10.6094/behemoth.2018.11.2.986

The Problem of Post-Truth

Rethinking the Relationship between Truth and Politics

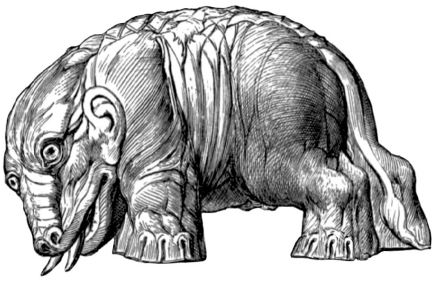
Frieder Vogelmann

Abstract

'Post-truth' is a failed concept, both epistemically and politically because its simplification of the relationship between truth and politics cripples our understanding and encourages authoritarianism. This makes the diagnosis of our 'post-truth era' as dangerous to democratic politics as relativism with its premature disregard for truth. In order to take the step beyond relativism and 'post-truth', we must conceptualise the relationship between truth and politics differently by starting from a 'non-sovereign' understanding of truth.

Keywords: relativism, authoritarianism, post-truth, John Rawls, Hannah Arendt, truth, political epistemology

Frieder Vogelmann is a postdoctoral researcher in political theory at Bremen University. He has published on themes from Michel Foucault's work, the history of "responsibility" and critical theory. His current research focuses on the force of knowledge and the political significance of epistemology. **E-Mail: frieder.vogelmann@uni-bremen.de**



Has politics, has society, well, have 'we' lost the respect for, or even worse, the interest in truth? This is the animating idea behind the newest diagnosis of our times, according to which we now live in a 'post-truth era'. Steve Tesich, a screenwriter and playwright, coined the phrase 'post-truth' in 1992 to accuse the North American public of silently accepting the lies by the administration of President George Bush (Senior). Tesich's drastic diagnosis is:

> We are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only drool about in their dreams. 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, that we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can denude truth of any significance. In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world. (Tesich 1992, 13)

The diagnosis didn't catch on in 1992, and it didn't in 2004, when Ralph Keyes published the first book to use "post-truth era" (Keyes 2004) as a title. Today, it has. The Oxford Dictionaries as well as the Association for the German Language (Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache) elected 'post-truth' as the Word of the Year 2016,**[1]** and its popularity is still growing, not only in the media but in scientific publications as well.**[2]**

I argue that the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' is interesting—not in itself but as a symptom and because of its consequences. For 'post-truth' is a dangerous concept, both epistemically and politically: its simplification of the relationship between truth and politics cripples our understanding of it and encourages authoritarianism. This makes the diagnosis of 'post-truth' as dangerous to democratic politics as relativism with its premature disregard for truth. In order to take the step beyond relativism and 'post-truth', we must conceptualise the relationship between truth and politics differently by starting from a 'non-sovereign' understanding of truth.

To arrive at this conclusion, I first examine the diagnosis of us living in a 'post-truth era' (I). Its attraction lies partly in 'solving' the conflict between two basic insights about the relationship between truth and politics by simply giving up one of them (II). I argue that letting go of either one leads to either relativism or authoritarianism. An adequate conceptualization of the relationship between truth and politics requires a non-sovereign understanding of truth that allows taking a more complex stance towards truth and politics (III).

I. After Truth?

'Post-truth' is not a precisely defined concept. We best understand it by looking at three examples often cited as evidence for the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era'. The first, notorious, example is Donald Trump's claim that 1.5 million people attended his inauguration, filling the space "all the way back to the Washington Monument".**[3]** Confronted with aerial photographs clearly demonstrating the contrary, Sean Spicer, the White House Press Secretary, defended the president's statement and proclaimed: "This was

[1] See Oxford Dictionaries 2016 and Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache 2016.

[2] See, for example, Peters et al. 2018 or Fuller 2018.

[3] Remarks by President Trump and Vice President Pence at CIA Headquarters, 21 January 2017. http://transcripts.factcheck.org/remarks-president-trump-vice-president-pence-cia-headquarters/. (05/09/2017).

the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration—period—both in person and around the globe." (Spicer, quoted in Fandos 2017) And the president's advisor Kellyanne Conway boldly stated that the White House had registered legitimate "alternative facts" and would continue to oppose those to the facts reported by CNN or the New York Times (Fandos 2017). This episode surely is an instance of politics being uninterested in truth, but is it indicative of politics in a 'post-truth era'? When exactly did the 'era of truth' end and the 'post-truth era' begin? With the fable of mobile weapons of mass destruction, forged by the administration of George W. Bush (Junior) to justify the second war in Iraq? Or, if we stick to US-history, with the fact that the "the Johnson Administration had systematically lied, not only to the public but also to Congress" (Apple Jr. 1996), as shown by the Pentagon Papers?

The second example is from Great Britain. The Vote Leave campaign promised voters during the Brexit election that leaving the European Union would free 350 million GBP per week which would be used to finance the National Health Service. Yet as early as 8am on the day after the vote, Nigel Farage backpedalled on the promise: "No I can't [guarantee it], and I would never have made that claim. That was one of the mistakes that I think the leave campaign made [...]." (Farage, quoted in Travis 2016) Given that he was part of the campaign, we seem to have a further case of post-truth politics. Or is it merely another broken promise made during an election campaign?

My third example is less well-known but noteworthy because it concerns the institution that society commissions to produce truths: the university. High-quality newspapers and other media outlets frequently report that universities have become dominated by leftist activists who shame, boycott and bully those who dare to voice different opinions (in the case of German universities see e.g. Forth 2016; Novotny et al. 2016). The two biggest 'success stories', invented and circulated by conservative and right-winged think tanks, are the concerns over a pernicious 'political correctness' (Feldstein 1997; Weigel 2016) and the self-proclaimed 'anti-genderism' (Hark/Villa 2015; Redecker 2016). Charging others with 'political correctness' allows those making this allegation to keep on discriminating against women, people of colour or other minorities.**[4]** Similarly, the current wave of 'anti-genderism' mobilises anti-academic sentiments and rhetoric to portray the Gender Studies as mighty corruptors of the university and society at large. Since neither a left hegemony nor domination by the chronically underfunded Gender Studies has ever been shown to exist,**[5]** does the insistence on such claims amount to a turn away from a concern with truth even in high-quality media outlets? Or are we just witnessing a clash of political opinions about what kind of university, what kind of science and ultimately what kind of society we want?

These three examples, then, are not simply evidence for the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' but give us three reasons to be sceptical as well. First, we should doubt the *historical* claim inherent in the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era', for we will not find an 'era of truth' that came before. This is not a trifle problem of a narrow-minded empiricist, for any diagnosis of our times must spell out what is new today, must locate a break somewhere in history to divide 'our times' from the times before, and must state the criteria that allow

[4] Cf. Chait 2015: "Political correctness is a style of politics in which the more radical members of the left attempt to regulate political discourse by defining opposing views as bigoted and illegitimate."

[5] Studies on student's political attitudes in Germany show that the political interest of students and the potential for the political left at the universities have consistently declined in the last 25 years: see Multrus et al. 2017, 79–81, 86–89; Bargel 2017, 26 f., 30. Counting all professors at German universities even marginal related to Gender Studies shows that they make up 0.4 to 0.5 percent of all German professors, virtually unchanged since 2000 (see Hark/Villa 2015, 22).

dating the divide (see Vogelmann forthcoming).**[6]** It would be rather self-defeating if those diagnosing and criticizing our 'post-truth era' eschewed concerns about the truths of their claims.

Second, we should doubt the diagnosis of the 'post-truth era' because we lack *conceptual* criteria for distinguishing between e.g. propaganda, ideology, lies and the disrespect for truth that the concept 'post-truth' is meant to single out (D'Ancona 2017, 26). The most common attempt identifies as new the cynicism displayed by those producing 'post-truth'. For example, Vincent F. Hendricks and Mads Vestergaard (2017, 5) suggest that 'post-truth' is distinct from propaganda and simple lies because lies or propaganda statements are meant to be believed and therefore cannot be openly acknowledged as propaganda or lies. This, however, seems to be a rather naïve idea of both 'post-truth' and propaganda or political lies. On the one hand, 'post-truth' statements are certainly meant to be believed, for they aim at orienting people's behaviour. Even obvious cases like the silly inauguration claim are defended (see the various—and hilarious—attempts by Sean Spicer reported in Fandos 2017), and more complex cases are only obvious lies if access to truth is presumed to be a simple matter, against which Raymond Geuss (2014, 140f.) rightfully protests. On the other hand, propaganda and political lies are frequently used openly in politics because it demonstrates power over others to make them affirm a statement they all know to be false (Müller 2017, 127). Hence cynicism cannot successfully serve as a criterion for what is new in the 'post-truth era'.

The third reason why we should doubt the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' is *epistemological*. Getting to know the truth is always hard work since the truth "doesn't lie there on the street in the sun waiting to be observed by anyone who glances in its general direction" (Geuss 2014, 140). And knowing the truth is presumed by diagnosing that others—'post-truthers'—no longer care for it. Still, those diagnosing a 'post-truth era' often replace the hard work of justifying their truth-claims with appeals that we must learn to trust again (D'Ancona 2017, 36): our political elites, our fellow citizens and, most of all, our scientists. Yet which experts, which scientists, which politicians and who of our fellow citizens should we trust? Without explaining how we can discriminate between blind faith and trust, calls for a renewal of the virtue of trust turn into calls for being less critical—certainly a bad strategy if we really lived in a 'post-truth era' with its reign of 'fake news' and phony experts. Epistemological questions are, ironically, the first victim of the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era'.

Harbouring these historical, conceptual and epistemological doubts comes naturally but is distracting. We should not presume that the problem addressed by the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' is conceptualised well enough by that diagnosis to make it our starting point for further investigation. Louis Althusser's (1971, 162–165) warning that our social practices are not found in ideology, neither distorted nor undistorted, is pertinent in this respect. His conclusion is to analyse the practices producing the ideology instead of the ideology itself. Similarly, we should formulate the problem addressed by

[6] Matthew D'Ancona (2017, 113) emphasises that his critique of post-truth is "absolutely not a restorationalist or heritage project, a mission to turn back the clock to an imagined past of untarnished veracity. There was never such a time and, even if there had been, it would be impossible to recreate". Yet if what is new in the 'post-truth era' is the public's non-reaction to the "mendacity of politicians" (ibid.), then there was a 'pre-post-truth era', in which the public actually cared about truth. This concern for truth is what D'Ancona wants to restore.

the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' in independent terms. Yet which problem is that?

II. Truth in Politics: Too Weak or Too Strong?

That problem is neither the medialization of politics with the acceleration of information and gossip and the collapse of editorial gate-keepers nor the sudden rise of feelings against a rational politics nor the cunning of demagogues spinning 'narratives'. The problem is the troubled relationship between truth and politics—which lies beneath all of these formulations.

The diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' presupposes without argument that we already know the ideal form that relationship should take: politics must respect the authority of truth and must yield to truth if it finds itself in opposition to truth. I will return to this diagnosis, but in order to pose the problem that gives rise to the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' in independent terms, we must take a detour through political philosophy which has analysed the relationship between truth and politics as the conflict between two 'forces'. Its two basic insights, trivial at first glance but immensely influential, are the sobering realization that truth rarely helps us settle our most important disagreements, and the stern warning of truth being hostile to politics because of its anti-political ('objective') character. For simplicity's sake, I will use John Rawls' (II.1) and Hannah Arendt's (II.2) formulations of these two insights, for they capture their underlying conviction particularly well. This does not imply that both share a common concept of truth or of politics—they certainly do not. Yet despite all their differences, both conceptualise the relationship between politics and truth as a conflict between two forces and thereby demonstrate just how common this conceptualisation of the relationship between truth and politics is and how basic the two convictions are.

II.1 The Rawls Conviction: Irresistible Reasonable Pluralism

The first conviction about the relationship between truth and politics stems from a lesson learned in bloody wars (especially in 17th century in Europe): toleration, most importantly the toleration of different religions. For tolerating religions means accepting that people fundamentally disagree about their most cherished truths. Although we commit ourselves to certain truths, we accept that other people are equally committed to other truths. And although we believe them to be wrong, we know of convincing counter-reasons to our own objections. This balance convinces us that we will have to tolerate disagreement and therefore will have to relativize our convictions—without necessarily becoming sceptics or relativists (Forst 2013, 22f., 480–496).

It is only a small step from the idea of toleration to the influential concept of reasonable pluralism as formulated by John Rawls. When constructing a conception of justice adequate for modern societies, he argues, we face the fact

> that the diversity of reasonable comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies is not a mere historical condition that may

> soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy. Under the political and social conditions secured by the basic rights and liberties of free institutions, a diversity of conflicting and irreconcilable—and what's more, reasonable—comprehensive doctrines will come about and persist if such diversity does not already obtain. (Rawls 2005, 36)

Regarding the relationship between truth and politics, there are three important aspects to Rawls' statement: First, the pluralism of doctrines is neither a passing historical condition nor a problem to be solved but a permanent condition of modernity. It is not a problem that must be solved, Rawls argues, because a just society with democratic institutions encourages the free use of reason, and reasonable pluralism is the necessary result (Rawls 2005, 37). Attempts to resolve this pluralism would have to use illegitimate coercive means. Rawls calls the "fact of oppression" that "a continuing shared understanding on one comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine can be maintained only by the oppressive use of state power" (ibid.). In a free and just society, the pluralism of doctrines is destined to persist and likely to grow.

Second, reasonable pluralism is distinct from mere pluralism. The idea is not just that we find in our societies an overwhelming wealth of different moral, political, ethical or aesthetic doctrines, by which Rawls means sets of interconnected judgements that define the basic values and their role in life. We do find a plurality of such doctrines, but for Rawls only reasonable doctrines are of interest. They are characterised by a moral ideal of reciprocity, because proponents of such doctrines accept to abide by the fair terms of cooperation which they put forward themselves, and they accept the burden to give public reasons for their views that cannot presuppose a shared, reasonable comprehensive doctrine (54).**[7]** Reasonable pluralism is a pluralism of reasonable doctrines and implies that neither of these can be shown to be 'irrational', 'immoral' or simply 'wrong'. Truth will not resolve reasonable disagreements:**[8]** Reason is not unanimous and does not speak in one voice (*pace* Habermas 1992).

Third, Rawls gives a reason for the possibility of reasonable disagreement that significantly weakens the consequences of his "fact of reasonable pluralism". For he argues that reasonable disagreements stem from (at least six) obstacles to our exercise of reason (see Rawls 2005, 56f.):

(a) We encounter conflicting and complex evidence.

(b) Even if we agree on certain reasons, we assign different importance to them.

(c) All concepts are subject to interpretation because of their internal indeterminacy.

(d) How we reason is affected by our whole biography.

(e) Issues are difficult to judge because there are many reasons of different normative strength.

(f) Not all values can be realised at the same time, so decisions about priorities are necessary.

These "burdens of judgement" (54) are controversial, because—so is Rawls'

[7] Rawls is rather vague when it comes to "the reasonable". Furthermore, he characterises it as a trait of persons but repeatedly uses concepts like "reasonable doctrines", "reasonable pluralism" etc. See Wenar 1995, 38–57 and Habermas 2011, 37–40.

[8] "Let's say that reasonable disagreement is disagreement between reasonable persons: that is, between persons who have realized their two moral powers to a degree sufficient to be free and equal citizens in a constitutional regime, and who have an enduring desire to honor fair terms of cooperation and to be fully cooperating members of society." (Rawls 2005, 55)

argument—accepting them is a condition for being reasonable.**[9]** Furthermore, by locating the sources of reasonable disagreement in the circumstances of reasoning (and mostly in our finite and bodily nature: see Forst 2013, 487–491), Rawls implicitly presupposes an 'ideal reason' without these external shackles and therefore without reasonable disagreement. He thereby misunderstands his own insight into the fact of reasonable pluralism, because if we can presuppose such an 'ideal reason', the fact of reasonable pluralism could not play the role Rawls wants it to play. Why would we reconcile ourselves with an empirical hurdle instead of finding a way around it as best as we can? The fact of reasonable pluralism demands more: it forces us to give up even the transcendental ideal of a unity of reason,**[10]** to acknowledge that reason (even Reason) is not one.

What I call the Rawls conviction is the commitment to the insight that because of the fact of reasonable pluralism we cannot expect truth to resolve our reasonable disagreements. We should not mistake this view for relativism just yet, because on the one hand, it still maintains that we do get pretty far with reason (as proven by Rawls' own work). On the other hand, we are not forced into a relativist or sceptical position, because we can still hold on to our convictions as those best justified. The Rawls conviction merely demands that we heed the limits of what these justifications permit us to think and do with regard to others who are not convinced by them (489).**[11]** Yet it does mean that we cannot expect truth to guide us to the one and only reasonable political conception of justice, much less to the one and only reasonable policy in whatever debate we engage in. The Rawls conviction of the irresistible reasonable pluralism thus forces us to realise that truth does not resolve political debates. We might even be so bold as to speak of a necessary pluralism of truths.

This is not a minority view in political theory, brought about by what is often denounced as a 'postmodern' contempt for truth. On the contrary, the commitment to reasonable pluralism is widespread and limited neither to political liberalism nor to poststructuralist political philosophy, radical democratic theory or deconstructivism. If we acknowledge the full force of the fact of reasonable pluralism, we can see how modern political philosophy is in unusual agreement in presupposing a plurality of truths.

II.2 The Arendt Conviction: The Compelling Force of Truth

In her well-known essay *Truth and Politics* (2006), Hannah Arendt sketches the long history of the struggle between politics and truth: Politicians have never been regarded as particularly honest whereas "truth-seekers" have always been an endangered species (Arendt 2006, 227–230). Her argument rests on a series of corresponding oppositions: One the hand, we have politics as the realm of plurality, opinions, future-directed actions and lies; on the other hand, we have the realm of philosophers and scientists in which truth (in singular) plays the decisive role for thinking. Politics is a mode of acting with others and necessarily with regarding the opinions of others, and its aim is creating and forming a shared reality in which together we can live a life in

[9] Wenar (1995, 41–48) argues that accepting the "burdens of judgement" is not necessary for being reasonable: According to Rawls, being reasonable minimally includes the willingness to propose and abide by fair terms of cooperation, and refraining from coercively repressing other comprehensive doctrines. Requiring others to accept the "burdens of judgement" as the reason to do so would define the reasonable too narrow, Wenar criticises, because most religious doctrines reject the "burdens of proof" as they "explain religious diversity by stressing the difficulty of finding the truth even under the best conditions, while universalistic religions present themselves as accessible to all clear minds and open hearts." (ibid.)

[10] However, even Rawls' weakened insight into the fact of reasonable pluralism in modern societies suffices for my argument.

[11] This has of course been disputed: see e.g. Raz 1990 and Cohen 2009. I will come back to this question in section III.2.

freedom. Science and philosophy instead are concerned with understanding, not acting, and with seeking the truth in singular. Even regarding this truth as a mere opinion on equal footing with other opinions is to devalue truth.

Against these background assumptions, Arendt introduces the distinction between "rational" and "factual" truth. Examples of rational truths are most clearly given by mathematical and scientific truths—the sum of all angles in a triangle is 180 degrees; every action causes a reaction of equal force (in a closed system). Examples of factual truths are the existence of historical events like the fact that the German army invaded Belgium in 1940 (231). Arendt argues that the historically older struggle between rational truth and politics is mostly over, as rational truths are tolerated (or simply ignored) today. **[12]** Now it is the factual truth that is endangered by politics—and it is more vulnerable to political action than rational truth because it is contingent. A historical fact can be liquidated from our knowledge by erasing all its traces. This could happen to a rational truth fact too, but because rational truths are necessary truths, they could be discovered again. Hence rational truths do not depend on their records as do factual truths (231f.).

The precarious factual truth is of vital importance to politics, "since facts and events—the invariable outcome of men living and acting together—constitute the very texture of the political realm" (ibid., see 238). We nonetheless witness a battle between factual truth and politics because factual truth has a "despotic character" (241) when it comes to politics:

> The trouble is that factual truth, like all other truth, peremptorily claims to be acknowledged and precludes debate, and debate constitutes the very essence of political life. The modes of thought and communication that deal with truth, if seen from the political perspective, are necessarily domineering; they don't take into account other people's opinions, and taking these into account is the hallmark of all strictly political thinking. (241)

Just as rational truths set limits for thought, factual truths set limits for political debates and actions (238). Herein lies the scandal: Factual truth is an external boundary of politics, and the question from a purely political standpoint is (for Arendt), whether politics should be limited "by something that arises from without, has its source outside the political realm, and is as independent of the wishes and desires of the citizens as is the will of the worst tyrant" (240).**[13]**

Yet politics should embrace these non-political boundaries for its own sake, Arendt argues, just as reason must know and respect its own limits (as Kant argued). Universities, Arendt suggests, could be understood as politically established institutions that produce factual truths in order to limit politics in the right way. We should think of science and philosophy as a politically sponsored limit-setting enterprise; hence the limits their truths establish would be politics' self-limitation via the detour of science and philosophy (259–264).

We need not enter into a fuller discussion of Arendt's complex text, for Arendt's most fundament presupposition is readily apparent: truth—whether

[12] This might have changed since 1967 when Arendt wrote her essay. The current struggle of conservative politicians against the scientific accounts of humanity's role in climate change could be interpreted to indicate that rational truth is no longer at peace with politics—if it ever was.

[13] Why is factual truth, which is "political by nature" (Arendt 2006, 238), an "external limit" to politics? This is just one of Arendt's many self-contradictions and implausible grandiose claims that lead Ronald Beiner to sharply (and rightly) criticise her "misleading and obfuscating account of truth" and her problematical view of politics as "addressing (heroically) the challenge of human mortality" (Beiner 2008, 123). For a spirited defense, see Zerilli 2005.

rational or factual—"possess[es] a strength of its own" (259) and "carries within itself an element of coercion" (239). Truth is forcefully compelling; hence it can be a useful external limit to politics as well as a depoliticizing tyrant. It is this fundamental insight into truth's own force that I will call the Arendt conviction: the commitment to the insight that truth is a unique force in this world, a compelling and sometimes despotic power that has no substitute (259).

As was the case with the Rawls conviction, naming the second conviction after Arendt is not meant to imply that it is only Arendt who shares this conviction. On the contrary, the idea that truth has a compelling "force" is widespread, whether Jürgen Habermas (1984, 24, 28) calls it "the peculiarly constraint-free force of the better argument" or Richard Rorty (1997, 22–32) opposes 'Truth' as a bad philosophical idol of great oppressive power. Arendt's position is especially interesting, however, because she neither defines away its coercive potential (as Habermas does) nor rejects truth altogether because of its coercive potential (as Rorty [sometimes] does). Instead, she realises that it is precisely the ambiguous nature of truth's compelling force that makes it irreplaceable for us.

III. Beyond Post-Truth and Relativism

I have argued that (modern) political philosophy holds two basic convictions about the relationship between truth and politics. The Rawls conviction is the quite sobering realization that we cannot expect truth to resolve the most important political disagreements between reasonable persons. The fact of reasonable pluralism forces us to acknowledge the existence of reasonable disagreement in political debates and to tolerate different truths answering precisely those questions we most deeply care about. Truth in politics is plural and weak; we cannot use it to achieve unanimity without exercising illegitimate power against disagreeing persons.

The Arendt conviction demonstrates the compelling force of truth. It alerts us to the ever-present danger of truth turning into a coercive tyrant, because truth tolerates neither contradictory opinions nor being demoted to a mere opinion itself. The compelling force of truth makes it problematic in the realm of politics, but it is also what makes truth necessary for politics. Truth's compelling force keeps politics' tendency to alter our shared reality in check; hence, we need the compelling force of truth despite the danger of its "despotic character" (Arendt 2006, 21).

Both convictions are widely shared, yet clearly conflicting: Whereas the Rawls conviction sees truth as anaemic because truth is precisely *not strong enough* to overcome reasonable disagreement, the Arendt conviction sees truth as *too strong*—namely tyrannical—to rely on it without qualifications. The former conviction insists on the plurality of truth, the latter on its tyrannical and singular nature.**[14]** Having two basic and intuitively plausible but conflicting convictions not only complicates debates in political philosophy, it also (partly**[15]**) explains the attractiveness of the diagnosis that we live in a 'post-truth era'. For it solves the conflict between both convictions, albeit

[14] As said at the beginning of section II, my focus is on the conceptualisation of the relationship between truth and politics as a conflict between two forces which Rawls and Arendt share despite their many differences. However, helpfully pressed by an anonymous reviewer, let me indicate two possible starting points for further investigations along the concept of "plurality". Both locate the reason for "plurality" in the conditions of human life, yet whereas Arendt explicitly argues that this does not constitute an anthropological thesis because human conditions are different from human nature (Arendt 1998, 9f.), Rawls seems to tie the plurality of opinions to our finite bodily nature (see section II.1). Yet the decisive difference, I would argue, is that Arendt strictly separates action and thought (and therefore politics and science/philosophy) using the traditional distinction between opinions (plural) and truth (singular). None of these dichotomies are relevant for Rawls who therefore does not limit the scope of "plurality" to politics.

[15] Obviously, a full explanation would have to take into account basic sociological facts about the media as well as the role of reputation in the sciences because buzz words like 'post-truth' are attractive for journalists and scientists in order to gain valuable attention. As for this text: honi soit qui mal y pense.

in a misguided way: by purely favouring the Arendt conviction (III.1). It thus mirrors another misguided attempt to solve the tension purely in favour of the Rawls conviction: relativism (III.2). What is needed instead of these one-dimensional conceptualisations of the relationship between truth and politics is an understanding that combines both convictions (III.3).

III.1 Authoritarianism

We readily recognise that the critical diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' embraces the Arendt conviction without hesitation. The pluralism of opinions, 'post-truth' critics argue, is feasible only within a carefully guarded territory, the limits of which are set precisely by truth. How do we tell mere opinion from truth, and who is that 'we' authorised to do so? The answer given is 'science' in singular, defending a singular truth: "[...] the rise of truth as a binding force in scientific, legal, political and commercial practices was a gradual and hard-won achievement. It is a single currency, furthermore, whose value is determined by the extent to which it is defended in each of these interconnected spheres." (D'Ancona 2017, 101)**[16]** Hence the criticism of our 'post-truth era' implies that we have to restore and rigorously defend the authority of science which, according to this diagnosis, science has lost in recent years (e.g. D'Ancona 2017, 41f., 70, 91–96).

Already the claim that science has lost authority would merit more attention (see Shapin 2008; Gauchat 2012), yet I will concentrate on the extraordinary explanation given by critics of our 'post-truth era', namely that 'postmodernism' is to blame:

> For decades, critical social scientists and humanists have chipped away at the idea of truth. We've deconstructed facts, insisted that knowledge is situated and denied the existence of objectivity. The bedrock claim of critical philosophy, going back to Kant, is simple: We can never have certain knowledge about the world in its entirety. Claiming to know the truth is therefore a kind of assertion of power. [...] Call it what you want: relativism, constructivism, deconstruction, postmodernism, critique. The idea is the same: Truth is not found, but made, and making truth means exercising power. The reductive version is simpler and easier to abuse: Fact is fiction, and anything goes. It's this version of critical social theory that the populist right has seized on and that Trump has made into a powerful weapon. (Williams 2017)**[17]**

The argument is popular but wrong, using two selective inaccuracies: First, 'postmodernism' is turned into a catch-all phrase for theories expounded by and developed from the thoughts of authors like "Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and Richard Rorty", to use D'Ancona's (2017, 91) list.**[18]** Ignoring the theoretical struggles and dissent amongst these very different thinkers, the argument creates a homogenous block of "bad guys" —women, e.g. Luce Irigaray or Julia Kristeva, to name just two, are never mentioned—whom Bernard Williams (2002, 5) calls the "deniers" of truth. Obviously, this is not a neutral descriptive term

[16] Notice that although D'Ancona adds the political, legal and economic system to science, science still appears as one (uniform) enterprise and includes the natural and social sciences as well as the humanities.

[17] Variations of the same charge can be found in Keyes 2004, chapter 9; Boghossian 2006, 1–9; Frankfurt 2006, chapter 1; Hampe 2016; D'Ancona 2017, chapter 4.

[18] Also frequently included are Friedrich Nietzsche (in Williams 2017), Edward Said and Paul de Man (in Keyes 2004, 136, 141f.).

for a group of people supposed to share a certain view about truth but sets up a polemic divide. This alone is hardly problematic: a polemic gloss of a shared claim between otherwise different authors can be quite illuminating. Yet both Williams—Bernard and Casey—interpret what is shared among the 'postmodernists' to be

> a style of thought that extravagantly, challengingly, or—as its opponents would say—irresponsibly denies the possibility of truth altogether, waves its importance aside, or claims that all truth is 'relative' or suffers from some other such disadvantage (4f.).

This formulation of the shared claim amongst "deniers" paves over their different views precisely about the concept, the historicity and the significance of truth, thereby ignoring theoretical differences—e.g. between Nietzsche (1999), Foucault (1998a) and Lyotard (1988)—important to the argument based on the polemic divide.

Let us, for argument's sake, accept for a moment that it is the somewhat less contentious assertion that truth is socially and historically constructed and hence connected to power that is shared by 'postmodernists'. The second selective inaccuracy now reduces this shared view and then adds something. The claim that truths are socially and historically constructed and that therefore truth is connected to power is reduced to equating truth with power. Truth suddenly is nothing but the exercise of power. To this reduced version, those who blame the 'postmodernists' add that therefore, all truths are equal or simply that truth is relative. Hence, we can "wave its importance aside" (Williams 2002, 4).

Yet the unmodified shared claim that truths are socially and historically constructed and therefore connected to power implies of course that truth has a compelling force different from power. If it didn't, what would be the point of painstakingly researching all these small steps of its construction? By presupposing that any connection between power and truth invalidates truth, the critics presuppose a conception of truth which automatically invalidates the claim of the 'postmodernists'. Nothing could be further from the(ir) truth. And nothing could be less illuminating of their shared claim—if it exists at all.

In addition to this theoretical objection against blaming 'post-modernism' for the science's alleged loss of authority, empirical data (on the USA) suggests that "public trust in science has not declined since the 1970s except among conservatives and those who frequently attend church" (Gauchat 2012, 182). Very few of those worshippers will have been influenced by 'post-modernism'.

Yet whether or not we find the charge against 'postmodernism' plausible, the crucial step for critics of our 'post-truth era' is to reinstate the authority of truth over and above the plurality of mere opinions. Favouring the Arendt conviction and discarding the Rawls conviction, they argue that we need truth to keep the free play of opinions in check. And the decisive question how we tell truth from mere opinion is answered by reference to 'science' in the singular.

Herein lays the real danger—not because 'science' is not a fascinating machine

for producing compelling truths but because the sciences are much more diverse, contradictory and interesting than the picture of a singular science with its history interpreted as a story of progress allows for. Viewing the sciences as a homogenous enterprise progressively advancing our knowledge about the true nature of things is possible only if we ignore most of the research that has been done in the history and philosophy of science in the last century. To name just three landmark studies: Thomas Kuhn (1970) shows that the natural sciences do not simply expand our knowledge but that their history is discontinuous because the sciences undergo revolutionary paradigm changes. His path-breaking book inspired historical studies of actual sciences in the making instead of a philosophy of science registering textbook results from afar. One such study is Bruno Latour's and Steve Woolgar's (1986) exploration of the *Laboratory Life* in which they demonstrate how scientific facts are literally made, chronicling the hard work to achieve objectivity. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (2007) have traced the history of this scientific ideal—objectivity—, revealing fascinating differences in what scientific objectivity meant at different times and how this oriented researchers and their scientific work quite differently. None of these studies is beyond debate, but the appeal to 'science' in the singular and to its linear historical progress forecloses such a debate from the start, for only by forcibly denying the complex history of the sciences can the critics of our 'post-truth era' uphold their clear distinction between mere opinions and authoritative scientific truths.

It is precisely at this point that we can see why the diagnosis of a 'post-truth era' entails two authoritarian tendencies as it embraces what Arendt (2006, 241) called the "despotic character" of truth without qualifications. The critics of a 'post-truth era' explicitly argue for reinstating the authority of truth which has, according to the Arendt conviction, a despotic character. More importantly, they implicitly brush aside all scientific research about scientific research in order to justify truth's authority, thus legitimatizing the compelling—despotic—force of truth with an authoritarian dismissal of dissenting voices. In their insistence on a fact-based politics that declares that 'there is no alternative', they are disconcertingly similar to those criticised for venting 'alternative facts'. Both seem driven by a wish for order without dissent, short-circuiting debate by appeals to authority.

III.2 Relativism

Yet it does not suffice to favour only the Rawls conviction and discard the Arendt conviction to void the authoritarianism of the critics of a 'post-truth era' and of those supposedly establishing it. For an unqualified embrace of the Rawls conviction either leads us to a contradictory denial of the fact of reasonable pluralism or straightforward into relativism. Rawls himself argues that the fact of reasonable pluralism does not demand to give up our considered judgements. It does, however, require us to defend our reasonable doctrine not as true but as being acceptable to all reasonable persons even though they might hold different reasonable doctrines:

> [Political constructivism] does not use (or deny) the concept of truth; nor does it question that concept, nor could it say that the concept of truth and its idea of the reasonable are the same. Rather, within itself, the political conception does without the concept of truth [...]. (Rawls 2005, 94)

Joshua Cohen has lucidly criticised Rawls' surprising claim. Truth is the norm of beliefs, Cohen (2009, 13–15) states, and because even political conceptions of justice that avoid commitments to comprehensive doctrines must assert some beliefs, doing without the concept of truth (and not just without a substantial theory of truth) is impossible. He therefore proposes a political conception of truth, a conception 'thin' enough to fit within the confines of an overlapping consensus in which the plurality of reasonable doctrines meet. According to Cohen, conceptions of justice must include a non-metaphysical ("political") account of truth that minimally includes four "commonplaces" about truth which Cohen deems relatively uncontroversial:

(a) Truth is the norm for beliefs, assertions and judgements.
(b) True beliefs represent things as they are.
(c) Truth is more than justification.
(d) Truth is independently important (26f.).

However, Cohen's argument that we need not explain those four commonplaces in detail and thus that we need no substantial theory of truth to have a political conception of truth (28) seems problematic. He claims that deflationary theories of truth say "too little" (26) because they cannot explain the value of truth. Yet his assertion that truth does have a value independently of justifications is hardly more illuminating without giving further details. Thus Cohen either falls prey to his own critique or would have to include a substantial theory of truth in his account of truth, thus implicating him in the philosophical controversies that the political account was designed to circumvent.

Even if we grant Cohen this political conception of truth, admitting the existence of an overlapping consensus and thus a meeting point of reasonable doctrines despite their pluralism judges the fact of reasonable pluralism to be bounded from the start or even reintroduces the unity of reason as a regulative ideal.**[19]** Either way we start to weaken or outright contradict the insight into the fact of reasonable pluralism. Thus, the only way left to cope with that insight seems to be relativistic in the sense that all truths are equal. If we allow for more than one truth regarding the same issue—and nothing else would amount to a pluralism of truths—, then denying the equality of these truths seems to re-introduce a criterion by which we could judge which of these truths is 'more true', thereby rejecting our premise of the plurality of truths. Hence relativism seems unavoidable as soon as we embrace the Rawls conviction wholeheartedly, yet of course we know why that is problematic: On the one hand, the position appears to be unstable, as admitting that more than one truth about the same issue exists leads us to conclude that no truth about the issue exists (if we accept the law of the excluded middle and the law of noncontradiction). On the other hand, it seems that resolving reasonable disagreements will mostly come about by force. Relativism indeed does not appear to be a particularly attractive position.**[20]**

[19] Obviously, the debate whether Rawls (2005) can show the possibility of an overlapping consensus between reasonable doctrines becomes important here. For convincing criticisms see e.g. Wenar 1995, 38–57 and Talisse 2003, 189.

III.3 Non-Sovereign Truth in Democratic Politics

If solving the conflict between the Rawls and the Arendt conviction by giving up either of them threatens to end in relativism or authoritarianism, how are we to think about the relationship between truth and politics? How do we defend truth against relativism without succumbing to authoritarianism and vice versa?

In order to hold on to both conflicting convictions, we must develop a "post-sovereign" (Rouse 1996a), or better yet: non-sovereign, understanding of truth. If sovereignty is understood as a standpoint above and beyond political struggles, as a standpoint from which the sovereign can rule the struggling parties in an impartial manner without being implicated in their conflicts, the argument for a non-sovereign understanding of truth starts with the realization that there is no such epistemic sovereign standpoint.**[21]** For Joseph Rouse (1996b, 1987) such a non-sovereign understanding of truth and knowledge grows out of appreciation of our most advanced social practices in which we actually seek truth, namely scientific practices. If we avoid the mistakes of presupposing that these practices cohere in an orderly fashion, that they have a progressive and linear history and that they can be analysed as 'pure'—untainted by economic, political or other 'worldly' affairs—we will be able to see how scientific practices really unfold as conflicting, material and discursive activities in the world. They partake in political and economic struggles and are influenced by them, without their activities being reducible to these struggles. Scientific practices, Rouse suggests, must be understood as a network held together by conflict and cooperation in which knowledge claims are created, passed on, rejected, reproduced etc. Hence

> knowledge is not a status that attaches to particular statements, skills, or models in isolation or instantaneously. Rather, their epistemic standing depends upon their relations to many other practices and capabilities, and especially upon the ways these relations are reproduced, transformed, and extended. Knowledge is temporally diffused or deferred: to take something as knowledge is to project its being taken up as a resource for various kinds of ongoing activity—whether in further research or in various applications of knowledge (Rouse 1996a, 408).

Knowledge and truth are constituted by "epistemic alignment[s]" (Rouse 1996b, 185f.) of practices; defending or opposing a certain truth therefore means attempting to uphold or to change a specific strategic alignment of scientific practices. Yet there is no standpoint beyond these social practices and thus beyond the conflicts about truths from which we could safely adjudicate them: there is no sovereign epistemic standpoint. Truth is a product of contested scientific practices, and there would be no truth without these conflicting practices. Moreover, scientific practices are social practices. They do not merely involve pure thought but real living actors with their own concerns and interests, funding agencies, library resources, computing power, administrative complexities and so on. What can become a scientific truth depends on all these (and many more) factors *which are not external to truth*.

[20] See the long-term project of Martin Kusch (2017) for an interesting defence of relativism.

[21] Donna Haraway (1988, 582) has called the illusion to be able to occupy such a standpoint the "god trick".

In this way, a non-sovereign account of truth makes us understand that "truth is a thing of this world" (Foucault 1998b, 131). It makes us understand that the compelling force of truth is not an apolitical force and that truth therefore does not offer us a standpoint beyond the political and epistemic struggles from which we could adjudicate their proper limits. Any attempt to do so is itself a political and epistemic move located within these struggles; and, if successful, a quite powerful one. Insofar, the plurality of truths (the Rawls conviction) is affirmed yet augmented by the insight that truths do have a compelling force (the Arendt conviction), so the engagement in the struggles between different truths is important. Defending certain truths then does not mean to stand outside the practices in which the different truths are clashing and to impose limits on these struggles in an authoritarian fashion. It means engaging in and defending those social practices in which we establish and correct our standards of justification, in which we demand, give and scrutinise justifications according to these standards, and in which the different sciences are awarded the resources (in terms of freedom and generosity, of money and time) they need to support these efforts for making and defending truths. A non-sovereign understanding of truth allows (and forces) us to fight for the compelling force of truths both epistemically and politically, for it recognises the interconnectedness of epistemic and political struggles (see Alcoff 1996).

This is not, as some might suspect, just another route to relativism, for acknowledging the materiality and historicity of truth does not relativize truth or entail that all truths are equal. Quite to the contrary, it presupposes that we fight for certain truths and against others because we care for them—and we have our reasons why we care for them. Anyone objecting that these reasons are not the proper ones—because they are 'impure' reasons—reverts back to the illusion of a sovereign understanding of truth. Yet neither the sciences nor any other practice we know of and engage in can produce this epistemic sovereign position.

Of course, the call for these concrete and mundane actions sounds much less impressive than the solemn declaration of a new 'era of post-truth', as will be readily apparent if we briefly return to the three examples with which I started: Trump's inauguration lie, Vote Leave's broken promise and misleading reports about conflicts at universities. How would the 'non-sovereign' understanding of truth interpret these examples, and what response would it suggest, when maintaining both the conviction of a plurality of truths and the conviction of their compelling force? First, it draws attention to the struggles in which the truth-claims are raised. It thus decodes Trump's inauguration lie as a call for submission and a test of loyalty. The obviously false statement and its many siblings work like tiny traps: Those who do not object immediately will have more and more trouble the longer they wait to distance themselves from Trump because they would have to avow that their repeated submissions were shamefully wrong. In order to perform this function, the statements must be false, even from the Trumpists' perspective. Yet defending such false statements manifests a truth about its defenders, it provides proof of their loyalty. The response therefore should be clear: oppose the lie but, much

more importantly, call out its function, support those who do not submit, and create possibilities to abandon Trump for those who have a change of heart.

Second, and in addition, a non-sovereign account of truth does not look at truth-claims in isolation but analyses the 'epistemic alignment' that supports them. So the preposterous promise of the Leave campaign must be located within the political struggle and the epistemic alignments they form. The battery of numbers used by the Remain campaign to scare people was certainly important,**[22]** as was the anti-intellectualism of the Leave campaign (D'Ancona 2017, 16–23; for a defence see Fuller 2017, 9–23). Yet perhaps more decisive was the neoliberal austerity politics and its "deficit fetishism" pursued by almost the entire political class from 1992 to 2015.**[23]** To cut a long story short, Leave's broken promise was preceded by neoliberalism's broken promises and its silencing of concerned or disagreeing voices. Of course, this does not excuse or justify the Leave campaigns NHS-statement, let alone its open racism (see Bhambra 2018). Yet we do well to remember that statements acquire their epistemic significance against a background of other social practices and the standards of justifications upheld or eroded therein. Without years of austerity politics insisting that there are no alternatives, Leave's 'alternative facts' would never have looked so promising. Again, the political and epistemic response to this diagnosis from the perspective of a non-sovereign account of truth should be clear: insist that justifications are given, demand that sincere objections are met by arguments, not by silence or ridicule, and fight those who stifle criticism and dissent.

Third and last, beyond analysing political and epistemic struggles, a non-sovereign account of truth consciously intervenes in them. This is especially important in the third example in which the truth-claims raised are more difficult to judge than in the first two examples. Although we certainly will not find any left hegemony in German universities, moral arguments for silencing others are made, and neither they nor the objections against them are obviously false. Recognising the plurality of truths and their compelling force, those who hold a non-sovereign account of truth do not presume to have a neutral standpoint from which they judge these political and epistemic struggles. They are participants in them as soon as they take a stand on these matters. And so are reports on the battle over 'political correctness'. By using this label, they frame the issue of individual controversies in a common and peculiar fashion. Of course, there is a commonality between these conflicts at the universities, and certainly, there is nothing wrong with criticising excessive moralism. Yet identifying this pattern with the polemic concept of 'political correctness' does more than that. It refuses from the start to acknowledge that the pattern is simply given by what these fights target: power relations known as sexism, racism, classism etc. And it refuses to spell out why the moralism in question is worse than these power relations. Hence the response from the perspective of a non-sovereign account of truth must be twofold: It will fight against framing these struggles according to the preference of the right, and it will fight against anyone again erecting a sovereign standpoint from which to judge them. Neither god nor morality, neither the state nor capital, neither science nor art must lay claim to the compelling force of truth

[22] "[...] both camps relied heavily on fear as a negative economic motivation: the Leavers feared losing control over the fates of 'our' country to 'Brussels' (or of having to compete with foreign migrant labor for jobs), and the Remain camp feared the adverse economic consequences (jobs, trade, investment, exchange rates) of Brexit." (Offe 2017, 18)

[23] For a range of different analyses that converge around the same point see Hopkin/Rosamond 2017; Koch 2017; Streeck 2017; Jessop 2016. For a broader overview of the political and socio-economic background of the Brexit referendum see Outhwaite 2018.

without recognising the plurality of truths.

Defending truth without pretending to be epistemic sovereigns certainly is a lot more troublesome than the authoritarian declaration of absolute limits or the relativistic shrug. Yet it also is the only chance for a democratic—non-sovereign—understanding of the relationship between truth and politics.

References

Alcoff, L. M. (1996) *Real Knowing. New Versions of the Coherence Theory*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press.

Althusser, L. (1971) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation). In: *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. New York; London: Monthly Review Press: 127–186.

Apple Jr., R. W. (1996) 25 Years Later. Lessons From the Pentagon Papers. In: *The New York Times*, 23 June 1996.

Arendt, H. (1998) *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H. (2006) Truth and Politics. In: *Between Past and Future*. New York: Penguin: 223–259.

Bargel, T. (2017) Studentische Orientierungen gegenüber Studium, Beruf und Politik im Wandel. Zeitreihe des Studierendensurveys 1983–2013. *Hefte zur Bildungs- und Hochschulforschung* 91.

Beiner, R. (2008) Rereading 'Truth and Politics'. In: *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 34(1/2): 123–136.

Bhambra, G. K. (2018) Locating Brexit in the Pragmatics of Race, Citizenship and Empire. In: Outhwaite, W. (ed.) *Brexit. Sociological responses*. London: Anthem Press: 91–99.

Boghossian, P. A. (2006) *Fear of Knowledge. Against Relativism and Constructivism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Chait, Jonathan (2015) Not a Very P.C. Thing to Say. How the Language Police Are Perverting Liberalism. *Newspaper*, 26 January 2015.

Cohen, J. (2009) Truth and Public Reason. In: *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37(1): 2–42.

D'Ancona, M. (2017) *Post-Truth. The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back*. London: Ebury Press.

Daston, L.; Galison, P. (2007) *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books.

Fandos, N. (2017) White House Pushes "Alternative Facts". Here Are the Real Ones. In: *New York Times*, 22. Januar 2017.

Feldstein, R. (1997) *Political Correctness. A Response from the Cultural Left*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.

Forst, R. (2013) *Toleration in Conflict. Past and Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Forth, F. (2016) „So müssen sich Sekten anfühlen". In: *Die Zeit*, 06. Juni 2016.

Foucault, M. (1998a) Truth and Juridical Forms. In: Faubion, J. (ed.) *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*. New York: The New Press:

1–89.
Foucault, M. (1998b) Truth and Power. In: Faubion, J. (ed.) *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984*. New York: The New Press: 111–133.
Frankfurt, H. G. (2006) *On truth*. New York (NY): Knopf.
Fuller, S. (2017) The Post-Truth About Philosophy and Rhetoric. In: *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 50(4): 473–482.
Fuller, S. (2018) *Post-Truth. Knowledge as a Power Game*. London: Anthem Press.
Gauchat, G. (2012) Politicization of Science in the Public Sphere. In: *American Sociological Review* 77(2): 167–187.
Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (2016) *GfdS wählt „postfaktisch" zum Wort des Jahres 2016*. http://gfds.de/wort-des-jahres-2016/#postfaktisch (28/05/2017).
Geuss, R. (2014) A Note on Lying. In: *A World without Why*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press: 135–144.
Habermas, J. (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Habermas, J. (1992) The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of Its Voices. In: *Postmetaphysical Thinking. Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: MIT Press: 115–148.
Habermas, J. (2011) Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason. Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism. In: Finlayson, J. G.; Freyenhagen, F. (eds.) *Habermas and Rawls. Disputing the Political*. New York; London: Routledge: 25–45.
Hampe, M. (2016) Katerstimmung bei den pubertären Theoretikern. In: *Die Zeit*, 15. Dezember 2016.
Haraway, D. (1988) Situated Knowledges. The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In: *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575–599.
Hark, S.; Villa, P.-I. (2015) „Eine Frage an und für unsere Zeit". Verstörende Gender Studies und symptomatische Missverständnisse. In: Hark, S.; Villa, P.-I. (eds.) *Anti-Genderismus. Sexualität und Geschlecht als Schauplätze aktueller politischer Auseinandersetzungen*. Bielefeld: transcript: 15–39.
Hendricks, V. F.; Vestergaard, M. (2017) Verlorene Wirklichkeit? An der Schwelle zur postfaktischen Demokratie. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 67(13): 4–10.
Hopkin, J.; Rosamond, B. (2017) Post-truth Politics, Bullshit and Bad Ideas: 'Deficit Fetishism' in the UK. In: *New Political Economy*: 1–15.
Jessop, B. (2016) The Organic Crisis of the British State. Putting Brexit in its Place. In: *Globalizations* 14(1): 133–141.
Keyes, R. (2004) *The Post-Truth Era. Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
Koch, I. (2017) What's in a Vote? Brexit beyond Culture Wars. In: *American ethnologist* 44(2): 225–230.
Kuhn, T. S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Kusch, M. (2017) Epistemic Relativism, Scepticism, Pluralism. In: *Synthese* 194(12): 4687–4703.
Latour, B.; Woolgar, S. (1986) *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1988) *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Müller, J.-W. (2017) Fake Volk? Über Wahrheit und Lüge im populistischen Sinne. In: *Kursbuch* 189: 113–128.

Multrus, F.; Majer, S.; Bargel, T.; Schmidt, M. (2017) *Studiensituation und studentische Orientierungen. 13. Studierendensurvey an Universitäten und Fachhochschulen*. Berlin: Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF).

Nietzsche, F. (1999) On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense. In: *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 139–153.

Novotny, R.; Pham, K.; Schmidt, M. (2016) Die neuen Radikalen. In: *Die Zeit*, 14. Juli 2016.

Offe, C. (2017) Referendum vs. Institutionalized Deliberation. What Democratic Theorists Can Learn from the 2016 Brexit Decision. In: *Daedalus* 146(3): 14–27.

Outhwaite, W. (2018) (ed.) *Brexit. Sociological Responses*. London: Anthem Press.

Oxford Dictionaries (2016) *Word of the Year 2016 is...* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016 (20/07/2017).

Peters, M. A.; Rider, S.; Hyvönen, M.; Besley, T. (2018) (eds.) *Post-Truth, Fake News. Viral Modernity & Higher Education*. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

Rawls, J. (2005) *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Raz, J. (1990) Facing Diversity. The Case of Epistemic Abstinence. In: *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19(1): 3–46.

Redecker, E. v. (2016) Anti-Genderismus and Right-Wing Hegemony. In: *Radical Philosophy* 198: 2–7.

Rorty, R. (1997) *Truth, Politics and "Post-Modernism"*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Rouse, J. (1987) *Knowledge and Power. Toward a Political Philosophy of Science*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Rouse, J. (1996a) Beyond Epistemic Sovereignty. In: Galison, P.; Stump, D. (eds.) *The Disunity of Science. Boundaries, Contexts, Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 398–416.

Rouse, J. (1996b) *Engaging Science. How To Understand Its Practices Philosophically*. Ithaka: Cornell University Press.

Shapin, S. (2008) Science and the Modern World. In: Hackett, E. J.; Amsterdamska, O.; Lynch, M.; Wajcman, J. (eds.) *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Cambridge (MA); London: MIT Press: 443–448.

Streeck, W. (2017) The Return of the Repressed as the Beginning of the End of Neoliberal Capitalism. In: Geiselberger, H. (ed.) *The Great Repression*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 157–172.

Talisse, R. B. (2003) Rawls on Pluralism and Stability. In: *Critical Review* 15(1/2): 173–194.

Tesich, S. (1992) A Government of Lies. In: *Nation* 254(1): 12–14.

Travis, A. (2016) The Leave Campaign Made Three Key Promises – Are They Keeping Them? In: *The Guardian*, 27. Juni 2016.

Vogelmann, F. (forthcoming) Unwissenschaftlich, unphilosophisch, unkritisch? Zeitdiagnostisches Wissen im Spiegel der Kritik. In: Alkemeyer, T.; Buschmann, N.; Etzemüller, T. (eds.) *Gegenwartsdiagnosen. Kulturelle Formen gesellschaftlicher Selbstproblematisierung in der Moderne*.

Weigel, M. (2016) Political Correctness: How the Right Invented a Phantom Enemy. In: *The Guardian*, 30. November 2016.

Wenar, L. (1995) Political Liberalism: An Internal Critique. In: *Ethics* 106(1): 32–62.

Williams, B. (2002) *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Williams, C. (2017) Has Trump Stolen Philosophy's Critical Tools? In: *The New York Times*, 17. April 2017.

Zerilli, L. M.-G. (2005) *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.