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A TRANSVALUATION OF TRUTH Towards a Double-edged Concept

Cultural history knows of inventions, such as the wheel, the hand axe, the printing press, the steam machine, the light bulb or the personal computer, which have changed its course to the point that they may be considered in terms of discoveries of the underlying principles of the world in which we live. Within our conceptual universe, a comparable status belongs to truth, much as it does to individual reason. The concept of truth originated as a useful tool which helped humans—regardless of the language they spoke—in grasping and naming the difference between what things are and what they are not. Even the incompleteness inherent in any and every cognitive act a human being makes—the fact that we are organically incapable of an absolute understanding of reality and that what we know about it is merely results of our (better or worse, but inevitably contingent) insights into its nature—has not made humanity abandon the notion of truth. On the contrary, one might claim that it was precisely the need for a possibly adequate vision of reality—the need to know not only what things are, but also how and why they are—that triggered the development of philosophy conceived as a conceptual reconstruction of reality and of the place the human being occupies in it.

Aware of the structural intricacies of such a venture and of the various meanings ascribed to truth in the theoretical discourse in which approaches as radically different as realism, idealism, and surrealism, or objectivism, subjectivism, and solipsism, have crystallized, philosophers come up with various truth theories, pointing out to the not unambiguous nature of the concept itself, as well as to the major implications of this ambiguity.¹ Yet, throughout the bulk of ancient as well as modern history, the public square remained—in this respect—indifferent to philosophical speculations, and unanimously, if not unwittingly, endorsed the so-called correspondence theory of truth, in which truth is the value of the conformity of a statement to a fact, or to a state of affairs. Conceived in this sense, truth provided the basis for a community, or a society, to come into existence and to grow: on the one hand, truthfulness made it possible for individuals to enter and build genuine relations; on the other, the prevailing belief was that, at least in principle, truth about things can be established, and if we fail to succeed in this task,

¹ For a comprehensive treatment of truth theories, see, e.g., Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (n.p.: MIT Press, 1995). The complexity of the issue is well-reflected in the lengthy entry on “Truth” composed by Michael Glanzberg in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. See *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Truth” (by Michael Glanzberg), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Fall 2023 Edition), Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/truth/>.

the responsible factor is the contingency of human cognition as such. However, common sense suggested that better cognitive tools might help us overcome our inaptitude and get us closer to truth. In a natural way, truth in the sense of determining what the various aspects of things are was put at the core of public debate, which took diverse shapes, all of which nevertheless presupposed the freedom of expression as the fundamental condition for the genuineness and rationality of the discourse, the principle epitomized by words attributed to the French thinker Voltaire: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”²

Among the other formal characteristics of the pursuit of truth in public life was the assumption that debate, also (in particular in modernity) referred to as public dialogue, significant as it is, is not a goal in itself, but merely a means for establishing the truth about things.³ Thus, any strictures put on reason or logic⁴ would render the debate futile and, as such, pointless. While medieval disputes aimed at a metaphysical grasp and a rational explanation of the theses put forward by the theology of the time, the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment brought fervent exchanges regarding our temporal reality and the place of the human being in it. Regardless of the nature of the views which were subject to debate—of whether they expressed or undermined the religious outlook upon the world—the commitment to truth on the part of those debating brought to mind the Biblical adage “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). Thus established, the formal framework for public debates remained valid until the postmodern times and—adopted in a broadly conceived social sphere, including political discourse and judiciary proceedings—prevailed not only in the domain of philosophy.

Interestingly, the belief in the special significance of the values of truth and truthfulness survived in Western culture even its most rocky times: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wars, as well as the political and social revolutions, insurrections, and uprisings

² Quoted in S. G. T a l l e n t y r e, *The Friends of Voltaire* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1906), 199.

³ See Andrzej S z o s t e k, “Prawda i dialog: Między relatywizmem a pluralizmem” (Truth and dialogue: Between relativism and pluralism), *Ethos* 10, no. 1 (37) (1997): 51–63. Szostek’s article is unique in this respect in that it comprises a phenomenology of the relationship between, on the one hand, truth and social solidarity and, on the other, oppression and violence characteristic of the communist system. Against this background, the author delves into the meaning of dialogue and public debate.

⁴ See Brand B l a n s h a r d, “Current Strictures on Reason,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 18 (1944): 345–68. In his article, written at the time when the war was drawing to its close in Europe, Blanshard wonders how it was possible that the last years brought “acts that seemed to belong, not to civilization and the twentieth century, but to the days of a Neanderthal past, before law or justice or pity had begun to lift up its voice against the fist and the club” (ibidem, 345) and confesses: “What has dismayed us is not merely the cruelty and the brutality, incredible as these have been; it is also the readiness with which the great numbers of kindly and sensible people have embraced absurdities that were scarcely sane” (ibidem). He goes on to trace the roots of the political threat in the tendency to ignore logic and the rules of reasoning: “No one ever tried to break logic but logic broke him.... To say that there is nothing right or wrong but thinking makes it so is to say that there is nothing for thinking to discover; and to say that is to deny all point in trying to be reasonable” (ibidem, 347). Any strictures put on the formal conditions of reasoning, he holds, “will black out reasonableness far more effectually than any withholding of civil right” (ibidem, 346).

of the period, were all started in the name of some truth which—in the deepest conviction of those committed to each particular cause—was unrightfully denied and which they considered as worth the sacrifice of life. Even the twentieth-century totalitarianisms made every effort to account for their oppressiveness and cruelty by invoking some apparently “higher” truth they attempted to put in effect. For that matter, the leaders of the communist regime claimed that the system of which they were the founding fathers was scientific, as it was based on the study of history, and, as such, a necessary outcome of the historical development.⁵ They held, with one voice, that science was the highest and ultimate instance determining whether a claim is true or false, regardless of its practical consequences. Also, theoretical attempts at changing the status or the nature of the concept of truth would not bring a lasting effect, except perhaps for some of them being readily adopted by those eager to back up their totalitarian worldview with a random yet convenient idea. Such was, for instance, the case with Friedrich Nietzsche’s startling insight: “Let us not underestimate this: that *we ourselves*, we free spirits, are already a ‘transvaluation of all values,’ a declaration of war and victory *incarnate* against all the old concepts of ‘true’ and ‘untrue,’”⁶ the idea he further developed in his *Will to Power*.⁷ To this day, debates are continued regarding the extent of the rootedness of the Nazi ideology in the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche.⁸

However, much as it was unintended by their founders, the twentieth-century totalitarian systems played a role in bringing out the significance of truth not only in public debate, but also, and above all, in the life of a human person. It was somewhat ironic that by creating the phenomenon of the dissident⁹—one who refuses loyalty to the regime even at the risk of being put in prison or in a psychiatric ward, or being murdered in most humiliating a way—they succeeded in demonstrating the existence of a bond between freedom and truth in a human conscience: the bond which ultimately generates the power in an individual to reject untruth regardless of the consequences.¹⁰ The actions

⁵ See, e.g., Karl M a r x, Friedrich E n g e l s, and Vladimir Il’ich L e n i n, *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Scientific Socialism* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1974).

⁶ Friedrich N i e t z s c h e, “The Antichrist,” § 13, in Friedrich Nietzsche, “*The Antichrist*.” “*Fragments from a Shattering Mind*,” trans. Domino Falls (London: Creation Books, 2002), 27.

⁷ See Friedrich N i e t z s c h e, *The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of All Values*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, ed. Oscar Levy (n.p.: Digireads.com Publishing, 2010).

⁸ See, e.g., Stephen R. C. H i c k s, *Nietzsche and the Nazis* (n.p.: Ockham Razor, 2010).

⁹ “When Jan Patočka wrote about Charter 77, he used the term ‘solidarity of the shaken.’ He was thinking of those who dared to resist impersonal power and confront it with the only thing at their disposal, their own humanity.” Václav H a v e l, “Politics and Conscience,” trans. Erazim Kohák and Roger Scruton, in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990), 157. See also Václav H a v e l, “The Power of the Powerless,” trans. Paul Wilson, in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, 36–122.

¹⁰ The issue of the dependence of the freedom of a human person on the truth grasped by her in a cognitive act was scrutinized by the Polish ethicist Tadeusz Styczeń, who argued for the concept of freedom in truth (*wolność w prawdzie*) and held that any cognitive act a person makes may potentially trigger a moral challenge, once the person is demanded to question her own recognition of the facts or actually does question them on opportunistic grounds. See Tadeusz S t y c z e ń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, ed. Kazimierz Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL and Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, 2013). In the 1970s and 1980s, Styczeń was in close contact with the Polish dissident circles and witnessed the drama of those who, “broken” by the threats from the secret police, ultimately

of those who showed utmost fidelity to the truth they had recognized, be it Sophie Scholl, Maksymilian Kolbe, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Witold Pilecki, or any anonymous person who paid the highest price for their integrity, demonstrated that truth is by no means undemanding or easy to ignore or disregard: that is has the nature of a challenge and that the only proper grounds on which to consider one's response to such a challenge are those provided by moral philosophy. "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction ... and the distinction between true and false ... no longer exist,"¹¹ wrote Hannah Arendt. The sacrifice of those who opposed the totalitarian systems in which they lived is a lasting proof that human beings are by no means natural subjects of totalitarianism and that they are not organically blind to the distinction between true and false.

Strangely enough, it was the postwar time that brought an erosion of the belief in the power and weight of truth-in-itself. While the testimony of the prisoners of conscience in the countries behind the Iron Curtain was a pillar of strength and hope for those confined to a life there, ideas not antagonistic to the communist utopia began pervading the public debate in Western countries, calling for a fundamental change in its framework. Truth was no longer to be debated with respect for the principle of free speech and assembly. "Universal toleration becomes questionable—claimed Herbert Marcuse—when its rationale no longer prevails, when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy."¹² "The telos of tolerance is truth,"¹³ he added, yet the truth in question was no longer to be discovered and individually recognized but implemented by those who were already its holders, or maybe even handlers. While one can hardly disagree with Marcuse's opinion that "the democratic argument implies a necessary condition, namely, that the people must be capable of deliberating and choosing on the basis of knowledge, that they must have access to authentic information, and that, on this basis, their evaluation must be the result of autonomous thought,"¹⁴ the point he makes is no longer so plain when he states that "tolerance expressed in ... impartiality serves to minimize or even absolve prevailing intolerance and suppression."¹⁵ Democracy, as it is, is repressive and totalitarian, according to Marcuse, and it needs to be steered by those who are in the know. As such, it calls for repressive tolerance. "Liberating tolerance—Marcuse insisted—would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda,

signed a declaration of loyalty to the regime. In the wake of such an act, many of them would develop mental disorders. Styczeń argued that their predicament reflected how deeply a human conscience, conceived as the faculty in which moral judgments are made, is immersed in the truth about things which has been recognized. Moreover, he interpreted the decision to stand for the recognized truth in terms of one's respect for one's own dignity as a person. See *ibidem*.

¹¹ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt & Brace Company, 1976), 474.

¹² Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 90.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 90.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 95.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 98.

of deed as well as of word.¹⁶ Absolutely certain of the latter point, he had no qualms about making a grandiose claim: “If democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War.”¹⁷ Much as it would be pointless to argue against Marcuse’s past conditional statement, one might trace a certain analogy between the imperative of truth-forging he puts forward and Nietzsche’s confidence that “in the long run it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new ‘things.’”¹⁸ In any case, Marcuse’s critical theory of society did not remain unechoed,¹⁹ and the next decades brought numerous instances of unfeigned willingness to work on the only shape of truth deserving admittance to public debate. Among the most articulate and notable voices in the matter was that of Stanley Fish, who did not hesitate to openly argue against the concept of free speech as such and elucidated his position by saying: “Values, rather than being opposed to political commitment, grow only in its soil and wither in the arid atmosphere of bodiless abstraction, whether that abstraction is named reason, merit, fairness, or procedural neutrality. The upshot of this is not ... that anything goes or that words have no meaning, but that the line between what is permitted and what is to be spurned is always being drawn and redrawn and that the structures of constraint are simultaneously always in place and always subject to revision if the times call for it and resources are up to it.”²⁰

Perhaps not surprisingly, and in strict conformity with the rule proposed by Marcuse, the line in question has been drawn in the recent decades by political correctness, which—as Doris Lessing observes—stepped into the vacuum left by the collapse of the “dogmas of Socialist Realism.”²¹ As such, rather than an unexpected bedfellow of repressive tolerance, political correctness transpired as its natural ally and has been used ever since as a system of safeguards helping to separate the wheat from the chaff within the domain of what is allowed to be recognized as true in public debate. Such is the case even though, as Michael Knowles observed, “to call something ‘politically correct’ is to acknowledge that it is not correct, at least by the standard of reality.”²² Within the new framework,

¹⁶ Ibidem, 109. Disturbing as it is, the concerns of the World Economic Forum about false information show distinctive similarity to those of Marcuse. See World Economic Forum, *The Global Risk Report 2024*, 1.3 “False Information,” World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/>, 18–21.

¹⁷ Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 109.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, ed. Bernard Williams, (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo; Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

¹⁹ Indeed, it recurs to this day, lately in the shape of critical feminist theory and critical race theory. See, e.g., *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*, ed. Elizabeth A. Meese and Alice A. Parker (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989); *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1996).

²⁰ Stanley Fish, *There Is No Such Thing as Free Speech and It’s a Good Thing, Too* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), viii.

²¹ Doris Lessing, *Time Bites: Views and Reviews* (n.p.: HarperCollins e-books, n.d.), chap. 8, “Censorship,” EPUB.

²² Michael Knowles, *Speechless: Controlling Words, Controlling Minds* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2021), xv.

society, with its now “sanitized”²³ language, is seen in terms of a set “collection of values,”²⁴ which inevitably suggests the idea of social engineering: destroying the traditional standards of speech in order to ultimately establish new standards of thought²⁵ and, in a longer run, bring about a collapse (or—in Nietzschean terms—a transvaluation) of the meaning of words and concepts, including that of truth. There is an analogy between the current condition of the politically correct society and that of the one anticipated by George Orwell in *1984*, argues Knowles: “‘Don’t you see the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow down the range of thought?’ asks a member of the totalitarian party. ‘The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.’”²⁶ Thus the proponents of modern Newspeak initially prompt that we should say, for instance, a “holiday tree” rather than a “Christmas tree,” an “undocumented uncitizen” rather than an “illegal immigrant,”²⁷ and “justice-involved youths” rather than “juvenile delinquents.” Ultimately, though, we end up with ideas such as the one stating that “a man who believes he is a woman must at all times be called a ‘trans woman,’ or better still just a ‘woman,’ because ... a man can become a woman simply by saying so.”²⁸ While—in particular when seen from the Polish perspective²⁹—the demands made in the name of political correctness might seem humorous, absurd or even grotesque, there’s an undeniable totalitarian temptation in them. Indeed, political correctness calls for an expansion of state interventionism in almost all spheres of life,³⁰ which is accompanied by the legislature seeking to control more and more areas of the lives of individuals.³¹ What we are dealing with is linguistic and eventually political expropriation, not infrequently done in the name of the protection

²³ Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (Chichester, UK: Wiley–Blackwell, 2010), viii.

²⁴ Leszek Kolakowski, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” in Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 164.

²⁵ See Knowles, *Speechless*, xvi.

²⁶ Quoted in Knowles, *Speechless*, 3.

²⁷ See Jonathan Kwan, “Words Matter: Illegal Immigrant, Undocumented Immigrant, or Unauthorized Immigrant,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/more-focus-areas/immigration-ethics/immigration-ethics-resources/immigration-ethics-blog/words-matter-illegal-immigrant-undocumented-immigrant-or-unauthorized-immigrant/>. See also Knowles, *Speechless*, 1.

²⁸ Knowles, *Speechless*, 3.

²⁹ The politically correct sanitization of the Polish language has so far involved adopting the so-called feminatives, and only occasionally specific pronouns. Feminatives are created by giving distinctly feminine forms to nouns (referring to humans) which so far have had grammatically masculine forms. The effects of the effort are not infrequently hilarious, as, e.g., in the case of words such as *ministra* (female minister), *komisarka* (female commissioner) or *mecenaska* (female barrister), resembling names of objects. The effort is also in a way futile, since in Polish (unlike in English) verbs are conjugated in all tenses and are given endings denoting the actual feminine, masculine or neuter gender of the grammatical subject of the sentence.

³⁰ See, e.g., Anthony Milton, “How the News Disappeared in Canada,” *New Lines Magazine*, November 20, 2023, New Lines Magazine, <https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/how-the-news-disappeared-in-canada/>; “Canada and Trudeau Go Full Orwell behind Anti-speech Bill: Fear the Maple Curtain,” editorial, *New York Post*, May 18, 2024, New York Post, <https://nypost.com/2024/05/18/opinion/canadas-moving-to-end-free-speech-with-new-bill/>.

³¹ See Kolakowski, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 166.

of the weak, the discriminated, the underprivileged, and the underrepresented.³² “If we take the principle of an equal start in life seriously and wish to remain faithful to it to the end, we have one foot on the road to totalitarian slavery. Direct experience, however, together with an understanding of human passions, teaches us that, once introduced, the totalitarian order does not bring with it equality of opportunity in life, let alone equality in material things. The opposite is the case. Two things are especially highly valued and important in modern society: free access to sources of information and participation in power. Under totalitarian systems, both are denied to the overwhelming majority of the population and are strictly rationed out to small privileged minorities,”³³ wrote Leszek Kolakowski already in 1979, adding that moral education needs more than an instinct: “It is, to a certain extent contrary to nature, otherwise it would hardly be necessary; nor can empirical knowledge create a foundation for it. To educate people to be tolerant and unselfish, to overcome tribal customs in favor of universal moral standards, cannot be done without the strong base of a traditional authority, which up till now has derived from the great universal religions. Very often, though not always, the net result of education freed of authority, tradition, and dogma is moral nihilism.... The liberal slogan that exhorts us to strive for complete liberation from tradition and the authority of history is counterproductive: it leads not to open society, but at best to one in which conformity enforced by fear keeps strict control over the struggle of private interests.”³⁴ One might say that, in his essay on open society, Kolakowski anticipated the results of the rule of political correctness, which was merely a Marxist-Leninist category at the time. “A similar pattern is to be observed everywhere: the institutions which make the survival of the pluralist society possible—the legal system, the school, the family, the university, the market—are attacked by totalitarian forces using liberal slogans, in the name of freedom, in other words. Freedom appears as the absence of law and responsibility, in the anarchistic sense.... These changes may be roughly described as society’s *retreat into infantilism*,” he further argued.³⁵

Interestingly, another dangerous aspect of this kind of infantilism, which silently introduces a totalitarian rule, was described by Günther Anders, who focused on how easy it has become to control individuals in a welfare-state society: “The stage-managing of masses that Hitler specialized in has become superfluous: if one wants to transform a man into a nobody ... it is no longer necessary to drown him in a mass, or bury him in a cement construction mass-produced by masses. No depersonalization, no loss of the ability to be a man is more effective than the one that apparently preserves the freedom of the personality and the rights of the individual. If the procedure of *conditioning* takes

³² In America, the rules of such protection have been included in DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies adopted by most companies.

³³ K o l a k o w s k i, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 170.

³⁴ Ibidem, 171–72. The results of the type of education Kolakowski criticizes, which today is focused on teaching correct virtue-signaling and shapes the sense of belonging rather than transmits knowledge, could be recently seen in young people, mostly students in various countries, chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” during anti-Israeli demonstrations. Yet, when asked by reporters which river or which sea they had in mind, they were unable to answer. See, e.g., “‘From the river to the sea’—Students Chant, but Don’t Know Which River or Sea,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 7, 2023, The Jerusalem Post, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-776987>.

³⁵ K o l a k o w s k i, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 172–73.

place in a special way in the home of every person—in the individual home, in isolation, in millions of isolated units—the result will be perfect.”³⁶

Today, when political correctness, also known as the ideology of wokism, has evolved to the point where its focus is no longer linguistic, but theoretical and simultaneously action-oriented, the classical shape of public debate consisting in the pursuit of truth has significantly waned. The ideas which do not fit in the binding narrative³⁷ Marcuse was so willing to introduce are arbitrarily dismissed, not infrequently as conspiracy theories. The phrase “conspiracy theory” itself has become a stigmatizing catch-all term: in this sense, conspiracy theorists are all those who—for various reasons—disregard the mainstream account of issues such as religion, identity politics, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate alarmism, the so-called green new deal, mass migration, and the roots and the accomplishments of the Western tradition. Among those excluded from mainstream public debate are authors as significant as Douglas Murray,³⁸ Alex Epstein,³⁹ Bjorn Lomborg,⁴⁰ and Steven E. Koonin.⁴¹ While their books are widely available, they do not easily get a mention from mainstream or social media. In such cases, political correctness finds an ally in algorithmic recommendations in digital spaces which are supposed to predict, but actually prompt us what we should think, seek, and desire.⁴²

Another reliable ally of political correctness is activism, defined as “vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change”⁴³ and popular among young, not necessarily well-educated people and celebrities. The impact of activism on social life was sadly summed up by Thomas Sowell: “Activism is a way for useless people to feel

³⁶ Günther Anders, *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. 1, part 2, section 2, Libcom.org, <https://libcom.org/book/export/html/51647>.

³⁷ One must not fail to notice the tendency, ubiquitous in modern discourse, to replace the notion of truth precisely with that of a narrative.

³⁸ See, e.g., Douglas Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sidney: Bloomsbury, 2018); Douglas Murray, *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019); Douglas Murray, *The War on the West* (London: HarperCollins, 2022).

³⁹ See Alex Epstein, *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2014); Alex Epstein, *Fossil Future: Why Global Human Flourishing Requires More Oil, Coal, and Natural Gas—Not Less* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2022).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Bjorn Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist’s Guide to Global Warming* (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, 2007); Bjorn Lomborg, *False Alarm: How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

⁴¹ See Steven E. Koonin, *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn’t, and Why It Matters* (Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2021).

⁴² On the impact of the digital media and algorithmic predictions of human decisions on modern culture, see Kyle Chayka, *Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2024).

⁴³ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “activism,” https://www.oed.com/dictionary/activism_n?tab=meaning_and_use#19584364.

important, even if the consequences of their activism are counterproductive for those they claim to be helping and damaging to the fabric of society as a whole.”⁴⁴

Just as the twentieth-century totalitarianisms created the phenomenon of the dissident, modern day offensive of political correctness and “correct” thinking has resulted, inadvertently, in the rise of the outsider: the one who does not want, or need, to see the world “through the lens of ‘social justice,’ ‘identity group politics’ and ‘intersectionalism.’”⁴⁵ A transvaluation of truth has been accomplished and the somewhat forgotten concept of post-truth has been hatched anew to explain why there should be outsiders in our world who have diverted from mainstream thinking and obstinately stick to what they deem true. The question remains, though, whose views are those shaped by appeals to emotion and personal belief. The ones of the outsiders? Or rather those of the campaigners for “correctness”?

A travesty of the infamous line of Pilate comes to mind: “What is post-truth?”

⁴⁴ Thomas S o w e l l, “Random Thoughts,” in Thomas Sowell, *Ever Wonder Why* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2006), 447.

⁴⁵ M u r r a y, *The Madness of Crowds*, Introduction, EPUB.