

## **The Crooked Structure of the Post-Truth *non Sequitur*: A Path Toward Epistemological Depth**

**Rob Blom<sup>1</sup>, Darren Stanley<sup>2</sup>, Chunlei Lu<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> *Director, wiseOak Akadēmeía, Canada*

<sup>2</sup> *Faculty of Education, University of Windsor, Canada*

<sup>3</sup> *Department of Educational Studies, Brock University, Canada*

In our shared academic climate, accentuated by moving beyond Modern (and post-Modern) perspectives, we (as Authors) have come across the idea that we (as people) are living now in a “post-truth world.” While the term gained cultural currency as a descriptor of specific political phenomena, its uncritical adoption in scholarly discourse merits philosophical examination. Our core discussion revolves around unravelling, i.e. “making sense of” truth paradigms and “teasing apart” the relationship epistemological shallowness has to post-truth. We argue that post-truth represents a quintessential *non sequitur*—a conclusion that cannot be derived from its premises—that incorrectly leaps from legitimate critiques of truth’s limitations to the abandonment of both Taylorian articulation and the Malpasian call to retrieve truth lost in Modernity. By unravelling the fallacious nature of post-truth through three argumentative threads: (i) etymological considerations, (ii) a historical contextualisation across Modern and post-Modern thought that enables the crookedness of truth into its distortion of post-truth, and (iii) an envelopmental approach to truth that overcomes bivalence and epistemological flattening, we demonstrate how spiritual knowing and epistemological depth offer a path between rigid rationalism and nonrigid sentimentality. We conclude that by extending the epistemological topography to include hierarchical and heterarchical dimensions, a more robust conception of truth—one that preserves spiritual knowing—can be recovered amidst the post-truth condition.

In unserem geteilten akademischen Klima, das sich zunehmend über moderne (und postmoderne) Perspektiven hinausbewegt, begegnen wir (als Autor:innen) vermehrt der Vorstellung, dass wir (als Menschen) in einer „postfaktischen Welt“ leben. Während der Begriff kulturelle Bedeutung als Beschreibung spezifischer politischer Phänomene gewonnen hat, verdient seine unkritische Übernahme in den wissenschaftlichen Diskurs eine philosophische Überprüfung. Im Zentrum unserer Argumentation steht das „Entwirren“, d. h. das „Sinnstiften“ von Wahrheitsparadigmen sowie das „Auseinanderfalten“ des Zusammenhangs zwischen epistemologischer Oberflächlichkeit und dem Postfaktischen. Wir vertreten die These, dass das Postfaktische ein paradigmatischer Fehlschluss (*non sequitur*) ist – ein Schluss, der sich nicht aus seinen Prämissen ableiten lässt – und dass es fälschlich von legitimen Kritiken an den Grenzen von Wahrheit auf deren völlige Aufgabe schließt, wobei sowohl die Taylor’sche Artikulation als auch der Malpasianische Ruf nach einer Wiedergewinnung der in der Moderne verlorenen Wahrheit missachtet werden. Durch das Entwirren der fehlschlussartigen Natur des Postfaktischen entlang dreier Argumentationslinien – (i) etymologischer Überlegungen, (ii) einer historischen Kontextualisierung der Wahrheit im Spannungsfeld zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne, welche die „Krümmung“ von Wahrheit zu ihrer Verzerrung im Postfaktischen nachvollzieht, und (iii) eines umhüllender (envelopmental) Ansatzes zur Wahrheit, der Bivalenz und epistemologisches Abflachen überwindet – zeigen wir auf, wie geistiges Erkennen und epistemologische Tiefe einen Weg zwischen rigidem Rationalismus und nicht-rigidem Sentimentalismus eröffnen. Wir schließen daraus, dass durch eine Erweiterung der epistemologischen Topografie – um hierarchische wie heterarchische Dimensionen – ein tragfähigeres Wahrheitsverständnis im Sinne geistigen Erkennens wiedergewonnen und bewahrt werden kann, angesichts des Postfaktischen.

## Introduction

What is truth if not a beginning and end? And what is the human condition that permits the apprehension of truth's nature between birth and death—and rebirth (Steiner, 1994, 1997)? We may further ponder the finite nature of truth paradigms as a mind-soul-body trifecta as regards the human construction through languaging, the Platonic apprehension by beholding (*das anschauende Erkennen*),<sup>1</sup> and the complexification of truth embodied and enacted ecologically through time—(i.e., truth and truth-seeker in the post-humanist tradition); yet these deliberations all differ in degree *and* kind as regards the notion of post-truth conceived and contrived within scholarship. Whilst most philosophical discourse may simply *over-look* the term as a form of popularisation (*i.e.*, a fad), we cannot say the same for scholarship within *educational* philosophy. The present paper responds to a tendency pervasive within educational philosophy specifically—the uncritical acceptance of post-truth as either a legitimate worldview or a coherent era—a tendency evident across otherwise rigorous scholarship (Fuller, 2017; de Saint-Laurent et al., 2017; Peters, 2017; Nally, 2021; Ambrosio, 2022). Insofar as our ambition is to speak to the complexity of truth paradigms—as a structured envelopmental framework through which truth is apprehended, articulated, and enacted—we cannot proceed to do so without first detailing how post-truth—and its various conceptualisations—is subsumed within the truth tradition.<sup>2</sup> Thus, our primary aim in our paper is to gesture toward the crookedness of a post-truth (or post-factual<sup>3</sup>) culture ... not as a *world-view* (*Weltanschauung*), but as a particularised *point-of-view* (*Weltansicht*).

Our philosophical *out-look*<sup>4</sup> resonates with two significant critiques of post-truth discourse. Clark's (2019) advocacy for non-post-truths represents a decisive injunction against postmodern relativism in educational theory and Baggini's (2017) assertion<sup>5</sup> that 'with honest intent and clarity of mind, we can guard against such misuse [of distorting truth] and see that the claim we live in a post-truth world is the most pernicious untruth of them all' (p. 10). As Clark (2019) noted, 'postmodernism might have come down hard on "truth" and "objectivity" but its playfulness and relativism was intellectually principled even if wrong' (p. 1350). The observation by Clark permits our own scholarly playfulness<sup>6</sup> regarding the concept of outlook. The archaic outlook<sup>7</sup>—or modern look-out—emerges from a "*vigilant* watch, act, or practice of looking out" that directly relates to Baginini's (2017) essential epistemic values of modesty, skepticism, and mindfulness. The Latin root *vigilia* encompasses both (1) a *watchfulness* (attentiveness) and *wakefulness* (mindfulness), *connected to vigere* (to thrive), and (2) *vigor* (invigoration toward truth-seeking). The etymological foundation illuminates the stances of both Clark and Baggini, who each plead vigilance against post-truths. Clark (2019) called for vigilance toward undisclosed non-post-truths to re-assert—and perhaps re-imagine—the role of expertise. Baggini (2017) advocated vigilance through an *attitude* of sincerity and accuracy—the two 'key virtues of truth' (p. 106) as per the late Bernard Williams. Our position synthesises these approaches into a stance toward non-post-truths: one conceptualised within the complexity of our times, directed against the arbitrariness resulting from a flattening of truth, and oriented through vigilance toward truth-as-envelopment.

We commence by addressing linguistic confusion surrounding the prefixed word 'post-truth' through etymological and evaluative considerations. We invoke the word "crook" to convey, metaphorically and

1. *cf.* Heidegger (1967) on page 246.

2. The present paper focuses primarily on the cultural dimensions of post-truth—its etymological crookedness, its misrepresentation of the truth tradition, and its epistemological shallowness. The philosophical dimensions, in particular as regards structure, transcendence and transformation within truth paradigms, are developed in the published companion paper.

3. The Cambridge Dictionary interestingly admits a rare and dubious redundancy, defining these two compound words the exact same; the only other instance of redundancy, to the Author's recollection, is "flammable" and "inflammable."

4. The word *outlook* contains both present and future connotations; the "view from a particular place" and an "expectation for the future" are equally an outlook respectively.

5. For Baggini (2017), relativism was a *bête-noir* in popular culture but did offer philosophical inquiry into social constructs (*e.g.*, narratives and power). However, he did contemplate a 'post-truth world' (p. 106) as both a pernicious untruth and a worldview where epistemic values falter and its correlates (*e.g.*, cynicism, overconfidence, close-mindedness, *et cetera*) flourish. It would seem to us that post-truth is better understood as a lackadaisical attitude toward epistemic values to avoid the semantic contradiction.

6. For Heidegger (1982), etymology poses 'a playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science' (p. 29).

7. Retrieved from the Online Etymology Dictionary at [https://www.etymonline.com/word/outlook#etymonline\\_v\\_9994](https://www.etymonline.com/word/outlook#etymonline_v_9994).

etymologically, the distortion of truth with respect to the academic insistence that we are somehow in a post-truth era. The term “crook” warrants examination for three reasons: (1) unlike the modern criminal—the *crook* originally meant a “dishonest trick” through the wiles of the Devil in Middle English; (2) truth or post-truth, in the post-Modern era, having been *bent* to preserve its paradigmatic structures, obscures a restorative notion of truth lost in Modernity; and (3) the shared root with *crutch* (Proto-Germanic \**kruk-*) serves as a semiotic support for conceptual instability. Later, through personal narratives, we illustrate how a truth paradigm of *epistemological depth* can overcome the fallacious and shallow nature of a post-truth cultural concept. Finally, we conclude with a call to Philosophers of Education to unravel the complex structure of epistemological depth away from the shallowness of the post-truth *non sequitur*. By extending the epistemological and ontological topography, we echo Neufeld’s (2012) *saving truths* to reinstitute, structurally, a spiritual knowing that recovers and preserves truth in contemporary philosophical discourse.

## Etymology, Evaluation, and the Meaning-Making of Words

Etymological analysis serves as a foundational philosophical method rather than linguistic curiosity alone. Heidegger’s (2023) phenomenological uncovering of concealed meanings through etymological inquiry, Gadamer’s (2004) hermeneutic insights into how language houses understanding, and Taylor’s (1989) work on articulation each demonstrated how frameworks of truth become encoded *in*—and subsequently constrained *by*—the very terms employed in their expression. From a methodological perspective, conceptual structures simultaneously reveal and conceal truth—enabling understanding while also permitting manipulation and distortion in contemporary discourse—a dynamic further developed in Guénon’s (2004c) and Korzybski’s (1958) respective critique of modern semantic limitations and Chong and Chong’s (2019) healing paradigm in medical hypnosis. That post-truth escapes such etymological rigour is itself revelatory of a philosophical *lacūna*—a conceptual void where critical examination ought to reside, leaving the term to function as an implicit acceptance of precisely the arbitrariness and disqualification of truth it superficially claims to denote. Thus, we find prudence in dissecting the word post-truth from the outset. The prefix “post-” has both a spatial and temporal connotation: “behind” and “subsequent” or “after(ward)” respectively. Thus, two philosophical questions follow: (1) what is the conceptual or theoretical space *behind* truth? and (2) what is the noun that describes what comes *after* or *beyond* truth? For the latter question: we know of no such noun. From a metaphysical<sup>8</sup> point of view, we can say that truth—on the basis of *theōria* (θεωρία)—is the result of a corresponding realisation (Guénon, 2004a). We can thus conceive of truth as being a “post-realisation” rather than something existing after or beyond truth. For the spatial connotation,<sup>9</sup> the question is far more complex as we are not limited to the empirical domain of mathematical and quantitative space. If we were, intangibles like the aforementioned epistemic virtues would be vacuous; moreover, any singular uniform education would be well-suited throughout the world. These ideas are philosophically ironic (*eirōneia*), yet not so ironic to dissuade inquiry into what informs a post-truth world as each idea—uniformity, flatness, and post-truth—leads to an *arbitrariness*. To avoid arbitrariness, care is taken to work within *qualified* rather than quantified space—as a forest breathes differently than a lecture hall, and a monastic priory orients the soul differently than a marketplace—attending to the qualitative character of definitions and context rather than their uniform accumulation.

In a rare lexical event within the history of Oxford semantics, the word post-truth is *identically defined* to post-fact.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the concept of *facts* has been problematised in philosophy for so long that Bas Van Fraassen, as early as 1969, articulated the central role of facts in explicating logical relationships as *already* historically problematic.<sup>11</sup> By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century the philosophers who espoused the analytic

8. We invoke the word metaphysics in its *archaic* sense (e.g., mystical) as opposed to its *modern* usage (e.g., metaphysical realism), recognising that prior to Descartes, philosophy (“love of wisdom”) was a branch of metaphysics (“wisdom”).

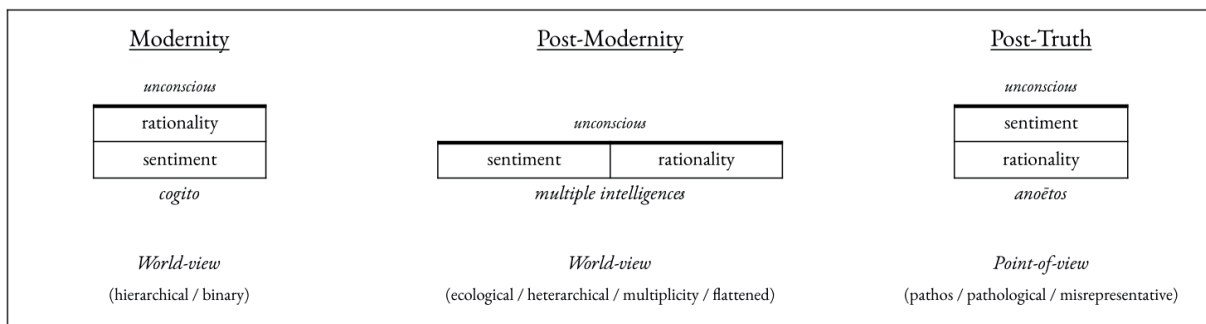
9. To be ‘behind’ is a matter of perspective as each relative position (e.g., beside, under, above) is mathematically equivalent through rotation—quantitatively speaking.

10. Both post-truth and post-fact are identically defined as ‘relating to circumstances in which people respond more to feelings and beliefs than to facts’ (as retrieved from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>, 25 June 2023).

11. Van Fraassen wrote, ‘today [1969] the prevalent opinion seems to be that facts belong solely to the prehistory of semantics and either have no important use or are irredeemably metaphysical or both’ (p. 477). And while Van Fraassen took facts seriously as representable ‘within the framework of standard metalogic [and as] a semantic explication of tautological entailment’ (p. 477) such analytic philosophical ruminations on what may be anachronistically called post-fact are beyond the scope of our paper.

tradition placed numerous moratoriums on ontology, epistemology, truth, and even God (Rockwell, 2003; Wilber, 2000). Nonetheless, the analytic tradition—where facts and sentential logic aim toward a theory of *truth statements*—is not the lineage that espouses the definitions of post-truth. Definitionally, Nally (2021) explained that from the three sources of post-truth that underpin scholarship—Jeff Malpas (1992), Steve Tesich (1992), and the Oxford definition, each delineated below—only two themes emerge: ‘(1) post-truth is a way of describing how reality is not being accurately represented, and (2) the reason for this misrepresentation is a tendency (whether intentional or not<sup>12</sup>) for perceptions to be *skewed* based on emotional reactions [emphasis ours]’ (p. 611). For the post-truth condition to permeate, personal truths—what can be called beliefs or opinions—are supposedly rendered superior to facts (whether in cultural value, sense, or importance); thus, ‘the anti-thesis [unsubstantiated opinion] is becoming the thesis [knowledge / fact]’ (Kester, 2019, p. 1330). Conceptual cases can be made against decontextualised truths, truths steeped in paradigmatic blindness, unqualified statements masquerading as truths, downright lies, and so on; however, to commit a straw man fallacy here would be to miss the wolf lurking beneath the sheep’s clothing—*i.e.*, a concept concealing a philosophical incoherence beneath the appearance of cultural critique. Indeed, the accepted word post-truth is used as an *adjective*, not a noun, to qualify events through sentimentality (“believed to be right”). Within the presupposed post-truth ideology or worldview—or collectively, within academic and non-academic culture—how people *feel* has come to be regarded as more important than how people think, what people know, or how people *converse*. The veritable confusion and *inversion*<sup>13</sup> of these two orders—feeling and thinking—can be divided into two incommensurate orders within the human psyche (*psukhē*) as sentimentality and rationality respectively.

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptualising Perspectives of World-views and Point-of-view*



*Note.* Each column is wedded to a notion of soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) of the Cartesian cogito—though not necessarily wedded to Cartesian dualism (*e.g.*, ecological). The bold line represents a conceptual limit—beyond the conscious *threshold* lies the unconscious, within which pre-Modern conceptualisation situated a sense of soul and Spirit<sup>14</sup> (or the Platonic Intellect as “higher mind”).<sup>15</sup> The loss of *true intellectuality*—synonymous with pure spirituality—‘has made possible two errors [in modern times] which, although seemingly opposed, are in reality correlative and complementary: rationalism and sentimentalism’ (Guénon, 1995, p. 1). When hierarchy collapsed to a network of intelligences, and Spirit became confused (*re:* flattened) with soul, and later soul with mind, and when spirituality came to be denied or wholly ignored, ‘as has been the case since Descartes, the logical end was positivism and agnosticism’ (p. 1)—a trajectory whose climax was reached in Modernity. The progression illustrated across Figure 1 demonstrates how the *non sequitur* of post-truth arose from flattened epistemologies that lack hierarchical depth—producing an anti-rational point-of-view that falsely presents post-truth as a coherent worldview.

12. Similarly, back in 1916, Steiner (2005) wrote almost the equivalent phenomenon, that ‘consciously and unconsciously people today form judgements in accordance with this type of viewpoint. The quicker the judgement, that is, the fewer the true insights that go to make up this judgement, the more comfortable it is for the souls of today’ (p. 2).

13. See “Post-Truth” in Figure 1.

14. *cf.* Figure 2 in the companion paper.

15. We allude to doctrinal teachings on the unconscious as beyond our conscious experience, such as deep sleep, and not the collective unconscious of Jung which would be conceptually situated below.

An objection may be raised that an ill comparison is being drawn between an unrelated noun and an adjective. Regardless of the inherent *logos* of post-truth as a concept—contextualised here as a misrepresentation, condition, or *point-of-view* rather than a *world-view* (Figure 1)—the term post-truth is quite *meaningful*—indicative of a particularised cultural possibility we wish to unpack, evaluate, and contextualise. First and foremost, the relation between noun and adjective is apparent through denotation. The adjective, moreover, details a type of event grounded in a neglect of truth. However, a “neglect of truth” is a surface evaluation—more nuanced would be to assert a *neglect* of truth at the rational order and a *realised* truth at the sentimental order. As Alfred Korzybski (1958) detailed from an ontological, semantic, and structural framework, the belief of the representation, whereby we identify higher order abstractions (*e.g.*, rational) with lower order abstractions (*e.g.*, sentimental), ends with unjustified evaluations; these *mis*-evaluations give rise to disturbed semantic states within our bodymind complex (*i.e.*, delusion, irrationalism, agitation, distrust, and so on). Thus, post-truth-as-misrepresentation—interpreted against Modern and post-Modern worldviews of Figure 1—is a confusion of orders (*i.e.*, a difference of *degree*).

A different *kind* of post-truth was posited by Fuller (2017), who positioned Platonists and Sophists as political actors motivated by *modal* games of skill and games of chance respectively within what Fuller termed a “post-truth orientation;” both Platonists and Sophists were proposed as “post-truth” thinkers, concerned more with the mix of chance and skill in the construction of truth than with the truth as such’ (p. 473). Fuller claimed both were ‘less concerned with the truth itself than with the conditions that make truth possible’ (p. 476) and framed the key distinction as about access to philosophical tools rather than qualitative differences in approaches to truth. For Fuller, politics becomes a game where Sophists deploy skills to maximise chance occurrences, while Plato used similar skills to minimise chance’s influence. While Fuller correctly identified certain power dynamics in philosophical discourse, the Fullerian framework arguably mischaracterises Platonic thought by overlooking essential metaphysical (*re*: vertical or envelopmental) dimensions. Fuller’s attempt to reverse the historical direction<sup>16</sup> is novel, acknowledging that knowledge production is socio-political and situated within historical context; however, the assertion that truth reduces to a modal power struggle over access to the conditions that make truth possible reduces truth to precisely what Plato would call the shadows—the most contingent and ephemeral domain of knowing. As Wilber (2000) noted, late 20<sup>th</sup>- and early 21<sup>st</sup>-century sensibilities assume that by simply studying the shadows in greater detail we may overcome the Platonic condition; put poetically, the ‘sum total of the shadows’ (p. 414) has been mistaken for the Light. The misconception of mistaking shadows for Light arises because the Platonic “One” (*i.e.*, Spirit) no longer *envelops* the “Each” and the “All”; and when “Each and All” is all that is left—a deficient subset of the Platonic or integral worldview—truth becomes flattened into holism and systems theory<sup>17</sup> (Wilber, 2000). A modal power framework reflects the tendency toward epistemological flattening that characterises much of post-truth discourse, converting qualitative distinctions (such as in truth paradigms) into purely quantitative differences in games of chance and skill. A focus exclusively on horizontal power dynamics fails to preserve the vertical dimension(s) of Platonic thought wherein the journey toward truth ascends (*anábasis*; ἀνάβασις) and descends (*káthodos*; κατάβασις). As explained by Steel (2012), the vertical movement manifests in educational contexts through the complementary processes of *diánoia*, which ‘extends principles downward into the realm of human activity’ (p. 47), and *nóēsis*, which “takes up” (*anáresis*) these principles toward their true beginning or ground (Arche). The bidirectional movement between *diánoia* and *nóēsis* is essential to pedagogical approaches that recognise the *depth* dimension of knowledge rather than horizontal distribution (*i.e.*, networks of *span*); put succinctly, epistemological flattening forsakes depth for span—enabling post-truth to masquerade as a worldview whilst simultaneously producing the very real cultural condition where no higher perspectives remain to adjudicate between competing *logoi* (Figure 2).<sup>18</sup>

Fuller’s *modal power* as regards truth conditions may reveal hidden power structures and assumptions that “un-Earth” why certain forms of knowledge are privileged or *possible*—a contribution to philosophical relativism; however, an examination of truth conditions falls well within established epistemological

16. The historic enterprise, as regards truth, has been an emphasis on philosophical principles {epistemology → conditions} rather than social constructs {conditions → epistemology}. The complexity of bi-directionality (epistemological ⇌ conditions) would mean an abandonment of pure constructionism toward what Maturana and Varela (1992) would term enactivism.

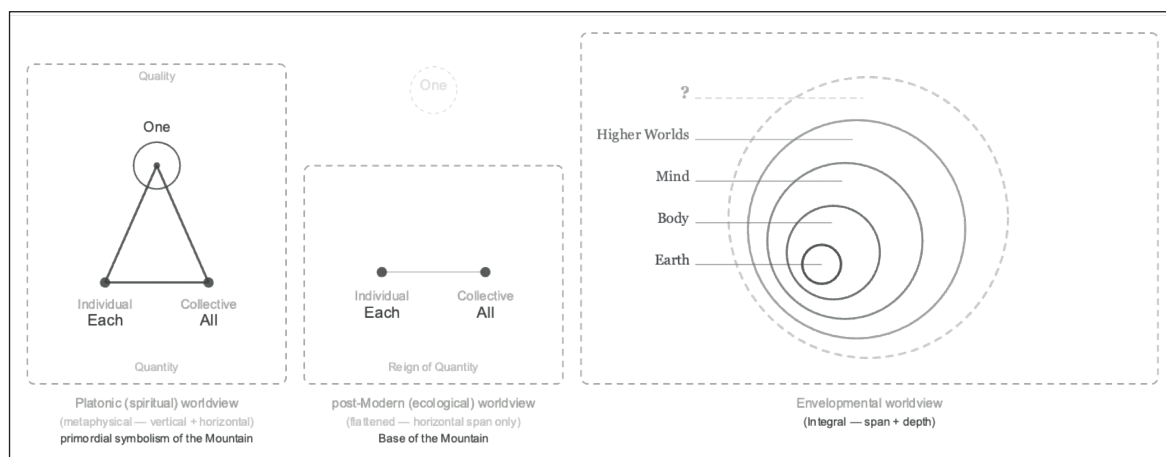
17. Hence “sum total” to mean, ecologically, the sum is greater than the whole of its parts, which is the basis of systems theory.

18. *cf.* Crosswhite’s (2018) post-truth condition and Clark’s (2019) death of the expert unpacked in the companion paper.

frameworks, including semantic realism/anti-realism, (logical/semantic) positivism, modal epistemology, verificationism, et *alia*. Such a complexification of truth, truth conditions, processes, and semantic-syntactic distinctions, is not a post-truth despite Fuller's insistence (unless we are swayed by arbitrariness). These categorisations of “games of chance” and “games of skill” are problematic given that both Plato and the Sophists pursued rigorous systematic approaches to truth. By recasting each position as a modal “game”—rather than maintaining the distinction between chance (*tuchē*) and skill (*technē*)—Fuller implicitly flattens their relationship. From a mathematical perspective, the Fullerian framework logically reduces to four possible modes: *inverse* (less of one, more of the other), *reciprocal* (chance by skill; skill in terms of chance), *contraries* (either chance or skill), or *complementarities* (degrees of chance and skill). However, although we can say “more skill, less chance” as intuitive and logical—as the cultivation of skill reduces the role of chance in outcomes—“more chance, less skill” does not follow, since increasing randomness does not actually diminish existing skill, just masks its expression. By flattening each to games, Fuller failed to capture an essential truth on the *asymmetry* between skill and chance, reducing skill to a more complex manifestation of probabilistic processes. Metaphysically, *skill*—as a combined proficiency (*technē*; τέχνη) and wisdom (σοφία, “expertise”)—is qualitatively higher than mere chance operating at the quantitative order of probability (Coomaraswamy, 1987). And when post-truth flattens truth to mere shadows of quantitative relationships (e.g., subjectivism and statistics), and spiritual knowing fades into obscurity, one cannot help but ask why?

**Figure 2**

*The Disqualification toward a Flatland of Competing Logoi and the Envelopmental Resolution*



*Note.* The left diagram represents the Platonic (spiritual) worldview—Each and All enveloped within the One, forming the primordial Mountain whose vertical dimension integrates quantity within quality. The middle diagram represents the post-Modern (ecological) worldview—Each and All without the One, reducing the Mountain to its base; following Guénon (2004c), the loss of the vertical dimension corresponds to the “reign of quantity,” wherein qualitative distinctions collapse into horizontal span and the epistemological flatness within which the post-truth condition acquires apparent legitimacy (*i.e.*, no “higher perspectives”). The right diagram represents the envelopmental worldview—Body, Mind, and Higher Worlds enveloped successively within one another, gesturing toward what lies beyond the known (?) in the Steinerian sense of higher worlds. The envelopmental model equally applies to competing logoi—wherein a higher perspective envelops and resolves what appears irreconcilable at a lower order.

Having examined the conceptual structure of post-truth, our analysis now turns to how the term originated in scholarly discourse. Understanding how the progenitors who coined “post-truth” conceptualised the term provides crucial insights into its original intent. The works of Steve Tesich and Jeff Malpas each employed the term without rejecting truth itself—a critical distinction overlooked in contemporary literature. Moreover, while Tesich referred to a “post-truth world” and Malpas to a “post-truth era,” both used these formulations to critique rather than legitimise the abandonment of truth. By examining these initial formulations,

current post-truth discourse is revealed as a conceptual non sequitur rather than a legitimate philosophical position. These origins further illuminate how truth paradigms have been flattened and how a path toward epistemological depth begins precisely with the refusal to accept post-truth as either worldview or era.

## Other Origins of Post-Truth

Although both Tesich (1992) and Malpas (1992) coined the term “post-truth” in their writing, neither elaborated much further on post-truth nor rejected truth. The claim that ‘the complex relation between Modernity and truth, and how he [Malpas] believed post-modernism would bring a post-truth era’ (de Saint-Laurent et al., 2017, p. 148) seems to miss the crux of the Malpasian perspective. For Nally (2021), who posited post-truth as a condition rather than a worldview, interpreted post-truth through past longings:

although Tesich’s [1992] aim is to contest America’s characterisation as a superpower and Malpas’ [1992] is how to defend the facts of history in the face of Holocaust denial, they do hint that the conditions for post-truth rely on a collective belief that past realities have been “better” than present ones. (p. 611)

For us, an emphasis on an after-thought for Tesich and a playful alliteration for Malpas occludes the gem of Tesich’s and Malpas’ theoretical work on truth (in short, we did not get the hint). For instance, in Tesich’s introductory comments he wrote ‘truth prevailed’ (p. 12) and ‘despite the crimes committed in the highest office in our land, our system of government worked. Democracy triumphed’ (p. 12). Tesich lamented on the trajectory of the American citizenry’s *relationship* to truth, whom ‘began to shy away from the truth’ (p. 12) and ‘came to equate truth with bad news [and] looked to our government to protect us from the truth’ (p. 12). Most revealing is Tesich’s conclusion, that ‘[Americans] 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 [emphasis added]’ (p. 13). Speaking ironically, ‘the last thing we want now is for an intellectually and spiritually vigorous generation to confront us with the question of what we have done to this country [*i.e.*, “truth”]’ (p. 13). To Tesich, truth was very much alive alongside a democratic process to support one’s relationship with truth. Spiritual will and significance were in question to vigorously save truth. The misappropriation of Tesich’s concerns into contemporary post-truth discourse represents a profound *non sequitur*—from an original call to recover significance to a framework that abandons the very object of concern. Hierarchically speaking, what is *most* significant is *least* foundational (*asymmetrical*); in other words, to “denude truth of any significance” is equivalent to a *dis*-qualification and subsequent flattening of truth (Figures 1 and 2).

For Malpas (1992), nowhere in *Retrieving Truth* did he indicate we live in an era without truth; the alliteration ‘the post-modern era is also a post-truth’ (p. 288), an era with the potential to ‘[doubt] the very possibility of truth’ (p. 228), an era ‘in which the possibilities of truth has been relinquished, rejected or, perhaps, simply forgotten’ (p. 288), were his first and final thoughts on the term. Such claims obscure the theoretical gem Malpas brought to the academic debate three decades prior: that the “postmodern truth” has not solved the crisis of Modernity. Furthermore, a postmodern truth has not justified, *a fortiori*, the abandonment of truth; the post-Modern *reaction* against truth—towards games of meaning, discourse, power, and worlds<sup>19</sup>—can only ‘lead back into the crisis of modernity from which it attempted to extricate us’ (p. 297). Historically, for the Modern, the concept of ‘truth is unproblematic insofar as the *possibility* of truth is unproblematic’ (p. 287); thus, there was never an apparent *crisis* in truth within Modernity *vis-à-vis* a paradigmatic blindness only a post-Modern perspective would *reveal*. For Malpas, ‘the post-modern abandonment of the notion of truth is misplaced and ... does not allow us to come to terms with the crisis of modernity’ (p. 289). Not only is there a refusal to acknowledge the crisis, ‘but ... a refusal to attempt to retrieve a more original and important notion of truth from the debris of modernity’ (p. 289). Part of the debris to be left behind was the elusive and exclusive function of *transcendence*—‘a notion that had to be relinquished’ (p. 297). To save truth and invoke a sense of meaning in languaging toward the unity of

19. One can group Fuller here, but essentially any social constructionism or constructivism theorist—and now we quote Davis (1996)—whose ‘reluctance to step outside the “neutral” bounds of epistemology into the messier and more demanding realms of morality, ethics, identity, and being-ontology’ (p. 234) continues the Modernist agenda and sidesteps the Malpasian retrieval.

truth, the Malpasian concern of “truth-as-transcendence” is justified insofar as truth is reachable and not demarcated with an idyllic Platonic realm. However, the very man Malpas positioned to save truth (Martin Heidegger) was quite at ease with “truth-as-transzendenz” (Moran, 2014). The paradox dissolves once the hidden semantics are extracted. To Malpas (1992), discarding truth-*{exclusivity}*-as-*{infinite}*-transcendence shortens to discarding “truth-as-transcendence;” to Heidegger (1967), the notion of *finite* transcendence (*endliche* Transzendenz<sup>20</sup>) begets a truth-*{implicitly}*-as-*{finite}*-transcendence—which *also* shortens to “truth-as-transcendence.” The irony is that the Malpasian truth-as-retrieval *is* (to us) the Heideggerian truth-as-transzendenz. Each would advocate for the retrieval of truth as a “struggle” to *articulate*<sup>21</sup> and discover one’s unique potential. Moreover, for Heidegger, ‘to speak the truth can manifest itself in two, fundamentally opposite ways: for one, it can be an *un-covering* or *dis-covering* (*ent-decken*) and, for another, a covering-up, a “*zu-decken*” and “*ver-decken*” of Being’ (Benesch, 2020, para. 8). Thus, not a post-truth, but an *un-truth*, and the “arduous,” “strenuous” and “willful” effort is to “forge” or “wrest” truth from the *un-truth* of our Being (Benesch, 2020). While post-truth thinking reduces reality to a simple binary (*e.g.*, “my truth” versus “your truth” or “rationalism” versus “sentimentalism” or “yes” versus “no”), our enacted world demands recognition of interwoven perspectives that not only honour empirical evidence and diverse lived experiences (another set of binaries), *but* equally embrace the complex, dynamic interplay between mind, life, body, and environment that shapes how we know, what we know, and finally, how we *en-act* in our shared Being-in-the-world. The contemporary transformation of these concerns into post-truth discourse exemplifies a classic *non sequitur*: from Malpas’ (1992) call to retrieve truth from the debris of Modernity and Tesich’s (1992) lament over truth’s devaluation, advocates of post-truth incorrectly infer justification for abandoning truth’s centrality altogether.

Further articulations against post-truth and the ‘crisis of democratic institutions’ (Oleksiyenko & Jackson, 2021, p. 1057) include the Foucaultian notion of *parrhesia* (*truthfulness*) or ‘aesthetics of the self’ (Ambrosio, 2022, p. 2141) and the Nietzschean ‘care of the self’ termed *therapeia* (Peters et al., 2022, p. 703). The Greek-inspired *parrhesia* (παρρησία)—etymologically “all” (πᾶν) “utterance/speech” (ῥῆσις)—was employed in Ancient rhetoric usage to utter boldly, frankly, and freely. For *therapeia* (θεραπεία), the etymology suggests the verb *therapeuo* (θεραπεύω), which among many connotations means “to heal,” “to serve,” or “to attend to.” In the educative domain, the archaic aesthetic of truthfulness, to Foucault, is inapplicable in our modern epistemological framing—only a courageous act that risks the Self and potentially unsettles<sup>22</sup> the Other would establish sincerity of purpose (Ambrosio, 2022). Construed as a moral obligation demanding ‘better knowledge’ (Baggini, 2017, p. 108), Ambrosio (2022) stated that the duty of the *parrhesiastes* was *not* to establish truth *per se*, but to criticise the interlocutor of Self or Other. A call toward academic freedom notwithstanding (Davids, 2021), the subject *parrhesiastes*—with quasi-free *agency* among other quasi-free *agents*—must grapple with the erosion of truth and accountability within the structures of democratic institutions (Peters & Besley, 2019). Otherwise, such an Ancient privilege of truth-tellers will surely fall on deaf ears. Our corollary is such that without a structure of epistemological depth, one may well be listening—and conversing—*truthfully* ... yet interpreting truth within conceptually deficient frames (Table 1).

20. The idea of transcendence remained even after Heidegger’s turn (*Kehre*) who, according to Moran (2014), valued transcendence as *thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*) and *projection* (*Entwurf*)—two terms whose shared etymological root is cognate with English “warp.”

21. The path toward saving truths (Neufeld, 2009)—against insignificance and alienation; the path of authenticity for Taylor (2003).

22. The *parrhesiastes* risks ‘angering or hurting a friend by telling them they are wrong’ (Ambrosio, 2022, p. 4), such that the risk of truth-telling runs in both directions—toward the Self who speaks and toward the Other who receives. Crucially, however, the resolution of the emotional tension arising in the Other does not require the *parrhesiastes* to descend to the sentimental order—to soften, retract, or capitulate—but rather to maintain the envelopmental structure that already integrates the orders of rational clarity and sentimental warmth. The *parrhesiastes* who collapses into the Other’s emotional reaction has forsaken the very height from which truth could be offered. An envelopmental resolution is care without the loss of reason—a higher register that warms the coldness of rationality without surrendering to sentiment—the philosophical dimensions of which are developed in the companion paper.

## The Complexity of Enveloped Truth in the Philosophy of Education

The etymological investigation of post-truth reveals not only a linguistic problem but a fundamental category error in educational philosophy—the confusion of span with depth<sup>23</sup> (Wilber, 2000), wherein the horizontally extensive cultural condition of sentiment-over-reason is mistaken for a vertically comprehensive worldview (i.e., the “Kosmos” or “Great Chain of Being”), and the categories of the sentimental-rational field are used to legislate over orders of knowing that structurally exceed and envelop them. As established in our etymological analysis above, the very construction of post-truth as a term reveals a conceptual incoherence—there can be no spatial or temporal domain beyond truth without negating the very concept of truth itself. The flattening of truth is traceable to the progressive loss—across the arc from Modernity to post-Modernity—of the higher envelopmental dimensions of Spirit, reducing the epistemological topography first to the rational and empirical, and subsequently, within post-Modernity, to a horizontal pluralism wherein no order of perspectives retains priority over another (i.e., no “higher perspective”). Post-truth arises as a consequence within the already-flattened post-Modern landscape—not as a further horizontalisation but as a perverse<sup>24</sup> inversion (Figure 1), wherein sentiment is elevated above rationality within the same impoverished two-valued field of ratio and sentiment, producing the crooked simulacrum of depth identified throughout the present paper as the structural *non sequitur* of post-truth. Whilst post-truth discourse thus distorts truth through inversion, truth paradigms, properly understood, function through envelopment—holding the rational and sentimental orders in asymmetric, hierarchical relation within a higher integration of post-formal stages of cognition. The critical question becomes not whether post-truth constitutes a valid perspective, but how philosophical reflection might recover the depth and dimensionality of truth paradigms that post-truth discourse systematically forecloses—a question to which the Taylorian diagnosis of the malaise of Modernity offers an indispensable, albeit incomplete, cultural phenomenology.

Philosophically, Charles Taylor (1989; 2003) pointed out that new forms of narrativity and new understandings of the Good—alongside our societal intersubjectivity of quasi-free *agency* among other quasi-free *agents*—collectively shape within our sense of Self a new coherence. This coherence represents truth as enveloping rather than flattening human experience. Currently, the (rational/modern) concept of education is an oppression to falsity: the repudiation that being naïve is the key to success and failure the key to understanding. That concept has, to Neufeld (2012), reached the end of its possibility as a meaningful engagement with the Good. Taylor (2003), furthermore, argued a careful path of articulation was needed, to come to terms with our sense of Self, our existence, our conflicts, our evolving or mutating inwardness, *et alia*, all within a historical enterprise<sup>25</sup> and predicated upon our present Self as a concatenation of our historical Self, both individually (e.g., moral standard) and socially (e.g., modern philosophy). The sheer breadth of such a historical enterprise (*re*: development) and the complexification of truth within a historical lens (*re*: envelopment)—whose measure is in centuries—provides us with what Taylor called successes (“models”) and failures (“foils”). These “models” offer dimensional depth lacking in flattened conceptions of truth, allowing critical engagement with our evolving sense of the nature of the Good. For instance, the malaise<sup>26</sup> of Modernity—that echoes in post-Modernity—centres around two principal themes: (1) the narrowing of

23. A concrete example is the ecological notion of the “more-than-human” world (Davis, 2004), which situates Earth as the largest and therefore most comprehensive whole—reasoning from span alone. From an envelopmental perspective, however, Human as a Spiritual Being is qualitatively *more* than Earth precisely because depth exceeds span: the human being envelops Earth as a higher holon, not by occupying more physical space, but by encompassing greater depth of interiority (Wilber, 2000). The category error here lies in mistaking the largest circle for the deepest one—the distinction I make between the ecological and metaphysical models of education (cf. Blom & Lu, 2016, Appendix A).

24. Etymologically from Latin to “turn thoroughly wrong.” The transmutation of perversion is, of course, the harmonious cognates stemming from verse (e.g., conversation, diversity, university, or simply “verse”) which directly relates to metaphors of teacher education.

25. We note that present foils may suppress awareness to past models (e.g., divinity and our inherent connection the transcendent Good) and cater to a modern malaise (e.g., disenchantment, narcissism, nihilism, and instrumental reason). We believe post-truth is a foil disguised as a model.

26. According to Neufeld (2012), higher education institutions (HEIs) are not only unable to correct such a malaise, but lend to its character through an increasing „essence of technology;“ a Heideggerian *technologia*, moreover, is at odds with what it means to be human, to seek deeper meaning in one’s Being-in-the(ir)-world, and to articulate spiritual ways of knowing, albeit in increasingly nonreligious ways within HEIs.

the self which begets narcissism, a *flatness* of living and shallowness of purpose, and the loss of the heroic<sup>27</sup> dimension; and (2) the disenchantment of the world (*i.e.*, Pan) through a reliance on the instrument (*i.e.*, Reason) and the role technology which equally ‘contributed to the narrowing and flattening of our lives’ (p. 6). These two principal themes converge onto the notion of *flattening*—a term emblematic of a loss, more generally, of the transcendent dimension. Such a flattening, away from the Spirit of contemplation and narrowingly toward the mathematical, material, calculable, and quantitative, marked the crisis of Modernity to Guénon (2004c)—whose diagnosis of the “reign of quantity” symbolically supported Taylor’s investigation into the malaise of Modernity. Again, is there a rightness or truth to the postulates of a post-truth ideology or worldview respectively? To Taylor (2003), and ourselves, not without an alignment with our evolving sense of the nature of the Good.

Taylor’s examination of flattening as a key symptom of Modernity’s crisis of malaise directly challenges the epistemological tendencies evident in post-truth discourse. His analysis of narrowing and flattening finds resonance in ecological perspectives that similarly identify how binary reductions impoverish our understanding of complex phenomena. Ecologically, the interconnected, interdependent, enacted, and conjoined mindbody (Davis, 1996; Varela et al., 1993) provides a rich foundation for understanding mindfulness as an embodied practice. Ecological approaches (*e.g.*, the interobjective *minding* in educational theory) reveal mindfulness as an enveloping truth practice rather than a critical technique<sup>28</sup> (Davis, 1996). Fritjof Capra (1996) and contemporaries (Stone & Barlow, 2005), in efforts to connect various themes such as complexity theory, the Santiago Theory of Cognition, deep ecology, and the “new sciences” of biology, proposed ecological literacy or *eco-literacy* to the educative domain—toward an understanding of form, pattern, structure, complexity, and relationships essential to mindful engagement with truth. Post-truth discourse, operating exclusively within the horizontal field of competing sentiment-based claims, cannot register ecological complexity as a meaningful epistemological category (*re*: “evolving sense of the Good”)—for depth, not span, is precisely what the two-valued field of ratio and sentiment excludes. The consequence is not just philosophical imprecision, but bears significant pedagogical implications: when depth is reduced to span, expertise<sup>29</sup> becomes indistinguishable from opinion, teachers become interchangeable units, and the entire vertical dimension of human cultivation—contemplation, mastery, spiritual knowing, the very *periagōgē* (*re*: “*turning-as-transformation*”) that education at its deepest level names—becomes structurally unthinkable within the flattened conceptual space post-truth both reflects and perpetuates. To quote Gadamer in his exposition on prejudice, ‘what authority says is not [necessarily] *irrational* and arbitrary but can, in principle, be discovered *to be true*. This is the essence of the authority claimed by the teacher, the superior, the *expert* [emphasis ours]’ (as quoted by Davis, 1996, p. 139). Echoing Davis, a multi-valued system does away with teachers versus learners and posits teachers-*as*-learners; however, in the non-Aristotelian spirit of Korzybski (1958), where order matters and structures of asymmetry prevail, the notion of learners-*as*-teachers is philosophically unsound—a topic beyond the scope of our paper.

Unravelling the post-truth condition proves more complex than simply opposing rationality with ecological sensitivity or heterarchical plurality—for even the most sophisticated alternatives available within contemporary educational philosophy risk reproducing the very flatness sought to remedy; the onto-epistemic topography that espouses a binary system of sentimentality and rationality within the human experience (*i.e.*, soul) remains wedded to the paradigmatic limits of the Cartesian dictum, *the cogito* (Figure 1). Moving beyond the very bivalence and flatness that enables post-truth discourse to appear coherent allows for genuine mindful engagement with complex truth structures (*i.e.*, truth paradigms). In such a simple, two-valued, either/or system of evaluation, the *cure* to rationality—and the post-Modern quest for truth—is equally simple: *less* (priority on) reason and *more* (priority on) sentiment. While ecological frameworks offer valuable alternatives to Cartesian dualism, many ecological approaches perpetuate another

27. We note that the *heroic* dimension is a subset of the *transcendent* dimension.

28. The democratic notion of freedom, for instance, is as much an interobjective and ecological issue where authority is based upon „reasonableness“ as authority conceptualised within intersubjective and critical framing and ‘identified with oppressive power or intrusive violence; [placing authority] on a foundation of fear’ (Davis, 1996, 139). Hence Davis, like Malpas, speaks to understanding truth beyond mere (modal) games of power.

29. Clark’s (2019) “death of the expert” names the cultural instantiation of expertise collapsing into opinion, the philosophical remedy for which is developed in the companion paper as 3-valued or n-valued discernment within envelopment structure.

manifestation of the *non sequitur* pattern—applying eco-systemic paradigms to eco-epistemological problems whilst unwittingly reproducing the very epistemological flatness the paradigms were invoked to resolve. An example in the socio-educative domain is the problematisation of hierarchy (*i.e.*, “transcendence”) and collapse toward what Wilber (2000) called heterarchies. Accordingly, heterarchical *solutions*—whether proposed by web-of-life theorists,<sup>30</sup> communal pedagogical theorists, or others—toward a view that “all perspectives are equally valid” are generally contradictory due to *another* deficient conceptual space: namely, the categorical rejection of hierarchical structures altogether (see Table 1). Heterarchy attempts to replace both pathological hierarchies (*i.e.*, the perceived “problem”) and growth hierarchies (*i.e.*, the undiscerned “solution”). Simply put, without hierarchy-integration, there is only heterarchy-differentiation which produces another form of eco-epistemological flatness—precisely the condition enabling post-truth to appear legitimate. In truth, to permit disquotational reasoning on our part, there exists both pathological and growth heterarchies too. Thus, integral theorists extend the topography further (*e.g.*, *scala nature*) to remedy what Wilber (2000) postulated as *subtle reductionism*—a flatland ontology where mindbody metaphors, ideas, and concepts remain tilted toward the material, albeit systemic and interconnected, ecological dimensions (what Wilber called “its” or the “sum total of shadows”). The solutions we ought to seek are growth heterarchies *and* growth hierarchies, rather than replacing growth hierarchies with pathological heterarchies—a hypercommunion enterprise.

**Table 1**  
*Some Deficient Conceptual Spaces*

Deficient Conceptual Space	Leads to ...	Extension
{Each, Many}	Holism, systems theory	{Each, Many, One}
{subject, object, <i>inter</i> -subject}	Social constructivism/ionism	{subject, object, <i>inter</i> -subject, <i>inter</i> -object}
{Hierarchy as Power}	Critical discourse theory	Hierarchy as: {disassociation (pathology), integrative}
{Heterarchical Growth}	Flatness, arbitrariness, post-truth, non sequitur thinking	{Heterarchical Growth, Hierarchy Growth}

*Note.* The extension to the {One} leads to a differentiation between metaphysics as *sophia perennis*, and metaphysics as philosophy (metaphysical realism). The extension of {inter-objectivity} leads to mindbody pedagogical extensions such as minding, caring, conversing, occasioning, and hermeneutic listening to name a few (Davis, 2004) and philosophically to deep ecology. The extension of integration leads to integral theory. Finally, the extension of hierarchical growth leads to our notion of epistemological depth—an articulation toward expertise for the one who has enveloped the conceptual deficiencies of rationality. When epistemological depth is shallow, post-truth arises as a crooked perspective (*i.e.*, there is no “higher perspective”).

When we extend the epistemological topography, when we re-conceptualise depth and hierarchical emergence into our educative and philosophical evaluations (alongside span and heterarchies), we can then challenge<sup>31</sup> the definition of Earth as being “more-than-human” speculated upon heterarchical, span-

30. As Wilber (2000) wrote, ‘It is ironic, to say the least, that the social champions of the web of life deny hierarchy in any form while the sciences of the web of life insist upon it. And it is doubly ironic that the former often point to the latter for support’ (*e.g.*, “The new physics supports the equalitarian web of life”)’ (p. 8).

31. The hierarchical differentiation of Earth into biosphere, noosphere, and beyond—as conceptualised by Teilhard de Chardin and Vernadsky (Wilber, 2000; Samson & Pitt, 1999)—follows a pattern of gradual envelopmental interpenetrations: geological and inanimate matter (Earth) was interpenetrated by life to form the biosphere, which in turn was interpenetrated by rational mind to form the noosphere—each stage enveloping and transcending the previous whilst preserving it within a higher integration, such that the Earth we inhabit now is already the rational interpenetration of biological form. The term itself is etymologically linked to the Platonic *nous* (νοῦς), the higher mind that grasps the Forms, and root of the educational term *understanding* or *dianoia* (διάνοια; “through Nous”). Crucially, however, Chardin and Vernadsky coined *noospheric* in reference to the passive intellect (νοῦς *pathētikós*) rather than the active mind (νοῦς *poiētikós*)—remaining, despite the hierarchical aspiration of the concept, within the register of ordinary mentation rather than spiritual intellect. The passive mind corresponds to the “subtle state” in Buddhist terminology, which ‘is properly the realm of ψυχή [*psukhē*] and not that of νοῦς [Nous]; the latter in reality corresponds to *Buddhi*, that is to say to the supra-individual intellect’ (Guénon, 2004b, p. 92). *Buddhi*—in contradistinction to *manas* (“mind—is the “very subtle state” to which the Enjoyment Body or *Sambhogakāya* is achieved through a lucid dream body (Wallace, 2006, 2011), akin to the writings of Plato’s *Meno* and *Phaedro*. Keeping strictly to the pattern of hierarchical emergence, the fourth stage beyond the noosphere would be the centauric age—the half human, half animal symbolism of an integration of body and mind toward supra-rational aperspectivism or vision-logic (Wilber, 2017)—or the Spirit-Self of the Steinerian worldview, both of which would

oriented, and ecological grounds alone (Davis, 2004). Instead we can postulate Human or Man<sup>32</sup>—akin to the Daoist doctrine of Ren (人)—as “more-than-Earth” based equally upon hierarchical, depth-oriented, and supra-formal grounds. Such an integrated framework (*i.e.*, we are more than material beings, we are envelopmental beings bridging matter to Spirit), allows for spiritual ways of knowing and remedies the very deficient conceptual spaces that enable post-truth to appear despite its philosophical vacuity masquerading as a verifiable worldview. The expanded conceptual space (*i.e.*, theoretical “extension”) offered through envelopmental depths directly corresponds to what Neufeld (2012) called “saving truths” found not on Earth, but envelopmentally transcendent within our immanent selves and developmentally within our co-participation as quasi-free agents. A unified view emerges wherein Modernity’s *crisis* of truth and post-Modernity’s subsequent *crook* of truth manifest not as discrete, historical ruptures (*re*: crises) but as complementary dimensions of epistemological flattening—one through excessive rationalism that reduces depth to quantification, the other through sentimentality masquerading as critical flexibility. Both are faces of the same loss that Steiner (1964) diagnosed as dead thinking, and whose remedy lies in the living thinking through which the envelopmental register becomes genuinely accessible.

### The *Crisis* of Truth in Modernity and the *Crook* of post-Truth in post-Modernity

Truth realised at the rational order is perhaps the defining feature of the egoic-rational soul and crowning intellectual achievement of the modern era for both Man and culture (Gebser, 1985; Wilber, 2000); for ‘the modern *the true is the modern*’ (Malpas, 1992, p. 287). As the etymology would imply, post-Modernity is the cultural era/mutation *after* Modernity; to be post-Modern is to adopt an ‘incredulity toward metanarratives’ (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv)—namely, the historical legitimisation of modern science and philosophy through reference to a rational metadiscourse. The process of delegitimisation, the attack on metaphysics, universals, and reason, and the linguistic turn defines much of what post-Modernity *is* (“principled, but wrong”). But for Malpas (1992), the *crisis* of Modernity<sup>33</sup> carried, *unresolved*, into post-Modernity—most notably remnants of the Enlightenment that sought truth in transcendent exclusivity.

For us, the unresolved crisis of Modernity creates the conditions for the crooked structure of post-truth, wherein sentimentality masquerades as an *autonomous* order of truth rather than finding proper integration enveloped hierarchically *within* rationality. When post-Modernity rejected hierarchical structures, the necessary scaffolding for maintaining qualitative distinctions between analogous orders of truth collapsed into a materialistic flattening (Coomaraswamy, 1987). Materialism—not merely as philosophical position but as cultural orientation<sup>34</sup>—renders the transcendent dimension of truth increasingly inaccessible. The flattened landscape of materialistic thought creates a fertile terrain or epistemological substrate (both grounding metaphors) for post-truth discourse, where distinctions between orders of knowing—between rational discernment and sentimental attachment—become increasingly blurred (and not constructively in the fuzzy logic kind of blurring). The logical structure of the post-truth *non sequitur* becomes clear: (1) Modernity’s conception of truth had limitations; (2) these limitations deserve critique; but then (3) therefore, we now exist in a world beyond truth. The third statement simply does not follow from the previous premises, representing a fundamental break in reasoning so characteristic of the “facts don’t matter”

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inevitably interpenetrate the noosphere to form a new soulsphere Earth. The access to higher orders of knowing beyond ordinary mentation—through contemplative structural practices such as attention (*śamatha*), mindfulness (*sati*), and insight (*vipāśyanā*), coupled with the cultivation of the four immeasurables (Wallace, 2011)—points toward what Steiner (1964) named living thinking: the epistemological modality wherein concept and percept, Spirit and matter interpenetrate, and through which the envelopmental register genuinely becomes accessible. Any such contemplative doctrine would be sufficient—Eastern or Western—including Baggini’s (2017) advocacy of epistemic virtues as a secular parallel.

32. We use the integral notion of Man—closely aligned with Ren (人)—to symbolise the human-soul-Spirit trifecta rather than naturalistic bio-phenomenological entities that would be implied through the use of either man and/or woman (Guenon, 2004a; Wilber, 2017).

33. Which to Malpas (1992) was synonymous/engulfed with the “crisis of Europe” and “crisis of truth.”

34. Coomaraswamy (1987) noted that ‘in the literal meaning of their etymology, “sentimental” and “aesthetic” are identical, and both equivalent to “materialistic”; aesthetic being feeling, sense the means of feeling, and matter what is felt. To speak of aesthetic experience as “disinterested” properly involves an antinomy: it is rather a noetic [spiritual] or cognitive experience that can be disinterested’ (p. 339); hence the Buddhist notion on the cultivation of *non*-attachment at the level of *manas* (mind) to envelop sentimentality and reach higher structures of truth (through the subsequent envelopment of *ratio* toward spiritual knowing).

discourse.

Steiner (2005) observed precisely such a pattern of the post-truth condition in 1916, when he wrote that ‘the great sin of our culture today lies in the fact that it [judgements] lives in sentences that bear no content, without realising how empty these sentences are’ (p. 3). For Steiner (1964), the epistemological crisis—stemming from a “materialistic worldview—creates what he termed *dead thinking* where thought produces abstract concepts that appear to float (*i.e.*, dissociate) above physical reality, yet remains trapped within materialistic assumptions about the nature of consciousness and reality itself; material thought becomes incapable of perceiving the living, interpenetrating spiritual dimensions within material processes. Furthermore, unlike crude anti-materialist positions, Steiner (1988) recognised materialism as a necessary evolutionary stage in consciousness development albeit identifying how its extension beyond proper boundaries creates increasingly abstract concepts divorced from lived experience. One could say Steiner anticipated aspects of contemporary mimetic theory<sup>35</sup> by identifying how concepts, once detached from living experience, proliferate as hollow discourse. Dead thinking thus establishes the epistemological conditions wherein the non sequitur of “post-truth” as discourse becomes culturally plausible (as a condition)—allowing emotional resonance to appear (falsely) as an alternative to contextualised (factual) validity rather than recognising these domains as hierarchically and asymmetrically related. Modernity, for all its limitations, preserved the asymmetric ordering of these two domains—rationality above sentiment, as Figure 1 illustrates—even if the envelopmental integration of the higher—or *hidden*—worlds remained structurally unavailable within the Modernist framework. To Steiner (1997), ‘a worldview not fructified by a knowledge of the hidden element inevitably leads to desolation’ (pp. 60–61) which bears analogy to the post-truth condition. Moreover, the higher worlds were not abolished by Modernity so much as rendered unconscious, relegated to what Steiner identified as the sleeping dimension of our Being, both *meso*-cosmically (cultural spiritual sleep to ignite materialism and the advent of modern industry) and *micro*-cosmically (when we undergo *the* physical-etheric and astral-Ego separation each sleep cycle). The higher envelopmental dimensions are not foreign to human Nature—as the Platonic *Meno* and the Daskalian notion of *exosomatosis* jointly suggest, the soul already carries knowledge of the spiritual world, accessed between incarnations and recoverable through contemplative cultivation. Post-Modernity’s rejection of the asymmetric ordering thus forecloses even the unconscious vertical dimension that Modernity, however imperfectly, preserved. In tandem, Steiner’s identification of dead thinking also provides a historical foundation for understanding how epistemological flattening creates the conditions for the post-truth illusion while simultaneously demonstrating the philosophical impossibility of moving “beyond” truth without abandoning coherence altogether. Conversely, Steiner’s (1964) concept of *living thinking* offers a counterpoint to materialistic consciousness and post-truth discourse—a modality where concept and percept, spirit and matter, interpenetrate rather than remain artificially separate. We find such living thinking already back in Plato, whose ‘theory of language is based on a quite radical thesis: any saying can be the story only when it is committed to the truth. Without having a *telos*, any saying is merely a mechanical organization of language elements but not a living organism [*ζῶον, zōion*]’ (Pleshkov, 2017, p. 137). Living cognition not only creates a fertile intersection between contemporary enactivist approaches and spiritual epistemologies, but illuminates the vertical dimension missing in post-truth discourse where the incapacity to enliven sentences and thoughts with truthfulness remains inauthentic.

Envelopmental structures of knowing enable vertical integration across analogous orders of truth—precisely what modern consciousness progressively abandoned. The Modernist epistemological crisis thus metamorphosed into post-Modernity’s structural distortion, creating an intellectual milieu, where vertical dimensions of knowing have become increasingly opaque, if not wholly unintelligible. Unfortunately, the envelopmental structure capable of integrating immanent and transcendent dimensions that would render the post-truth condition inefficacious collapses under span-oriented and Aristotelian bivalent conditions. Whether post-truth manifests as what Nally (2021) identified as misrepresentation or what Baggini (2017)

35. The relationship between Steiner’s critique and contemporary discourse labeled as “post-truth” reveals how the post-truth non sequitur gains apparent validity through three mechanisms: (1) the misconstrual of emotional resonance as epistemologically equivalent to factual accuracy; (2) the social construction of perceived reality through mutual reinforcement that masquerades as verification; and (3) mimetic processes creating self-reinforcing systems that resist correction while appearing to constitute legitimate alternatives to truth-oriented discourse.

theorised as atrophied epistemic virtues, these developments mark an obstacle to truth inherited from an Enlightenment consciousness—the Malpasian retrieval. Thus, in order to detail the journey from crisis to crook, we must first contrast the Enlightenment era to our own era, and foreground a propensity that engenders a sociocultural antagonism between eras. As culture historically develops, the previous cultural era becomes the Devil and a cultural tool to move beyond the confines of paradigmatic structures that defined the old age or the old structures of consciousness (Wilber, 2000); ‘the God of one stage of evolution and development tends to become the Devil of the next’ (p. 269). Thus, the Nature God Pan ‘became the actual personification of the Devil for monotheism. And, at the next stage, when Reason became the God of the Enlightenment, the God of monotheistic and mythic religions became the oppressive Devil of free thought and full human potential’ (p. 269). Today, Reason—and thus the search of truth through individual effort<sup>36</sup> and transcendence—is seen as the new Devil with Gaia as the new heterarchical God(dess). Accompanying Gaia is a preference for the communal (vs agency), the feminine (vs masculine), collectivity (vs individualism), holism (vs parts), immanence (vs transcendence), and so on. The key is to distinguish a pre-Modern quality with our current post-Modern inclination toward that quality.

### From Crisis to Crook

The Malpasian retrieval of truth demands a genealogical account of how post-truth arose—not as arbitrary cultural caprice but as the structurally predictable consequence of a specific philosophical trajectory. What follows traces how the Enlightenment’s conception of rational transcendence, once delegitimised by post-Modernity, left the epistemological field open to the post-truth inversion: the path from crisis to crook. The word *crisis* has a fascinating root; etymologically, “crisis” derives from the Greek *krínō* (κρίνω) meaning “to separate and decide” and reflects the Chinese 危机 meaning *wēi* (“danger”) and *jī* (“chance/opportunity”). For Stephin Toulmin (1990), the undoing of the crisis of Modernity was a sizable task owing to the assumptions of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Rationalists that continued to shape our way(s) of thinking in post-Modern times. The agenda of the Modern was ripe with intellectual rigour, abstraction, mathematical exactitude, and idealistic certitude.<sup>37</sup> Descartes and contemporaries favoured certainty, formal logic, and permanence (*re*: universals) over humanism, rhetoric, and the transitory respectively; for 16<sup>th</sup>-century Humanists of the Renaissance—a century which *also* provided a basis for Modernity—it was best to suspend judgment about matters of general theory, and to concentrate on accumulating a rich perspective ... as we encounter them in our actual experience’ (p. 27). For Toulmin, giving credit to the originality of Renaissance thinkers implicated ‘the opening gambit of modern philosophy; [i.e.,] not the decontextualised rationalism of Descartes’ *Discourse and Meditations*, but Montaigne’s restatement of classical skepticism in the *Apology*’ (p. 42). Despite correspondence between 16<sup>th</sup>-century humanism and 21<sup>st</sup>-century values, transcendence as regards truth remains unresolved.

The “separation and decision” to forego Modernity’s quest for truth through rational transcendence—albeit a transcendence unbeknownst<sup>38</sup> to the rational mind (Wilber, 2000)—finds no resolution to the limits of rationality (*e.g.*, moratoriums on truth). The resolution follows two paths: either the envelopmental structure of higher integrative post-formal faculties beyond reason (*e.g.*, vision-logic, integral-aperspectival, meditation, knowing higher worlds, *et alia*)—found within meditative and Anthroposophical literature in the West—or the distorted structure of post-truth (*e.g.*, the elevation of sentiment over rationality). To re-

36. If we maintain strictly within post-truth literature, we can cite „harmful“ distortions such as hyper-individualism as a byproduct of post-Modernity (Kester, 2019) and individualism as a byproduct of neoliberalism and socio-economic mobility (Parker, 2020). Conversely, a weakening of individuality and spontaneity of the psychosocial subject is suggested for emotional appeal and the ‘problem of mass psychology’ (Ambrosio, 2021)—noting that „mass“ here is symbolic of the dis-qualified individual toward a purely quantitative unit of a collective (Guénon, 2004c).

37. In other words, toward universal determinism—with the Laplacian demon a socio-historical limit on the distortion of such rationality. Today, sensibilities toward local determinism—by virtue of chaos and complexity theory, the linguistic turn, *et alia*—resulted in a post-Modern way of knowing that offers a ‘sensitivity to differences [that] reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert’s homology, but the inventor’s paralogy’ (Lyotard, 1989 p. xxv).

38. Wilber (2000) noted that the *reason* „reason“ can innocently reflect upon the world as seemingly „separate“—a famous critique of Heidegger who forwarded the notion of Being-in-the-world—is due to the use of ‘reason without really knowing the ontogenetic stages that produced it. [It] is simply not immediately obvious to reason that reason itself developed or evolved’ (p. 450).

iterate Figure 1, within a domain circumscribed by sentiment and rationality alone, rationality functions as the ceiling of knowing. When post-Modernity delegitimised rationality—rightly identifying its limits, yet wrongly concluding no higher order exists—sentiment became the only remaining option within the flattened two-valued field. Post-truth is therefore the structurally inevitable consequence of the category error: the assumption that the domain of ratio and sentiment exhausts the epistemological topography. Consequently, the concept of post-truth has less to do with *conceived* truth in our shared post-Modern academic and cultural climate and more to do with a *counter-truth* against Modernity; that is to say, not *deviation* from truth, but a *subversion* thereof (Guénon, 2004c). Such an enterprise can only lead to the dissolution of truth toward what Guénon would call *infra-human* potentialities. Herein lies a trace of transcendence, for what is clearly down or below (*re: infra-*) must also admit an up; and while we will not seek an immediate answer to what precisely define *human* potentialities<sup>39</sup>—we do point out that such human potentialities are “higher” than our *infra-human* ones ... to say nothing of *supra-human possibilities* (Guénon, 2004a). Moreover, although reason differentiates (*re: arises from, goes beyond, is higher than, et cetera*) belief and emotions, reason does not have the capacity of integration beyond reason. Acknowledging the limitation of one’s rationality is the starting point of a healthy developmental cycle of post-formal<sup>40</sup> possibilities capable of integrating body and mind: a mind looking at the mind intersubjectively as opposed to operating within the mind alone (*re: reflection paradigm*). Vision-logic is aptly defined as the transitional stage of *self* between rational perspectivism and subtler consciousness structures (*e.g., aperspectivism*). Wilber (2000) defined vision-logic as recognising hierarchies within hierarchies—or holarchies within holarchies—while still maintaining a network-mind within heterarchies. Vision-logic ‘consciously grasps this [holonic] fact for the first time, and thus finds its own operation increasingly transparent to itself [emphases added]’ (p. 193). Wilber (2000) himself was inspired by the developmental angle of Jean Gebser (1985). According to Gebser, from the *rational-perspectival* of Modernity emerged (hierarchically) the *integral-aperspectival* of post-Modernity—a grand and discontinuous mutation in consciousness. For Modernity, a rational-perspectival stage can “walk in another’s shoe;” for post-Modernity, an integral-aperspectival stage can add ‘up all the perspectives tout ensemble, and therefore privileges no perspective as final: it is aperspectival’ (Wilber, 2000, p. 193). From perspectivism to aperspectivism marks a clear transcendence or mutation toward what we call a *supra-perspectivism* perspective or what Wilber (2017) called simply a ‘fourth-person perspective’ (p. 51) that emerged (*re: mutated*) within post-Modern discourse; thus, whereas post-truth is categorically “aperspectivism madness” gone dissociation, vision-logic is aperspectivism gone integral and integrative (Wilber, 2017). The Devil is in the details.

A post-truth paradigm that counters rational truth is a cultural *cul-de-sac* and, to us, a “crooked dishonest trick” (*crōc* in Old English) that does not properly differentiate<sup>41</sup> from the partiality of Reason (*i.e., the Modern Devil*). The key is to differentiate and then *integrate* prior stages into the present<sup>42</sup> rather than seek simplicity—in contradistinction to complexity—in past longings. Post-truth discourse fails to recognise that truth requires coherent unity (Malpas, 1992). As Pleshkov (2017) explained, for Plato ‘the true understanding of cosmos and logos is possible only on the level of the coherent unity of the [anterior] whole, which represents the ideal [truth] paradigm in the best possible way’ (p. 128). The Malpasian retrieval requires what Plato distinguished in the *Republic* (444c) as the contrast between “straightness” (*εὐθύ, euthú*) and “crookedness” (*σκολιόν, skolión*) in the soul’s relation to truth. In the *Sophist* (230b-c), Plato further illuminated the distinction through “twisted opinions” (*δοξῶν διαστρόφους, doxôn diastrophous*) that divorce speech from its commitment to truth, while in the *Phaedrus* (270e) he cautioned against the rhetorical

39. Taylor (2003) argued authenticity as one potentiality; Heidegger (2023) and inceptive thinking as another; the list is indefinite.

40. We keep to literature but would prefer the term *supra-formal*, *supra-rational*, or simply *post-rational*.

41. An example of proper differentiation versus dissociation is as follows: although all perspectives have their own partial truth and subjective validity (a post-Modern intellectual victory of differentiation over decontextualised truth), not all perspectives are equally valid (assumed due to a flatness).

42. Educationally and developmentally, according to Keagen, the ‘subject of one stage becomes the object of the subject of the next stage’ (as cited in Wilber, 2017, p. 256). Wilber (2017) himself found the definition applicable to both healthy and pathological development; thus, redefining to strictly define healthy development: ‘the subject in the 1st-person subjective stream (“I”) becomes an object in the 1st-person objective stream (“me”) and eventually in the 1st-person possessive stream (“mine”) ... of the next stage’s subject in the 1st-person subjective stream (“I”)’ (p. 701). Our point is simply this: that each stage is a transcendence of the previous, incommensurate stage.

“twisted complexity” (πλοκή, *plokêi*) obscuration of truth. These metaphors of distortion (“twisting the truth”) does not resolve the crisis a Malpasian retrieval aims to overcome, and only dissolves truth’s spoken character as the crook of post-truth—a path leading away from the very coherence and evolving sense of the Good. And although

part of the cure is “derepression of the shadow—that is, recontacting the lower structure [body/sentiment] that has been alienated and distorted [... it] is not at all the same as discovering the higher [supra-rational]: and it is the higher that the true healing, and true integration, can occur. (Wilber, 2000, p. 715)

Accordingly, to Coomaraswamy (1987), the psychonoetic practice of sati (*i.e.*, from mind → enveloped higher mind)—far from the Westernised psychosomatic concept of mindfulness to contact the lower structure (*i.e.*, psychosomatic; from mind → body)—prepares us for a single-instantaneous awakening (*eka-kṣaṇa-sambodhi*), toward a peace with oneself (*śāntātman*), and toward a truth of Being (*gnosis*) through a *dementation* (*amanībhāva*). Therefore, not a post-truth, but a post-rational structure toward truth—a known historical example being the Platonic *intellect*.<sup>43</sup> Utilising strictly ‘Scholastic terminology, it is the pure intellect [Buddhi/voūç] which is *habitus principiorum*, while reason is only *habitus conclusionum*’ (Guénon, 1995, p. 293). Our intent in recapitulating such metaphysical doctrine is to argue against two-valued ways of thinking and articulating to which post-truth permeates within a two-valued soul. For *without* truths beyond what the rational mind may grasp, and *with* the legitimate philosophical problematisation on the limits of rationality—one is left with sentimentality to play the dual role as both *sub*-rational and *supra*-rational modes of thinking and knowing. We find no coincidence, therefore, when we read that the symbol of the heart, traditionally the symbol for intellectual intuition, in modern times now plays the dual role for ‘affectivity’ (p. 285) owing to a collapse of ontological ideation.

## Bending over Backwards and the Dangers of a Crutch

Having delineated Modernity from post-Modernity, we now return to the crooked prefixed word. Taylor (1989) would call the modern inclination toward subjectivism philosophically ‘skewed’ (p. 102) which lends further symbolic value to our choice of the word “crook.” Any skewed truth statements that society naively accepts without due process—whether spoken or written, and emptied of spiritual content in the manner Steiner (2005) identified as dead thinking severed from its living vertical ground—are subject to error through prejudice, perspective, and bias. The remedy is greater clarity and insight gained through hard intellectual work (including work on overcoming bias within oneself). Therefore, a third-person approach—deemed rational or empirical—gleans inconsistencies and multiple perspectives to arrive at a coherent understanding for common or uncommon notions. Such a stance was never called a post-truth, simply *truth*—at least in Modern terms. The historical (*i.e.*, post-Modern) critique of Modernity is that truth at the rational or empirical level is often devoid of subject and lends itself to abstract, uniform, and mechanistic approaches to knowledge—the Heideggerean *technologia*;<sup>44</sup> all points well argued. Yet, the irony is that to achieve a *third*-person perspective one needs multiple perspectives of the historical enterprise.

Metaphysically, through the qualitative use of number, from first- to second- to third-person perspective marks a clear historical enterprise (Wilber, 2017). And a clear distinction is to be made of “contemporary perspectives” whether the movement is from third- to fourth-person perspective (*e.g.*, vision-logic) or third- to first-person perspective (*e.g.*, subjectivism). Whereas the former is a clear transcendence, the latter is what we see in post-truth culture: a “bending over backwards” to seemingly progressive and holistic *first-person* sensibilities (a sentimental “crutch”). Thus, *truth can never be a post-truth*; the impossibility exposes the non sequitur as the premise that truth is complex, situated, and difficult to articulate fully is erroneously

43. The intellect remedied the limitations of reason’s discursive and mediate character to ‘Aristotle and his Scholastic successors, for to them the intellect was in fact that faculty which possessed a direct knowledge of principles. Aristotle expressly declares that “the intellect is truer than science,” which amounts to saying that it is more true than the reason which constructs that science’ (Guénon, 2004a, p. 117).

44. With devastating consequences (*e.g.*, Nazism) which, according to Malpas (1992), was not only the fruition of Modernity taken to its technological limits, but the crisis of Europe and more generally, Modernity in general. Nazism was both the ‘destruction of transcendence’ (p. 291) and ‘destruction of the hope of modernism’ (p. 292).

concluded that sentiment can convincingly replace rational truth. While it is true that a sentimental truth is true or *right* at the sentimental order, it is simply *not* true that the same sentimental truth is more important than rational truth—except when there is a collapse or inversion of orders. And to support sentimentality at the level of rationality is a crutch (a literal “crook”)—one that does not ameliorate the complex historical situation of truth but simply makes poor concepts sound more palpable to a sentimentalism that realised them.

We close our section with a central question: is there a rightness *or* truth to the postulates of a post-truth *ideology* or *worldview* respectively? The *exaltation* of the infra-rational is ‘the tendency to see in sentiment what is most profound and most elevated in the being and to affirm the supremacy of this over intelligence;’ (Guénon, 1995, p. 285) where such a flattening ‘could not have come about except for the fact that intelligence had first been reduced to reason alone’ (p. 285). Such an exaltation of the sub-conscious becomes what the Buddhist doctrine would call a *near enemy*<sup>45</sup> to the supra-conscious. Historically, if the post-Modern, post-factual era has taught us there is no truth and the pre-Modern era (*e.g.*, Platonism, Daoism, et cetera) that there is Truth—and that such a truth is capable of being attained through hard contemplative work—we query the contextual limits of the former position. After all, just like any crooked figure is not remedied by a crutch without greater physiological effort, so, too, any crooked truth is not remedied without greater intellectual effort needed to overturn popular sentiment.

## The Drop of a Book and Other Envelopmental Stories

We now turn to three stories of the Authors that exemplify higher perspectives acquired in our lives. When the primary Author was 22, now 19 years ago, there was a moment in time that I read a single passage in John Robbins (1998) *Diet for a New America*. After reading the passage time stood still, the energy left my body, and the book, in slow motion, dropped from my hands that had not the energy to hold the book up anymore. I remember the series of statements that came to a single conclusion: the intake of milk (as excess dietary protein) decalcifies the bones. As one with a Northern European heritage and who drank litres of milk per day, and who had just decided to move away from meat and dairy products—hence why I was reading the book—the result was literally shocking. For I “knew” milk builds calcium in the bones, it was at the very cultural core of by being. I recognised, for the first time, that my set of unquestioned knowledge, inculcated culturally, was in fact not *wrong*, but bounded by spatial and temporal circumstances—“particular practices” within “particular utterances” to quote Malpas (1992). It was certainly not a post-truth, simply a partial truth, with socio-economic and socio-ecological considerations that were not within my field of knowing. The main point was the sudden realisation that happened spontaneously—that is to say, instantaneously—that if such a supposed truth was partial, what else did I “know” that was also on, what Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1993) would call, “groundless ground.” Far from a post-truth coupled with uncertainty, there was a deepening of knowing—with an accompanied realisation—at an existential level.

Another philosophical perspective comes from Dr Chunlei Lu. As a child, I often asked my parents or older friends if someone was a good or bad person—whether in life or when seen in movies. Later, I realised the simplicity of good or bad is ineffectual—incapable of going beyond a simple and shallow level of understanding; that there exists *levels* of understanding was taught to me during my years of studying Taijiquan 太极拳 in theory (and practice). At the level of a basketball rim, we see the rim as a line. With a line, we have a left and a right. Only by rising (our eyes higher than the rim) through stages of cultivation can we see the line for what it turns to: a circle. The domain of possibilities of a circle is not right and left, but equally round, centripetal, centrifugal, rotational, and so on. The line was never a line, but a circle from a limited and horizontal perspective: two incommensurate perspectives of the same idea, symbol, or thing. I also realised that the line was not incorrect, it was simply partial and appropriate to the certain level of child development—part of a deeper symbolism of the life journey that we all move through. Since my decades’

45. We appreciate Grossman’s (2011) elucidation of Buddhist scholar Buddhaghosa’s concept of „near enemies“ in contradistinction to „far-enemies;“ the latter ‘are characteristics we usually conceive of as opposites, such as love and hate, kindness and cruelty. Near enemies ... are qualities that may outwardly or superficially appear very similar, although these qualities actually profoundly differ from each other’ (p. 1035). Examples: (1) compassion and pity; (2) equanimity and indifference; and (3) Western (psycho-somatic) mindfulness and Eastern (psycho-noetic) mindfulness.

learning in Taijiquan and life, I have come to deepen my understanding of the symbolism of the line and the circle even more. Symbolism itself matches the consciousness that contemplates what is symbolised. For me, the circle is not static, but dynamic; a dynamic circle is again incommensurate with a static perspective, the latter perspective being a simple snapshot of the entire process of life. Moreover, the external symbol became an inward reflection capable of addressing many aspects of life. One such aspect is the symbol of Taiji 太极. When I was younger, the symbol represented two halves that acted as contraries. Deepening the understanding of the symbol, I noticed the symbol was one of complementarities. A complementary perspective recognises the double or mixed nature within all things, including within ourselves (*e.g.*, we are not all good or all bad). Higher expressions of the symbol was disclosed to me much later, that of the *interpenetration* of the yin 阴 and the yang 阳 within all phenomenal things—whether in hierarchical or heterarchical ways. This is a more precise meaning of Taiji: Wu ji er tai ji 无极而太极 (Endlessness is the end).

Last, in the case of Dr Darren Stanley, I recall as a young graduate student being introduced to Bernt Capra's<sup>46</sup> 1990 film, *Mindwalk*, a story about a poet, a politician, and a physicist, who met on the tidal island of Mont Saint-Michel and ended up reflecting upon and sharing with one another their own personal worries and woes. As they spent the day connecting and disconnecting, like the tides, they contemplated and discussed not only politics and philosophy but also spirituality, matters of ecology, and the scientific. I watched the three strangers meander along stone-cobbled streets around the cathedral-topped island, now cut off from the mainland, and take in their conversations. Their individual perspectives, and not merely their worldly concerns, began to open up a new, more complex, perspective for me; not simply a richer perspective through multiplicity, but a higher lens through integration; therefore, not simply more lenses, but a new lens, the lens being complexity. Complexity suggested to me rich patterns and concepts far beyond what I can see and understand. As the story comes to an end, the poet ends their day-long contemplations with some lines from Pablo Neruda: 'I walked around as you do, investigating//the endless star,//and in my net, during the night, I woke up naked,//the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside the wind.' And, so, I look into my own net and wonder how it draws from this endless sea—this endless seeing—and leave so much behind...for another day? Perhaps my net needs mending, but I have come to find so much more than I have ever caught before. From the holes to the wholes and then even greater, integrated wholes. Clearly, there is much more to learn, much more to see and understand, but I surmise that there is so much more than I *can* see. As the tide begins to come back in, the trio leave the island and this medieval island off the coast of Normandy becomes, once again, seemingly cut off from the world around it on this "groundless ground."

## Deliberating A Path Toward Epistemological Depth

In understanding stability, the tendency is to think our eyes are what keep us balanced. Yet, it is our ears that do so through our vestibular system—in tandem with interrelated brain mechanisms. When there is imbalance, it is usually through contradictory visuals our brain receives. Stability, then, is more sonorous than our field of vision. Similarly, "truth rings true" is an application of sonorous symbolism. The concept of post-truth simply does not ring true, and the most obvious reason may be in the hearing of the compound word, for anything sentimental cannot itself be true at the rational order when properly viewed within an epistemological framework *en-framing* depth over flatness.

As our etymological and conceptual analysis has suggested, post-truth represents neither a progression beyond truth nor a coherent philosophical position, but rather what Malpas and Tesich originally recognised: a concerning cultural condition. Both pointed toward the need for retrieval rather than rejection and their insights—misappropriated in subsequent literature—reinforce our central thesis that post-truth constitutes a counter-truth disguised as an intellectual *non sequitur*; born from a category error, the post-truth concept is shallow, etymologically vague, and a conceptual necessity (*re: crutch*) to support a limited domain of validity. The path forward demands both philosophical vigilance and educational re-imaginings. By recognising truth

46. The brother of Fritjof Capra.

paradigms as envelopmental rather than remaining wedded to flat and material bivalence, Philosophers of Education can expand rather than flatten epistemological topographies—a requirement to the very Taylorian articulation that gives coherence to our evolving sense of the Good. A project against aperspectival madness demands the integration of rational discernment and spiritual insight rather than propagating empty signification—the structural dimensions of which, including the ordered process of discernment and the transformation paradox, are elaborated in the companion paper. The educational implications are significant: when teaching and scholarship reject the crookedness of post-truth discourse, they re-open pathways to what Neufeld (2009) aptly termed “saving truths” and Clark’s (2019) “*non*-post-truths” that restore depth and meaning to knowledge practices within truth paradigms.

We conclude where we began: with the recognition that truth cannot be “post” without ceasing to be truth. Thus, we argue that labelling post-truth as a *non sequitur* is the first step toward a “saving truth” of truth—to recoup ‘values associated with the era of truth, such as veracity, accountability, authenticity’ (Benesch, 2020, para. 2) as a meaningful Good (Taylor, 1989, 2003) and dialogue within languaging (Malpas, 1992). Considering the alternative, if post-truth is not a *non sequitur*, and we somehow live in disparate worldviews of “truth” and “post-truth” with the illusion of choice, such Malpasian attempts of retrieving truth would be “futile” (Benesch, 2020). The caveat, however, is that we *problematized* that we exist within a post-truth worldview; we find the propagation of the academic narrative supporting a post-truth worldview in educational philosophical discourse *problematic*. In the spirit of *parrhesia* and *vigilia*, Philosophers of Education are uniquely positioned to counteract the post-truth *non sequitur* by restoring the vertical dimension to truth—not merely as transcendence in the Malpasian rejection of exclusivity, but as the envelopmental structure that embraces both immanence and transcendence in their proper relation. We find such a task of unravelling spiritual knowing in the philosophy of education worthy of our times.

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