

Theorising Post-Truth: A Postmodern Phenomenon

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In times of universal deceit, telling the truth will be a revolutionary act.
—George Orwell

Introduction

Any discussion of post-truth implies an assumed understanding of truth. In order to analyse post-truth, one has to at first grapple, with the notion of truth. Does truth refer to facts and evidence? Can we access an objective truth and if there never was any ‘real’ truth and only truths, then what is this sudden fuss over post-truth and what are its implications? These questions in themselves pose a very postmodernist scepticism about the truth in general.

If truth then is so precarious, then what are the theoretical groundings of the post-truth. In my paper I will critically evaluate the phenomenon of post-truth and its relationship with postmodernism, accentuated with the rise of social media. There has been an evident surge in the academic publications on post-truth with writers like, Michiku Kakutani, Lee McIntyre and Ari Rabin-Havt along with Palgrave Macmillan anthology on Post-truth and contemporary society shows the urgency of the post-truth debate.

Post-truth today as it exist, is an extreme manipulation of the fertile grounds laid by postmodern theories. Both cultural critic Kakutani and McIntyre hurriedly trace Trump era post-truth politics which has had a ripple effect through out the world, with the rise of the right wingers to the postmodernism. Trump or other right wing politicians may not quote Foucault, Derrida or Lyotard but as McIntyre writes “the germ of the idea made its way to them.” The paper will analyse the “germ” in the more nuanced perspective of the major postmodernist theories and its direct or indirect bearings on the present post-truth scenario.

With contenders like “Brexit” and “Altright”, post-truth won the race for 2016 word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries. Given the political undercutting of the words in the list, it is clear that post-truth translated the tenors of the time. The two historic decisions namely, US presidential election and the Brexit vote in the recent history were dominated by sensational lying and obfuscation of facts, undermining the notion of truth. During the Brexit vote, many buses carried false statistics that UK sends 350 million euros a week to EU, while Trump famously lied about almost everything. These two landmark events in ways more than one, shaped the present century and signal the advent of the era of post-truth, where post does not necessarily mean that we are past the era of truth but rather the prevalent marginalisation and trivialisation of truth.

According to the Oxford Dictionaries “post-truth” is explained as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” Before “post-truth” took over, Stephen Colbert had coined a new term called truthiness to capture Donald Trump’s persistent reliance on his “guts” and instinct in his grave decisions. Truthiness refers to the “feeling of truth” for a person, unsupported by any evidence or facts. The post-truth reality is alarmingly reminiscent of the cold war propaganda of 1945-1950. Hannah Arendt reflects in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist.” As well predicted, today facts have become fiction, with the ever increasing lexicon of post-truth, words like “truth decay”, in the strategic denial of facts and more words like “fake news” and “alternative facts”. The word “fake” has entered in every aspect of our lives. “Fake science” is the science produced by climate change deniers. “Fake history” in the form of the holocaust revisionist. “Fake followers” and even “fake likes” and “shares” in the facebook, twitter and instagram, generated by bots (computer programming).

Post-Truth: Propaganda and Social Media

Aristotle defined truth in *Metaphysics* as “to say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true” (Metaphysics 1011 b25). Aristotelian view of truth is a philosophical and metaphysical understanding of the ‘real’ and ‘truth’ which essentially runs on the logic of “correspondence”. Plato’s object based truth relied on the subject-predicate structure of the sentence and led to the famous problems of the falsehood because according to Plato in a sophist argument, one cannot judge falsely. In order to judge falsely, one has to judge what is not, but one cannot judge what is not and hence false judgment is impossible. The fact based view of truth came up in 20th century with philosophers like David Hume (*Treatise*), John Stuart Mill (*Logic*), G. E. Moore (*Truth and Falsity*) and Bertrand Russell (*The Nature of Truth*) and is also perhaps the

most pragmatic view of the truth. Moore and Russel forcefully advocated fact based truth as ,“thus a belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact” (*Problems of Philosophy*, 1912 129). However, with the onset of post-truth politics, meaning of truth has transformed from fact to fiction, from reason and logic to rhetoric and emotions. This disturbing shift is dangerously manifested in the rise of populism and fundamentalism worldwide. Lets analyse the post-truth reality with an example.

For e.g., if it is said that “Mughals never ruled over India”, this statement is contrary with the statement like “Mughals ruled India from 1526 to 1857”. Both statements cannot be true and in order to ascertain the truth, we need to find out about the Mughal rule in India. Once we determine the fact, the statement contrary to it is either wrong or a deliberate misrepresentaion of the truth/fact by someone who should know better or is simply lying to manipulate the audience.

Welcome to the post-truth era, here the assertion that Mughals never ruled India will incorporate the whole system of documentation to be used as facts, opinionated experts to educate the masses about its veracity and the hired section of members of the archival network who will reiterate the claim along with the social media machinery with millions of likes and shares to prove its authenticity. So the statement that Mughals never ruled over India becomes “true” because of this “network/nexus of agreement” and if any dares to question the claim, it is interpreted as an attack on the whole system of knowing and not the statement itself. Thus posttruth is not just about alternate facts as the other side of the story (as it is often projected using postmodernist logic) or the misrepresentaion of facts, falsification of data, unintentional lying, deceiving or political spin. In a clear refutation of the objective facts, post-truth challenges not just the idea of knowing truth but the very existence of truth is gasping for oxygen. Michiku in her latest book, *The Death of Truth* defines post-truth as “where truth increasingly seems to be in the eye of the beholder, facts are fungible and socially constructed.”

When Trump called the climate change, a Chinese hoax to ruin the American economy, the point to note is that the climate change deniers will negate the fact that don’t conform to their ideology and hence no climate change. It is not just the careless disregard or the complete abandonment of facts, the post-truth thrives in the manipulation of the process and the corruption of the machinery by which facts are gathered and then used to shape people’s opinion about issues. And post-truth flourishes as people cherry pick only those facts which suits their beliefs, generating information silos. News silos are created on social media not only with the sharing of the stories but also with the ‘trending stories’ phenomenon which will display only those stories that one is more inclined to watch, according to its recorded history of likes and shares. This creates fragmentation and polarisation of views, “an endless you loop.” Hence the whole machinery(of network of agreement) is employed to manufacture facts that suits the political interests. Post-truth is thus more like a an

“ideological supremacy” in compelling and convincing people to believe in something without any reliable evidence for it. Using the emotive power, it often appropriates the cultural and nationalist language to generate consensus. In his TED talk in 2011, Eli Pariser, left-wing internet activist working against the web personalisation accurately cautions, “if they’re going to decide what we get to see and what we don’t get to see, then we need to make sure that they’re not just keyed to relevance but that they also show us things that are uncomfortable or challenging or important, other points of view.” (3)

Al Gore in his *Assault on Reason* reprimands Bush’s disastrous decision to invade Iraq on the false pretext of WMD “the persistent and sustained reliance on falsehoods as the basis of policy, even in the face of massive and well-understood evidence to the contrary.” The Iraq war was based on the same post-truth logic of orchestrated intelligence to support “preconceived ideas fixes” using the rhetoric of America’s ‘war on terror’. Ari Rabin-Havt in his *Lies Incorporated* unravels the hidden nexus between the economic interests and post-truth politics, by demonstrating that the corporate funding and lobbying determines the political positions on topics like global warming, abortion, guns, immigration and even healthcare.

Post-truth has become synonymous with political control. After all, blatant lying or misrepresentation of facts or deceiving or beguiling masses is nothing new. Hitler’s close associate and the Propaganda Minister of Nazi, Joseph Goebbels, known for his virulent speeches, not only engineered the Final Solution but also convinced the Germans of its urgent necessity. Deborah E Lipstadt, a renowned American historian asserts in *Denying the Holocaust*, the dangerous implications of post-truth where “no fact, no event, and no aspect of history has any fixed meaning or content. Any truth can be retold. Any fact can be recast. There is no ultimate historical reality.”

What has given the post-truth its credibility and what are its tools on which it operates so successfully? Why is it that truth and reason have become such an endangered species? What has made the people normalise their indifference to truth?

In order to understand the tragic demise of truth and the evolution of post-truth, we have to go back to the postmodernism as a philosophical theoretical understanding of the world that permeated in the art, history, culture, literature and even clothes and architecture, post-world wars. Post-truth gets its legitimacy from the postmodern premise of the impossibility of any objective truth.

Postmodernism: The Rise of Multiple Truths

Postmodernism emerged as a seminal concept with Jean Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* in 1979 where he describes the postmodern era as the disillusionment with the grand claims of the meta narrative on “reason”, “truth” and “progress”, which were the hallmarks of the Enlightenment Project. The modern period began with the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason, famously called in Britain. Espoused by thinkers like Kant in Germany, Voltaire and Diderot in France and Locke and Hume in Britain, the Enlightenment project believed

in reason and logic to be the foundations on which human progress can be laid. Enlightenment also coincided with the scientific vision undermining slavish obedience to the religions and traditional practices in glorifying the primacy of reason in the human civilisation. The French Revolution and its successful ideals were the ultimate litmus test for the Enlightenment theory of progress and justice. Jurgen Habermas makes a very careful connection between the modernism and post-modernism in his insightful essay entitled as “Modernity: An Incomplete Project” in 1980, where he reprimands Derrida and Foucault in their attack on reason, clarity, truth, and progress.

The end of the modernism and the beginning of the post-modernism can be traced in Beckett’s waiting for Godot, where Godot, the God or any totalising discourse remains present/absent and Vladimir and Estragon are endlessly waiting for the Godot who never appears in the play but is constantly evoked. The bare and minimal props and confusing cyclical game of language signals the transition from the modernism to post modernism. The emphasis on impressionism, subjectivity, the theme of fragmentation and alienation, discontinuous narrative, blurring of the distinction between genres and increasing tendency towards reflexivity are common to modernism and post modernism. While in the modernism there is a feeling of nostalgia and lamentation towards the lost order of progress and rationality, the post-modernism seems to celebrate the collapse of fixities, as a liberating escape. W. B. Yeats famous poem “The Second Coming”

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Written in 1919, the poem mourns the loss of order and justice in the present world, the situations in Europe escalating to the World War. The poem has been recently used in many newspaper articles by editors in the aftermath of Trump’s presidency as it captures the new reality. Significantly, Yeats poem is modernist and not postmodernist. The poem harks back to “the ceremony of innocence” and the “best” who “lack conviction”. The poem reminds the readers about the birth of Christ to save the humanity as its saviour but ends in the birth of a “rough beast” slouching “towards Bethlehem to be born”? In *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, the narrator similarly mourns “these fragments I have shored against my ruins” in despair and nihilism. The decentering of the grand narrative also deconstructed identity as always in the state of being and a socially constructed entity which is not static and is determined by the prism of gender, race, ethnicity and other local contexts.

Lyotard in the *Postmodern Condition* uses the Wittgenstein's model of language games (uses in speech act theory) in his critique of science and advocated that science works on the same precarious model of creating knowledge like art and literature. According to him, the text is the amalgamation of two different language games namely

an 'expert' and a 'philosopher'. While an expert knows what he knows and what he doesn't, philosophers knows nothing and merely creates doubts with question. Thus their projection of knowledge "makes no claims to being original or even true," and that his hypotheses "should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised" (Lyotard 1984, 7). For Lyotard, the narrative of knowledge is disintegrated into "clouds" of linguistic combinations of numerous heterogeneous language game. The break of continuous meta-narrative leads to multiple subjectivities denying any coherence to form stable identity. By questioning the process of legitimation as one of the language game, Lyotard considers performativity as new criterion of legitimating and in the instantaneous communication technologies, whatever that cannot be disseminated as information is either deligitimised or excluded. Lyotard suggested this model of knowledge system requires paralogy, paradoxical language games with the continuous reinvention of the "new" and denied any system of knowledge based on "progressive development of consensus". Thus paralogy becomes a source of legitimation in the postmodern society. According to Lyotard, science as a meta-narrative also uses its own rules, invention, theories and experiments in the language game of paralogy to produce new knowledge. Christopher Butler summarises the postmodernist stance on science as, "seen as no more than quasi narratives which compete with all the others for acceptance. They have no unique or reliable fit to the world, no certain correspondence with reality. They are just another form of fiction." (15) The dethroning of science in the heydays of scientific discoveries led to the serious academic debate between the sciences and the humanities.

Another major development in the literary theory that pivoted postmodernism into the mainstream discourse from being an avant garde or experimental, is Derrida's deconstruction which is also analogous to the rise of poststructuralism. Structuralism derived from linguistic, essentially inherited a confident scientific outlook which believes in method, system, reason and reliable truth. Poststructuralism takes its bait from philosophy. Nietzsche's famous remark "There are no facts, only interpretations" sets the mood for the poststructuralist which intensifies the philosophy's scepticism and deride the scientific confidence of ever knowing truth as misleading.

Ferdinand de Saussure was a key figure in the development of linguistics in 1960's. He emphasised that words (signifier) and objects (signified) have no logical connection. The meanings thus produced is arbitrary (unscientific) and is established by conventions. Based on such arbitrary system of signification, language is not the mirror of the world or of the experience, rather language shapes the world for us. Saussure further explained that meanings of the words are 'relational', or in association with other words and no word can be explained in isolation. Furthermore Saussure emphasised that words don't have any intrinsic fixed meanings. For example, terrorist for some could be a freedom fighter for others.

Poststructuralist exploited the arbitrariness of language into creating a universe of radical uncertainties insurrecting anxieties about possibility of achieving any knowledge

or meanings through language. According to Derrida, “all identities, presences, predications, etc., depend for their existence on something outside themselves, something which is absent and different from themselves.”

Reality according to Derrida is a “free play” of difference (word coined by Derrida) and identities are not real or fixed, rather they are primarily a linguistic construct. Since meanings are relational and always changing (differential), the reality is always postponed and delayed (deferred). Following the “deconstructivist” approach, the postmodernist call all worldviews into question because the meanings that constitute that world view cannot be ascertained objectively. Knowledge, meaning and identity are all contextual since they are determined by the race, gender, nationality, tradition, culture and hence reality itself is relative. Derrida finds this “free-play” of meanings without any fixed centers as liberating much like Roland Barthe’s joyous declaration of “The Death of the Author”. Steven Connor traces the development of postmodernism from the period of “accumulation” in 1970 to the “syncretic period” in 1980 to the 1990’s,

In this decade, “postmodernism” slowly but inexorably ceased to be the condition of things in the world, whether the world of art, culture, economics, politics, religion, or war, and became a philosophical disposition, an all-too-easily recognizable (and increasingly dismissable) style of thought and talk...entered popular lexicon to signify loose, sometimes dangerously loose, relativism. Now its dominant associations were with postcolonialism, multiculturalism and identity politics. So whereas Postmodernism had expanded its reach in the academic discussion, it had shrunk down into a casual term of abuse in a more popular discourse. Postmodernism had become autonomous from its objects. (7)

The uncontrollable technological mediation transformed the postmodern human experience into series of images and codes developing the idea of reality as representation. Jean Baudrillard introduced the concept of ‘hyperreality’ signifying the loss of real with the infinitude of images from television and now social media has substituted the real without any external referent. Thus in a nut shell, what is represented is the representation of it. Baudrillard in his essay “Simulacra and Simulations” foregrounds the culture of hyperreality where any distinction between the real and imagined or reality and illusion or surface and depth is completely eroded. When a sign which is a signifier of an object is no longer an index of the signified reality, then the whole system of signification becomes a simulacrum and a sign reaches to a point where it bears no semblance with the reality and the sign transform “its own pure simulacrum.” (Baudrillard 1981, 6) The hyperreal according to Baudrillard is “that which is always already reproduced.” (Baudrillard 1976, 73) Hyperreal as endless circle of simulation simulating itself.

The loss of the real made Baudrillard to conclude in his essay “The Gulf War Never Happened” in 1991 and what was seen were just images conforming to the hyperreality. While Baudrillard was much criticised for his postmodernist apathy for the suffering and the victims of the war in his complete denial of the war, his concept of hyperreality

can be easily noticed in the post-truth era where fake twitter and facebook accounts operating as robots. In the continuous dissemination of the selected images which are completely divorced or even just the contrary to the verifiable fact, Baudrillan simulations create alternate reality. The hyperreal culture in the form of morphed and photoshopped images of the self and the world operates in the narcissistic denial of the real. These technologically mediated images and the experiences (hyperreal) with its “viral” effect has been used and misused to programme and monitor people, their behaviour and choices. Baudrillard gave the example of Disneyland in America to show how a sign conceals itself, today one can think of online gaming or virtual games with its life like semblance, simulates the human experience as virtual existence so much so that individuals who are addict, gets disoriented and cannot differentiate between what is real and illusory.

Postmodernism under Attack: Reclaiming Truth or Moving towards Post-Truth

The postmodern discourse came under severe scanner with two major incidents in the academia. The Alan Sokal hoax and Paul de Man’s wartime writings. Paul de Man scandal arose in 1987 when a young Belgian scholar working on Paul de Man discovered that de Man had authored more than 100 pro-Nazi articles for *Le Soir* during the Second World War, de Man’s apparent anti-semitic writings came under severe ire but the real threat to the postmodernism erupted in the Derrida’s defense of de Man’s war time collaborationist writing as ambiguous. Derrida used the same deconstructive approach to absolve de Man of any moral responsibility. Paul de Man’s irrational defence by the deconstruction school spearheaded by Derrida (seen as a threat to deconstruction itself), is one of the lowest point that led to questioning of the postmodernism and its intellectual vacuity. Another event in the academia that polarised the sciences with humanities was Alan Sokal’s denunciation of postmodernism.

Alan Sokal, the Physics professor at New York University in 1996 wrote a hoax article “Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity” and send it to *Social Text*, a leading journal of postmodernism. Sokal was convinced that if he sounded inexplicable and full of jargons, he would get it published. Sokal’s article was accepted and published. Sokal on the same day published another article in another journal revealing the hoax and thereby showing the hollowness of the postmodernist theory. Ironically the hoax article was published in the edition that was dedicated to “The Science War”. Sokal explains his hoax as:

a pastiche [of] Derrida and general relativity, Lacan and topology, Irigaray and quantum gravity—held together by vague references to “nonlinearity”, “flux”, and “interconnectedness”. Finally, I jump (again without argument) to the assertion that “post modern science” has abolished the concept of objective reality. Nowhere in all of this is there anything resembling a logical sequence of thought; one finds only citations of authority, plays on words, strained analogies, and bald assertions”

Sokal’s satire on postmodernist theory was due to his anger on postmodernist’s glorification of the mystification and obscurantism in place of clarity reason and logic.

Sokal further contends:

Theorizing about “the social construction of reality” won’t help us to find an effective treatment for AIDS or devise strategies for preventing global warming. Nor can we combat false ideas in history, sociology, economics, and politics if we reject the notions of truth and falsity.

However, neither the Sokal hoax nor the Paul de Man controversy dissipated the postmodernist theory, rather it now became a handy tool for the far right (politicians and corporations) in order to deny the scientific truths especially the climate change debate. Judith Warner in her article “Fact Free Science” claims that questioning facts and “revealing the myths” which was the practice of left has shifted base to radical right now in questioning the global warming. In consensus with Judith Warner, Lynch Connor explicates in an article:

If there are really no facts and only interpretations, and if millions of Americans are ready to unthinkingly embrace your perspective, then why bother adhering to a rigid line that separates fact from fiction? If you interpret a period of cold weather as evidence that climate change isn’t happening, and if millions of other people agree with your point of view, then climate change is a hoax. If your subjective experience perceives record attendance at the inauguration, then there was record attendance—aerial photographs that prove otherwise are simply illustrating another perspective.

Lee McIntyre in his recent book on Post-Truth raises similar questions “how can we be sure that postmodernism has made the jump from right-wing science denial to the full-blown, reality-bending brand of skepticism that is post-truth (270)?” Here the role of internet and social media is very crucial in using the postmodernist doubt into post-truth Baudrillian hyperreality. McIntyre explains “One cannot understand the rise of post-truth (or Trump) without acknowledging the importance of the alternative media. Without Breitbart, Infowars, and all of the other alt-right media outlets”. (272)

Did Postmodernism Lead to Post-Truth?

However Aaron Hanlon in his article, “Postmodernism didn’t cause Trump. It explains him.” in Washington Post ,provides an astute analysis where he claims that the writers blaming postmodernism for the rise of “Trumpism” and alt-rite relativism fail to provide any link and in their insistence behave themselves more like postmodernist (Kakutani and McIntyre). Hanlon accepts that “populist right employs relativist arguments”, “But simply because this happens after postmodernism doesn’t mean it happens because of postmodernism”. McIntyre documents in detail the tobacco Industry alternate research programme with right wing think tanks and the corporates to fight against the scientific claim that tobacco causes cancer. He concludes “So it’s a massive category error to call Trump’s post-truth politics “postmodernist.” It’s just the say-anything chicanery of the old-fashioned sales pitch”. Hanlon makes a very nuanced distinction between Cernovich and Postmodernist theorist. Mike Cernovich is right wing ideologue, conspiracy theorist, Trump supporter who has been credited

with the steady stream of “fake news”. He famously generated Hillarys Health tweets that she was dying, with 250,000 twitter followers, he is believed to have significantly influenced people’s views. Here Hanlon criticises the devaluation of postmodernist theory as:

Cernovich may—if he’s not lying to sow yet more discord—draw on postmodernist theory to fuel misinformation, but Fredric Jameson’s reflections on conspiracy theory (“the poor person’s cognitive mapping in the postmodern age”) aren’t what’s convincing people to believe that climate change is a hoax.

However, the same Cernovich in an interview in *New York Times* in 2016 contends, “Look, I read postmodernist theory in college. If everything is a narrative, then we need alternatives to the dominant narrative. I don’t look like a guy who reads Lacan, do I?” (Marantz, “Trolls For Trump”), a facile statement in itself, clearly destabilises Hanlon’s argument.

In a clear defence of postmodern theory, Hanlon dismisses the post-truth as related to postmodernism, and reduce it to the the political dissimulation which is as old as the recorded history, but one can argue as presented in my analysis that post-truth is more than just deliberate falsehood, it’s the widespread acceptance of that deliberate falsehood which is a cause of concern as it gets warped under “point of view” logic of postmodernism. Daniel Dennet, a famous American philosopher who is also a cognitive scientist and has done extensive research in the philosophy of mind agrees in an interview given to the *The Guardian* in 2017, that postmodernism is to be entirely blamed for post-truth.

Philosophy has not covered itself in glory in the way it has handled this [questions of fact and truth]. Maybe people will now begin to realise that philosophers aren’t quite so innocuous after all. Sometimes, views can have terrifying consequences that might actually come true. I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil. They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts. You’d have people going around say: “Well, you’re part of that crowd who still believe in facts.

Although postmodernism is today seen as a threat to the truth and has been exploited by the far right to manipulate the possibility of alternate discourse, one cannot fail to point out that postmodernism is also the Godfather of postcolonial studies and the questioning of the grand narrative of white’s man burden, an imperialist/colonial enterprise. Postmodernism has made valid the truths and realities of the marginal and the subaltern by acknowledging the existence of mini narratives of resistance and protest.

Postmodern theories are the product of various thinkers from different disciplines, Hayden White uses postmodernist discourse in history. In “Historical text as a literary artifact”, White argues that historical writing uses techniques of literary writing and it derives meaning from its “narrativity” thereby eliminating any claims of objective or scientific history. In other words using postmodernist discourse he revealed the

“textuality of history”. In literature, it led to postcolonialism and decolonial studies countering the western hegemony as the Empire begins to write back. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is a groundbreaking analysis of deconstructing the western hegemony and the “orientals” as a western construct. It is through postmodernist discourse of deconstruction that Aimé Césaire would rewrite Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in inspiring decolonial movements where the enslaved Caliban becomes the hero aspiring for freedom from Prospero, the Coloniser. Similarly, Achebe’s rejection of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* with the apparent racism interrogated the western canon of literature. The rise of the Dalit literature and autobiographies supported the Dalit movement in India, advocated by B. R. Ambedkar, essentially led to the rise of political parties like Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Uttar Pradesh by Mayawati.

In the Feminist theory, 1960s is the most radical period, empowered with the postmodernist ideologies of questioning the patriarchy, French feminist like Hélène Cixous argued for *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) in order to celebrate the female body. And recently the LGBT studies emerged in the gender discourse with critics like Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* opened the debate on the ‘third gender’ and the concept of gender (different from sex) as social construct that lies in its ‘performativity’. It led to such far-reaching impact like the invalidation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and subsequent decriminalisation of homosexuality by the Supreme Court in 2018. Owing to the environmental concerns of the present century, postmodernism also incorporated the ecosystem in a unique and innovative study of the environment and literature called ecocriticism. It led to the ‘Association for the Study of Literature and Environment’ in 1992. Postmodern manifestation can be seen in art, paintings and architecture, it led to dissolution of boundaries with multiple creative expressions.

Thus, one can contend that postmodernism is not a monolith. As a nuanced and complex discourse, its significance cannot be rejected in the aftermath of post-truth debacle as maintained by Kakutani and McIntyre. In its absolute repudiation of the any objective truth, it played in the hands of corporations and politicians, with vested interest to manufacture alternate truth, seeking popular support through social media campaign. Post-truth, however, is most certainly not the logical outcome of postmodernism which originally emerged to protect the rights of poor, marginal and vulnerable by resisting the authority. Post-truth is the exploitation of postmodernist tendencies that has made people receptive of their predisposed beliefs and ideologies, causing information silos and further polarisation of views which is quite the contrary of the postmodern ideals.

I will conclude by asserting that though post-truth can be traced to postmodernism, in its theoretical manifestation of denying objective truth, yet the bizarre and surreal outcomes of post-truth politics are the exact premises which the postmodernist theories resisted. Postmodernism was the product of its time (cultural, social and political changes in the Europe) and its corruption in the form of post-truth is the new reality of virtual times (internet, social media and fake news). One can resist and negate post-

truth but one can not deny or undo the possible changes and the progress made by the postmodernist theory in all aspects of our lives.

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