critique and possibility or what I have called a discourse of educated hope. This means developing discourses and pedagogical practices that connect reading the word with reading the world, and doing so in ways that enhance the capacities of young people as critical agents and engaged citizens. In taking up this project, educators and others should attempt to create the conditions that give students the opportunity to become critical and engaged citizens who have the knowledge and courage to struggle in order to make desolation and cynicism unconvincing and hope practical. Critique is important and is crucial to break the hold of commonsense assumptions that legitimate a wide range of injustices. The language of critique is also crucial for making visible the workings of unequal power and the necessity of holding authority accountable. But the critique is not enough and without a discourse of hope, it can lead to a paralyzing despair or, even worse, a crippling cynicism. Hope speaks to imagining a life beyond capitalism, and combines a realistic sense of limits with a lofty vision of demanding the impossible. Reason, justice, and change cannot blossom without hope because educated hope taps into our deepest experiences and longing for a life of dignity with others, a life in which it becomes possible to imagine a future that does not mimic the present. I am not referring to a romanticized and empty notion of hope, but to a notion of informed hope that faces the concrete obstacles and realities of domination but continues the ongoing task of "holding the present open and thus unfinished" (Benjamin 1997, p. 10).

The discourse of possibility not only looks for productive solutions, it also is crucial in defending those public spheres in which civic values, public scholarship, and social engagement allow for a more imaginative grasp of a future that takes seriously the demands of justice, equity, and civic courage. Democracy should encourage, even require, a way of thinking critically about education, one that connects equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good. Authoritarianism has created in many societies a predatory class of unethical zombies—who are producing dead zones of the imagination that even Orwell could not have envisioned, while waging a fierce fight against the possibilities of a democratic future. One only has to look at the U. S., Turkey, the Philippines, and Hungary, to realize that the time has come to develop a political language in which civic values, social responsibility, and the institutions that support them become central to invigorating and fortifying a new era of civic imagination, a renewed sense of social agency, and an impassioned international social movement with a vision, organization, and set of strategies to challenge the neoliberal nightmare engulfing the planet. The dark shadow of

authoritarianism may be spreading, but it can be stopped. And that prospect raises serious questions about what educators, youth, intellectuals, and others are going to do today to make sure that they do not succumb to the authoritarian forces circling so many countries across the globe, waiting for the resistance to stop and for the lights to go out. My friend, the late Howard Zinn rightly insisted that hope is the willingness "to hold out, even in times of pessimism, the possibility of surprise." To add to this eloquent plea, I would say, that history is open and it is time to think otherwise in order to act otherwise, especially if as educators we want to imagine and fight for alternative futures and horizons of possibility.

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Afterword: Viral Modernity

From Postmodernism to Post-truth?

Tina Besley, Michael Peters and Sharon Rider

Declarations of the death knell of postmodernism are now quite commonplace. Various publications such as those below suggest that, if anything, postmodernism is at an end and has been dead and buried for some time. An age dominated by playfulness, hybridity, relativism, and the fragmentary self has given way to something else, as yet undefined. McHale (2015) describes the life cycle of postmodernism in terms of the "big bang" in 1966 with Derrida's seminal paper "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" at the Johns Hopkins conference "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" symposium; its peak years 1973–1989; uncertainty and reorientation in the 1990s; and the aftermath and beyond after 2001. What happened in the intervening period?

Beginning in the late 1980s and extending into the 1990s, there was a plethora of books proclaiming the end of postmodernism in a variety of contexts and disciplines—*Sociology after postmodernism* (Owen 1997); *Thinking Again: Education after postmodernism* (Blake et al. 1998); *After Postmodernism: Education, Politics and Identity* (Smith and Wexler 1995); *Encounters: Philosophy of history after postmodernism* (Domanska 1998), etc. The flow of books continued well into the 2000s—*Philosophy after postmodernism*, (Crowther 2003); *Feminism after postmodernism* (Zalewski 2000); *Painting after postmodernism* (Rose 2016); *Literature*

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after postmodernism: reconstructive fantasies (Huber 2014); *Value, art, politics: criticism, meaning and interpretation after postmodernism* (Harris 2007), and so on.

In a letter to the editor in *The Lancet* responding to Muir Gray's (1999) "Postmodern medicine", Watts (2000) succinctly expressed a particular current of opinion that coagulates concerns around the concept of truth: "I think of post-modernism as a condition of despair caused by the belief that it is impossible to know truth, and which is sometimes accompanied by the belief that it is not possible to know right and wrong. Postmodernism has shot itself in the foot in the same way as logical positivism a few decades ago." Watts here ascribes a kind of agency to postmodernism here, as a cause of the condition that we have come to call post-truth. And there are today any number of academic doyens and public intellectuals who share the view that it was left leaning intellectuals such as Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty (rather than, say Donald Trump or Steve Bannon, for instance) who brought about our present situation in which post-truth thrives.

In a recent piece written for *The Conversation*, "The surprising origins of 'post-truth'—and how it was spawned by the liberal left", Calcutt (2016), makes the following observation:

> Punditry on the "post-truth era" is often accompanied by a picture either of Donald Trump (for example, BBC News Online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37995600, or The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/15/post-truth-named-word-of-the-year-by-oxford-dictionaries) or of his supporters (The Spectator: http://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/11/post-truth-politics-dont-be-so-patronising/). Although The Spectator article was a rare exception, the connotations embedded in "post-truth" commentary are normally as follows: "post-truth" is the product of populism; it is the bastard child of common-touch charlatans and a rabble ripe for arousal; it is often in blatant disregard of the actualité.

He then goes on to claim: "Left-leaning, self-confessed liberals, they sought freedom from state-sponsored truth; instead they built a new form of cognitive confinement—'post-truth'" (Calcutt 2016).

In an article with an even more sensationalist heading, "Richard Rorty and How Postmodernism Helped Elect Trump", Read (2016) argues that "Our whole culture and civilisation has features which probabilify a tendency toward a notion that we live in 'post-truth' times" including consumerism that "one can 'buy' whatever subjective truth one wants". A further example, also from *The Guardian*, is in an interview Cadwalladr (2017) with the distinguished philosopher Daniel Dennett: "I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil. They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts. You'd have people going around saying: 'Well, you're part of that crowd who still believe in facts.'" As one final case in point, take the article by Sonne (2017), which asks "Is Trump a Postmodern Prophet?" The author argues that the election of Donald Trump illustrates the victory of the postmodern definition of truth. These examples could be multiplied, of course. They are all cases of what we might call "fake intellectual history", in the sense that rather than a serious discussion of a very serious matter, we are offered clickbait: a way of consolidating and confirming

prejudices within one group as a means of demonizing and disparaging another (even if, in this case, the groups in question are hardly known outside of seminar rooms).

The assertion that Foucault (or Derrida, or Rorty) is responsible for the post-truth condition is false, and fatuously so. In ignoring the complexity of the cultural context in which ideas are formed, propagated, integrated, and transformed as well as the historical facts of the matter with regard to relevant occurrences and developments which give those ideas substance, the claim itself fits neatly into the post-truth format of oversimplification, falsification and appeal to visceral reactions rather than reason and deliberation. This kind of axe-grinding has become commonplace among certain analytic philosophers (as well as some natural scientists with chips on their shoulders about the humanities, and even humanities scholars who harbor an abiding abhorrence for "theory").

But let's take a closer look at the role of Truth in twentieth-century philosophy. We can begin with the "verificationism" of the Vienna Circle and the Logical Empiricists, which held sway in the 1920 and 1930s in Europe and which, largely through the migration of its proponents to the US and the cross-pollination with native American Pragmatism, was important to the development of what was to become mainstream Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy. By 1960, the movement had lost steam and, by the 1970s, it had largely folded as a going concern (Creath 2017). But the history of Logical Positivism (as opposed to its internal historiography) has only recently begun to be written. A common understanding of the relationship between language, truth, and logic (the title of A. J. Ayers' famous pamphlet) has yet to be established for all work that is described or describes itself as "analytic philosophy".

Given that there is no universally accepted account of the historical development toward a generally recognized conception of truth, it is difficult to say what exactly it means to suggest that some philosophers (say Derrida, or Rorty) are post-truth by dint of criticizing the assumptions of the mainstream. Rather, the denunciation of "postmodernism" as a purveyor of "post-truth" seems to be mostly a way of signaling that analytic philosophers disapprove of theoretical or critical projects that implicitly undermine their own basic assumptions. It doesn't mean that the philosophers denounced are really "post-truth" in some broad, all-encompassing sense. On the other side of the equation, more recent, historically sensitive retrospective accounts of the development of analytic philosophy have indicated that, as a movement, it has no coherent set of unifying principles that define its present borders (Biletzki and Matar 1998; Grafton 2004). What exactly are the reviled postmodern philosophers "post"?

The history of analytic philosophy (see also *The Journal of the History of Analytic Philosophy* https://jhaponline.org/) is the history of a specific kind of engagement with a historically specific set of questions concerning truth, language, and meaning. But the work emanating out of those questions today is largely based on the application of formal methods to arrive at formal definitions, which is to say that the "truth" of professional epistemologists does no real work outside of the seminar room and journal articles. Already in 1967, in his famous paper "Truth and

Meaning" (1967), Donald Davidson concludes that natural languages are not amenable to the direct application of formal methods to construct a correct definition of the expression "true sentence" in harmony with the logic and spirit of everyday language use, which is where the question of truth actually gets interesting.

But leaving the history of "truth" within the mainstream twentieth-century theory of knowledge aside, the heart of the matter regarding the accusation of epistemic treason on the part of intellectuals working in other traditions, is to what extent the case being made against the latter has some substance. If we take the case of one of the usual suspects regarded as bearing much of the responsibility for our current hankering for "alternative facts", Michel Foucault, the first thing we ought to notice is that he is interested in a *history of truth-telling* (*parrhesia*) rather than a notion of conceptual or factual truth. Indeed, he draws the distinction between an analytic account of truth and a history of truth-telling (Foucault 2001). Foucault writes: "My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of truth-teller or truth-telling as an activity." Moreover: "What I wanted to analyze was how the truth-teller's role was variously problematized in Greek philosophy. And what I wanted to show you was that if Greek philosophy has raised the question of truth from the point of view of the criteria for true statements and sound reasoning, this same Greek philosophy has also raised the problem of truth from the point of view of truth-telling as an activity" (Foucault 2001, p. 169). In sum, the questions Foucault was raising were not the same ones as those discussed in most mainstream analytic epistemology. He was not "post-truth" in the sense that he was denying or making assertions about truth or truth conditions; he was not part of *that* discussion at all.

Similarly, Derrida also sees himself as a philosopher very much concerned with upholding truth: "The value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested or destroyed in my writings, but only reinscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts" (Derrida 1988, p. 146). Elsewhere, he distinguishes between two interrelated notions of truth in the Western tradition: truth as presence and truth as agreement:

> "Truth" has always meant two different things, the history of the essence of truth – the truth of truth – being only the gap and the articulation between the two interpretations or processes […] The process of truth is on the one hand the unveiling of what lies concealed in oblivion […] On the other hand […] truth is agreement (homoiôsis or adaequatio), a relation of resemblance or equality between a re-presentation and a thing (unveiled, present), even in the eventuality of a statement of judgment. (Derrida 1981, pp. 192–193)

In the Blackwell *A Companion to Derrida*, Norris (2014) corrects the misunderstanding that Derrida's project is to undermine the notion of truth:

> [far] from rejecting or denouncing the notion of truth, Derrida can be found insisting on its absolute indispensability to philosophical enquiry in general and – more specifically – its crucial pertinence to the project of deconstruction (LI, 162–254). [H]e went out of his way to controvert the widespread belief (put about chiefly by detractors in the mainstream analytic camp) that deconstruction amounted to nothing more than an update on ancient sophistical themes or a bag of crafty rhetorical tricks with absolutely no regard for

reputable, truth-apt standards of debate (Searle 1977). All the same Derrida's reiterated protests – asserting his strict and principled allegiance to just those criteria of valid argument, logical rigor, and conceptual precision – are often dismissed, by those so minded in advance, as a routine show of respectability designed to conceal his indifference to truth in whatever commonplace or technical guise.

 The point here is not to defend Derrida or to castigate his critics, but simply to note that the misleading notion that post-structuralist, hermeneutic, phenomenological, pragmatic, or Wittgenstein-inspired philosophers deny any sense to the idea of truth, to criteria for the application of the term, and so forth, is an old canard. The claim has almost exactly the same form today as it had 30 or 40 years ago, namely, as a visceral reaction to the unfamiliar. In the best cases, some effort is put into building an argument on the basis of the antipathy toward the kind of philosophizing that falls roughly under the heading of "continental", even if they normally make assumptions that undermine the relevance of the arguments they want bring to bear. But in the worst cases, examples of which were enumerated earlier, the attacks have the form of Trumpian innuendo, dismissive hand-waving, bullying and character assassination.

To call everyone who poses other questions than those common to a certain academic tradition "postmodern" is intellectually slothful, and contributes to the general confusion rather than helping to clear it up. What has one really accomplished by packing together Wittgenstein, Peirce, James, Nietzsche, Popper, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty, and others as "anti-foundationalists"? Whatever it is, it is not a contribution to, nor a basis for a rigorous, balanced and open dialogue about how to think about our notions of truth. It is rather the sort of move described by Rorty as a "conversation-stopper".

So we have in this picture of "postmodernist philosophy" both a false picture of the history of contemporary philosophy and a fictionalized portrayal of a dangerous "post"- or even "anti"-truth movement that goes under the heading of "postmodernism". We have here also a rather sweeping idea of the postmodern as well. In this context, it is useful to remind ourselves that there is a distinction to be made between postmodernism in architecture, art and literature, and poststructuralism. In "(Posts-) Modernism and Structuralism: Affinities and Theoretical Innovations", Peters (1999) provides an account of poststructuralism, distinguishing it from postmodernism, and from its predecessor movement, structuralism, noting that while there are philosophical and historical overlaps between the two, it is important to distinguish between them in order to appreciate their respective intellectual genealogies and their theoretical trajectories and applications. He stresses in particular the difference between their *theoretical objects.* Poststructuralism takes as it theoretical object "structuralism", whereas postmodernism takes as its theoretical object "modernism". Each movement is an attempt to supersede in various ways that which went before. The two movements—poststructuralism and postmodernism—while now intertwined and often equated with the other or their terms and meanings conflated, are distinguished by a peculiar set of theoretical concerns most clearly seen by tracing their respective historical genealogies. Of course, if one doesn't do the work, one will not see the difference,

which goes a long way toward explaining why the two terms are often used interchangeably in philosophical polemics.

We have up to this point argued that the idea that the post-truth condition has been created by a certain "postmodern" strain of philosophy is "fake news", an "alternative fact", at least from the historical perspective. The issue at stake, however, is not merely one of intellectual history, but also of political economy. The crux of the matter is what we have, in the title of this book, referred to as "viral modernity". Viner (2016), editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*, relates the story of the circumstances surround the news of David Cameron's alleged intimate involvement with a part of a pig's anatomy while a student at Oxford, an anecdote extracted from a new biography but the veracity of which no one could establish as fact. *The journalist who perpetrated the story and co-wrote the biography could not verify a source or verify whether it was true.* After the story had gone viral, she asks "Does the truth matter any more?" Viner (2016) widens her report to include Brexit and refers to Arron Banks, a major sponsor of the Leave. EU Campaign who explained the basis of the publicity offensive:

> "It was taking an American-style media approach," said Banks. "What they said early on was 'Facts don't work', and that's it. The remain campaign featured fact, fact, fact, fact. It just doesn't work. You have got to connect with people emotionally. It's the Trump success." (cited in Viner 2016)

Viner (2016) asserts that, "[i]n the digital age, it is easier than ever to publish false information, which is quickly shared and taken to be true[…]" Quoting Emily Bell, the director of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, she comments on the dramatic changes of the news ecosystem: the concentration of ownership and power especially distribution; the automation that filter news through platforms and algorithms; and the shift to consumerism, the so-called domination of user content. Viner's (2016) explanation is not ideology-driven. Rather, she proposes an analysis of what the advent of digital media means for truth in a world dominated by global media infrastructures owned by the few that count billions among their users and utilize a distributive logic that displaces the authority of journalism with personal belief based on the emotional charge of the issue for the individual or group.

If representatives of research and higher education in general, and in particular, those self-appointed guardians of Veritas, the philosophers, fall into a mob mentality of alarm, agitation and acrimony rather than liberality, curiosity and interest toward opinions, ideas or traditions that are different, alien, or foreign to them, then they unwittingly, and surely unwillingly, are part of the post-truth atmosphere of mistrust and self-delusion which they are at such great pains to dispel. For let us not forget what a powerful force a clearly focused common object of hate is:

> The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness […] seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract,

undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. (Orwell 1949, Chap. 1)

 The idea that mastery of certain formal methods of extremely limited application in the real world can inoculate one from the conventionalism, sadism, and provincialism of group-thinking is a dangerous illusion, especially for intellectuals. We should be wary of those who are already sure they know what the Truth is; so well, in fact, that they are satisfied to reject dissenting opinions emphatically, with or without good arguments.

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