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Colloquium Rationale: Beyond Truth

According to the Religious, Political, Philosophical, and Visual

I was brought up in a Catholic household. After moving across the country to attend university, I slowly began to deconstruct my religious worldview. The deconstruction was a particularly brutal and existentially upsetting experience, especially since it was accompanied by my living alone during the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, learning became my consolation, central fascination, and eventual deliverance as religious studies, philosophy, psychology, and photography offered new interpretations and a broadening of perspective. Academia welcomed me into a new world of perhapses. My sophomore year, I took a course called *Photographing Peace*, where I discovered my passion for visual storytelling, and *Political Theology*, where the Book of Genesis was interpreted not as literal scripture or historical text, but as a poetic, foundational narrative. For the first time, the words that I had been wrestling with in an hopeless attempt to either falsify or justify as fundamental Truth were presented to me as living poetry. It is an understatement to say this new dialectical interpretation was healing. It was in this class that I realized my intellectual interest in worldview and the genealogy of Truth. I identified with 19th century European philosophers marking the end of the Enlightenment Era, such as Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx, who were critically analyzing inherited conceptual and social structures, observing the theologian instinct in everything, trailblazing a new relationship to the unknown, and carefully reimagining a revolutionary worldview. In this way, my academic venture has reflected my personal relationship to truth, and I am thrilled to share what I have found.

Introduction

"Having a camera doesn't give the photographer carte blanche to ignore the question of who is being photographed, where and why. Every image should be a choice, made over and over again, by an individual acutely aware of their purpose and intentions." - Dina Litovsky, *In The Flash*

As a budding photographer and photojournalist, I have spent my time in university laying the foundation for a mindful career in visual storytelling, where the question of Truth cannot not be taken lightly. Truth, as I have come to understand, is an indefinite life force we believe in and live by. Each form of Truth taken in my interdisciplinary research has exposed its character as an ineffable phenomenon that cannot be limited to a singular definition. In this way, Truth can only be referred to via metaphor: such as a God, or as a photo. Throughout the course of my academic concentration I have identified the reduction of Truth to a fixed, didactic message as the birthplace of harm, misinformation, oppression, and tyranny. Given the essential role Truth plays in meaning making, while I have come to understand the deconstruction of Truth as crucial to social justice and the progression of history, I have also wrestled with the question: What is next? After deconstructing inherited paradigms, instead of compulsory Truth replacements, for example the rise of capital economy post-Enlightenment, I make a case for the reimagination of Truth. We will move beyond Truth through engaging in the liminal space between antithetical values, and reintegrating poetic insight. Here, we will watch creativity emerge and identify itself as a form of social justice with revolutionary potential. My Senior Colloquium will follow these themes as they have appeared in my interdisciplinary research, presenting an epistemological inquiry into the "Truths" of religion, science, culture, political economy, philosophy, psychology, and photography. In my Colloquium, I will ask the following questions: What is Truth? What is the origin of Truth? How does Truth emerge interdisciplinarily? What are cross-disciplinary examples of the harm of Truth?Who encourages the movement beyond Truth in these disciplines? What are cross-disciplinary examples of the movement beyond Truth? How do these discussions on seeking Truth inform my career in journalism and visual storytelling? Ultimately, my academic concentration presents an inquiry into what lies Beyond Truth.

Beyond the omnipotence of Truth

Identifying Truth and categorical thinking as inherited, perspectival, and tyrannical

Before we can begin to understand the belief in Truth, and thereby the paradigms under which we live, we must first recognize them as inherited through investigating the genealogy of Truth. Although I am interested in the idea of universal Truth, my research has focused primarily on the Western construction of Truth in contemporary American culture. In his essay, *Political Poetics: Narrative Imagination and the Art of Politics*, William Adams argues that "the heart of any political culture is a bundle of 'narratives' that constitute it… because political culture is always in some measure 'poetic', political knowledge is always poetic knowledge" (Adams 2). Social things, according to Adams, are all creatively envisioned and fabricated. An inquiry into the centrality of foundational narratives provides insight into the Western political imagination. So, in order to understand society, one must first understand its fiction, by examining Truth genealogically.

Truth as inherited: Genesis as a foundational narrative

I define inherited truths as ideas that are passed on culturally and genealogically, which after long usage appear to a population to be unequivocal. Let us begin by considering the Bible as a foundational narrative, and the cornerstone of contemporary values in American culture. Familiar moral ideals, such as the power of speech and categorical thinking, reveal themselves to the Western eye in the origin story of the abrahamic religions.

The Book of Genesis begins with verse 1:3: "And God said, 'Let there be light': and there was light". According to this origin story, in the beginning of existence, there was Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Word is designated as the predecessor to life, and intrinsically related to the Divine. The power of Logos, or the Word of God, is immediately established in this foundational narrative when Word spoke existence into existence.

After the establishment of language immediately follows dichotomous classification, as seen in Genesis 1:4: "And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness". In this foundational narrative, God draws a division between light and dark, good and evil, man and woman (Genesis 1:27), and heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1), by immediately situating them in diametric opposition. The influence of the Abrahamic narrative on contemporary Western culture is clear when considering the examples in which the two-world view is not universal. One example is the cultural value of interconnectedness in Eastern countries with Buddhist majorities such as Cambodia, Thailand, and Tibet. Further, the cultural particularity of Anglo-American values is obvious when considering Indigenous North American traditions, wherein the mutual exclusivity is not upheld between man and woman, as embodied in the Two Spirit cultural, spiritual, sexual, and gender identity.

As I will argue throughout the remainder of my rationale, dichotomous thinking is fundamentally a Judeo Christian invention, and serves as the bedrock for categorical thinking in general. By examining their origins in foundational narrative, we have a deeper understanding of the character of these rigid, canonical Truths. The translation of scripture and the invention of the printing press, coupled with the revival of Platonism during the Renaissance, inaugurated the dualistic worldview as a primary mode of Western thinking. The influence of Genesis is one example of the unexamined epistemological inheritance of fundamental truths by contemporary Western culture.

Truth as perspectival: On the illusions of Truth

When we culturally inherit a Truth that has become de-contextualized, rhetorically intensified, and socially established as undeniable, we become beholden to it, misinterpret it, and desaturate its meaning. Let us consider the role of Truth and its function in the disciplines of philosophy, photography, politics, and psychology.

In his book, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, Friedrich Nietzsche considers truth to be nothing more than metaphorical: "To be truthful is to employ the usual metaphors" (127).

Even his own writing refuses a didactic Truth, as he writes in the form of *Aphorisms*, or short statements that contain some bit of wisdom, usually presented as metaphor. Truths are, as Nietzsche theorizes, "illusions which we have forgotten are illusions - they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force" (117). He asks, "[w]hat then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and; anthropomorphisms: a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, … which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding" (117).

In order to further understand Truth as illusory, let's take the example of a photograph. A photo is often interpreted as a form of visual evidence, so the practice of photography is therefore considered more "objective" than alternative modes of communication, such as writing or painting. However, much like any other form of Truth, a photograph has its limitations. There is a difference between truthfulness and accuracy, and while a photograph may have the capacity to be technically accurate, it may not be truthful. In her book, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag notes that a photograph can never offer ethical or political knowledge. Sontag argues that proper contextualization is required in documentary photography: "In order to turn a photojournalist's work into art, [show] the photographs without their original captions" (107). In her book, *Conversations on Conflict Photography*, Lauren Walsh explains, "in order to better understand what these images mean, it's crucial to appreciate how they were created and delivered to us" (xiv). Due to the common association of photography with "objectivity", the photojournalist has a great responsibility to transparency, credibility, and proper contextualization (to whatever degree they retain control over these aspects).

Truth as oppressive: Cross-disciplinary examples of the harm of omnipotent Truth

In my interdisciplinary research, I have seen, time and time again, the concept of Truth used as a social weapon, whose oppressive power is propagated by willful ignorance and wish fulfillment. To better understand the idea of truth as tyrannical, let us consider the harmful effects of a rigid belief in and submission to Truth as manifest in the following examples of imperialist ideology, photographical misinformation, and the abuse of the omniscient reputation of religion, philosophy, and science. We must recover ambiguity and become unafraid of our own unknowing in order to relieve ourselves of the tyrannical reign of Truth. As presented below, social justice is the redemption of ambiguity and the practice of transparency thereof.

Examples of tyrannical Truths: Fascism, Imperialism, and Capitalism

One example of this of the dictatorial fear of ambiguity is found in Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies*; a study of categorical thinking at the center of the imaginative world of the German Freikorps. Theweit analyzes fascist ideology through the use of language, particularly in their odd descriptions of water and women. Firstly, fluidity for the Freikorps became the communism that swallowed up Germany: "Remember the hour, dark and dank, when Germany into the Red morass sank?" (389). Secondly, water is an animate, uncontrollable substance of nature that the Freikorps want to de-animate. Language also indicates a great deal about the Freikorps and their relationship to women. Women were comparable to water in Freikorps ideology, as "the living entities associated with hybrid substances" (409). In the mind of the Freikorps, "women" is a code word for the whole complex of nature and anything having to do with feelings and the unconscious (Theweit 401). Since they cannot reduce reality to analytic terms, the Freikorps, desperate for any sense of control, refuse a woman's individuality by refusing to use her name (52). Instead, they place her in an abstract constituency of women by naming her "whore" and "communist" (409). Consequently, by using language, the Freikorps member attempts to "appropriate and transform reality" into rhetorical groupings that are fixed and palatable according to his own underlying desire (Theweit 215). In this way, Theweit views the linguistic process as imperialistic insofar as the prerogative of language is to assert its own reality. Theweit argues since language can neither lie nor tell the truth, we delude ourselves in feigning its omnipotence (214). As seen in this example, language provides the Freikorps an illusion of imperialistic control.

In his essay, *Culture Industry*, Theodore Adorno reflects on the coercive influence of capitalist structure. Adorno theorizes that, "[u]nder monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce" (1). Adorno claims that the ultimate "triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them" (1). The most significant indication of power in the culture industry is arguably in society's consciousness of the manipulation by the culture industry, and yet willingly continues under its spell. The danger of consumer industry, which hides under the guise of high culture, is the complacency it produces in the masses over which it reigns.

In his book, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*, George Shulman examines the potential value and danger of prophecy as a political language. He posits that, "Tropes of redemption and corruption have been used repeatedly to justify domination and exclusion – in the name of defending a chosen people against subversion linked to female desire, independent women, demonized others, nonreproductive sexuality, and urban life. Currently, indeed, prophetic language authorizes imperial power, racial domination, and patriarchal codes". Shulman argues that theocratic rule and scriptural literalism is most dangerous when religious leaders and politicians empty language of its ambiguity. As such, he examines the ways in which differently situated political speakers "take up and rework prophetic language". Shulman argues, "we acquiesce in the power… if we reduce prophetic poetry into a didactic message. My contrary practice is to recover prophecy not as scripture with a fixed meaning but as living poetry open to infusions of new meaning" (3). As we have seen, liberating ambiguity is an act of social justice.

Photographical Misunderstanding

In journalism, truthful integrity is upheld by the reporter's transparency with readers about implicit bias, informational sources, and that which still remains unknown. In and beyond journalism, we are most truthful when we are honest in our unknowing. In *Associated Press Guide to Journalism*, former director of photography at *The Virginian Pilot*, Alex Burrows argues we should not blur the lines between what is real and what is not in our communication: "the photo illustration should be real obvious that it is one. With news photography, it should be straight and honest and to the point. It can be artfully shot but not tampered with or manipulated - there shouldn't be any way to confuse the two" (40). Reportage should obviously be reportage, and art should obviously be art. The photo is not the Truth, and it need not pretend to be. In the same way that it is harmful to "reduce prophetic poetry into a didactic message" (Shulman), and in the same way it is harmful to hide industry under the guise of culture (Adorno), it is likewise harmful to omit perspectival transparency in journalism (Burrows).

One example of the harm in the belief of objective photography is found in the *V-Day Kiss in Times Square* by Alfred Eisenstaedt. The photo was published a week after Victory Over Japan Day on August 14th, 1945, and was given a full-page spread in LIFE Magazine. The famous photo of the sailor kissing a dental assistant lived on for decades as an iconic celebration of the war's end. However, in recent years, after the woman pictured, Greta Zimmer Friedman, said the kiss was in reality, nonconsensual. In the case of Friedman, the de-contextualized photograph allowed for fictional inferences to be made about the relationship between two strangers.

In her book, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag theorizes that "photography is essentially an act of non-intervention". The camera functions as a barricade between the unfolding of reality and its future narrative. In this way, the camera has the power to be a weapon or a tool, depending on the motivations of the storyteller and their transparency in presentation to avoid misinformation. The art of photography is intrinsically subjective, and historically, American journalism has been narrated predominantly by the white male, often with a considerable lack of the requisite engagement to adequately represent the subject and their story. This is the result of the "habit of photographic seeing, or looking at reality as an array of potential photographs which creates estrangement from, rather than union with, nature" (Sontag 97). In

the research project, *Imagining Famine*, David Campbell examined how famine had been historically pictured in the media, from the nineteenth century to the present. David Campbell's analysis of the iconography of the starving child highlights the photojournalist's tendency to turn an individual into a stereotype, as "stereotypes sell". Campbell considers how imaging these visual stereotypes perpetuate misunderstanding, saying, "with their focus firmly on women and children, these pictures offer up icons of a feminized and infantilized place, a place that is passive, pathetic, and demanding of help from those with the capacity to intervene" (Campbell 70). The power of images becomes clear when we consider the ways in which they call the viewer to action. While stereotypical famine photos have historically also led to action, the intervention that follows is based in misinformation. In this way, stereotypical images which are interpreted as Truth perpetuate violence.

Ultimately, we need Truth as it is a necessity for human flourishing. In their book *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel identify the essential principles and practices of journalism, saying, "All truths – even the laws of science – are subject to revision, but we operate by them in the meantime because they are necessary and they work". It is the responsibility of those in positions of power to call Truth what it is: perspectival. As Nietzsche explains, Truth is metaphor, and we must rely on it only as such. As we have seen, narrative is dangerous when it is not transparent about that which it does not know; when it allows listeners to believe that they have immediate access to unequivocal Truth. Without this transparency, viewers may conclude language is reality, prophecy is God, singularity is sufficient, industry is sincere, and photography is objective.

Racism in The Name of Religion, Science, and Philosophy

Interpretations by American and European powers of Bible verses (eg. Ephesians 5:7) were used undoubtedly in the 16th through 18th centuries to justify chattel slavery. The history of racism in the Americas weaponized Truth as justification for racism under the reputation of a preeminent God. This is the case not only in the name of religion, but science and philosophy alike.

Historically, "scientific truths" have weaponized the reputation of science - much like the name of God - to give authority to discriminatory claims. In his *Three Essays On Religion*, John Stuart Mill explained, "Nature, the natural, and the group of words derived from them, or allied to them in etymology, have at all times filled a great place in the thoughts and taken a stronghold on the feelings of mankind." In other words, naming a phenomenon a "thing of nature" is a projection of objectivity onto science, and a dangerous form of wish fulfillment. One example of this is found in 19th century Darwinism. In his book, *On The Origin of Species,* Charles Darwin introduced the theory of evolution. The conception of natural selection coupled with Darwin's personal racism set the stage for social darwinism, eugenics, and other movements which were propagated in the name of "science" used to propose, project, and justify discriminatory ideals. Another example is found in the history of neuroscience. In her article for Penn Museum, *The Curious Cabinet of Dr Morton*, Katherin Boas describes how Samuel George Morton's 1839 research on the *Crania Americana* comprised illustrations of skulls which promoted the idea of white supremacy on the premise of "aesthetic superiority" of European skulls over non-European skulls. Further, Boas summarizes Morton's findings, saying he "determined that specimens belonging to the 'Native African' group had the smallest cranial capacity of all the geographically circumscribed groups he measured" (Boas). He summarized that intelligence and racial superiority correspond to skull size, a theory for which he has been given the title, "Father of Scientific Racism". Dr Morton's work undoubtedly served as justification for slavery and racial oppression during the 19th century (Boas). The history of neuroscience is lesso a scientific history than it is a cultural one, as the production of knowledge is constantly colored by the social, political, and religious notions of the day.

The workings of dichotomous thinking as a product of Judeo-Christian, Platonic, Manichaeistic worldviews within the Western phallogocentric philosophical framework served to perpetuate racist ideals, as evident in its linguistics. The association of intelligence with light visual imagery is embedded in the fabric of language, as demonstrated in expressions such as the "enlightenment" and the

characterization of a person as "bright." Conversely, an unintelligent person may be described as a "lunatic," which references the lunar realm associated with darkness and stupidity as well as femininity.

In his essay, *Black Disciplinary Zones And the Exposure of Whiteness*, George Yancy details his experience with whiteness, "as the 'transcendental norm,' a power structure that is binary, hierarchical, and hegemonic," woven into the European and Anglo American philosophical landscape. He criticizes philosophers for claiming objectivity and wearing a mask of omniscience, remaining deliberately blind to the conditions that serve as the premise of their thinking. As Yancy puts it, "[t]he conceptual whiteness of philosophy remained unspoken or unrecognized through, I would argue, willful ignorance… working within such a mutually dynamic and embodied conceptual space belies the "godlike" tendencies of thinkers to assume unmediated access to ahistorical and de-contextual 'Truths'". We engage in knowledge production within our own perspectival situations, and too often fail to refer to them and depend on them only as such. We must become critically aware of the psychological, political, and cultural circumstances from which we produce knowledge and make Truth claims. Finally, as we have seen the reputation of religion, science, and philosophy weaponized to give ultimate authority to discriminatory claims, under the guise of Truth. As seen above, social justice is found with continuous transparency in the recovery of ambiguity.

Reimagining Truth
Rather than replacing it

Nietzsche wrote "God is dead" in *The Gay Science* (108). By this, he is not referring to the metaphysical assertion that God does not exist. He is making an observation on the cultural shift that indicates our idea of God is no longer strong enough to be the foundation for our sense of mortality and the ways in which we govern. While emphasizing the disastrous effects of increasing secularization, Nietzsche argues that the death of God is not the end, but rather an opportunity to reimagine our values by fueling revolutionary transvaluation. "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed Him! How shall we, the most murderous of all murderers, ever console ourselves? The holiest and mightiest thing that the word has ever known has bled to death under our own knives … must we not become gods ourselves, if only to appear worthy of it?" (108)

In the same way that Moses and Jesus inherited a certain tradition and reinterpretted it, Nietzsche encourages us to do the same. In the *Gospel of Matthew*, Jesus claims he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (5:17). In a similar way, Nietzsche urges us not to destroy and substitute the Truth paradigm, but to reimagine God for ourselves. Thinkers such as Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche think critically about the tendency toward compulsive ideological replacement; they see clearly the theologian instinct which lives on in the secular practices that constitute science, politics, and philosophy. The following paragraphs include a critique of the quasi-religious devotions to sociopolitical structures and conceptual frameworks, embodying the ideological movement of the existentialist. Let us take the examples of devotion to God replaced by quasi religious devotion to science and industry.

In the wake of the Enlightenment, the religious worldview in Europe was replaced by the scientific worldview, while still maintaining the same social role. The irony of this replacement is represented in the famous bumper-sticker expression, "I believe in science". Indicative of the mainstream understanding that Western science and progressivism are fundamentally secular, the phrase attempts to mock the religious for their belief in the faithful paradigm rather than the factual one. In this way, the belief in God shifted into the belief in scientific materialism. By placing itself in opposition to religion, the term preserves the concept of God's ultimate authority by calling it a different name: science. For example, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud notes how, after religion, the group tie remains exclusive, and will find another orientation toward a new ego ideal: "If another group tie takes the place of the religious one, then there will be the same intolerance… the same result would again be repeated with this new motivation" (Ch 5). In the case of the Enlightenment, belief shifted into belief, while maintaining the same exclusionary and dogmatic effect.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels discuss this social organization toward dogma, saying, "Gradually every dominant relationship was pronounced a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of the State, etc. On all sides it was only a question of dogmas and belief in dogmas" (148). Additionally, in *Capital, Volume 1*, Marx argues that the loss of religion and need for meaning propagates the dependency on the rising capital-based market and fetishism of commodities. In his critique on the political economy, Marx uses quasi-religious language to describe the value of commodities: "A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (*163*). Throughout Capital, Marx emphasizes the appearance of wealth and value, so as to hint at that which lies beyond it. In the same way human labor is embodied in the commodity, I would argue, a sum of social relations is embodied in cultural Truths. Marx distinguishes the commodity from its material form, demonstrating its elevation into something divine: "The form of wood is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent" (*163*). Similarly, in his essay, *Culture Industry*, Theodore Adorno argues that the culture industry has taken the place of objectively established religion: "the sociological theory that the loss of the support of objectively established religion, the dissolution of the last remnants of pre-capitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialization, have led to cultural chaos is disproved every day; for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything" (9). In other words, Adorno argues the culture industry has become the placeholder of meaning in an increasingly godless society.

Collectively, marking an end to the enlightened epoch, these thinkers do not see the death of God, the primal father, or Truth as an end, but as a decisive moment in which the masses can either choose a compulsory replacement, or a reenvisioning of moral, psychological, social, and political structures. Nietzsche considers deconstruction as a pregnancy of youthful and sincere reimagination, "One comes back out of such abyss… reborn, with skin shed: more ticklish, more mischievous, with a finer taste for delight, with a more delicate palate for all good things, with a more blithesome disposition with a second and more dangerous innocence in delight, at the same time more childish and a hundred times more sophisticated than before" (*Gay Science*). By critically analyzing inherited structures and their epistemological origins, Freud, Nietzsche, Marx and Adorno inspire a new envisioning of social and political life.

Creative insight beyond dichotomous thinking

Reintegrating poetic insight and engaging in the liminal space between antithetical values

Blurring the lines of dichotomous thinking illuminates the revolutionary potential of creative thinking. Let's reimagine the relationship between seemingly antithetical values by moving beyond truth/untruth, good/evil, religion/science, religion/spirituality, male/female, dialectical/rhetorical, portrayal/reportage, and heaven/hell. There, we will discover the limitations of mutual exclusivity, the value in refiguring the relationship between opposites, and the revolutionary potential of poetic insight.

Truth and untruth, good and evil

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche asks, "How could something originate in its antithesis? Truth in error, for example?" Nietzsche refigures the relationship between opposites while also indicating that he no longer believes in the truth of opposite values. He argues truth is found in untruth, good is found in evil, health is found in illness, and freedom is found in pain. He sees the liminal space between antithetical values as dangerous, disruptive, and revolutionary. It is this danger that ultimately sets us free: "In the end, it is great pain only which liberates the spirit for it teaches a great suspicion which reveals the apparently genuine to be counterfeit… prepares us for an ultimate decision"(3). He recognizes mutual compatibility in opposites, saying, "Oh how little you know about human happiness, you comfortable and good-natured people - for happiness and unhappiness are sisters and twins which grow tall together, or, in your case, remain small together!" (338). Nietzsche urges these new philosophers to disrupt the system of

philosophy we have come to believe in, worship, and depend upon. He is hopeful, saying, "But who is willing to concern himself with such dangerous perhapses! For that we have to await the arrival of a new species of philosopher, one which possesses tastes and inclinations opposite to and different from those of its predecessors - philosophers of the dangerous 'perhaps' in every sense - and to speak in all seriousness: I see such new philosophers arising" (338). Nietzsche urges us to, "recognize untruth as a condition of life: that, to be sure, means to resist customary value-sentiments in a dangerous fashion; and a philosophy which ventures to do so places itself, by that act alone, beyond good and evil" (333).

Religion and science, religion and spirituality

Religion and science are often considered to be diametrically opposed. As we have seen, the limitations of the scientific and religious perspective are due to their mutual exclusivity, as they both claim access to ultimate Truth. There is revolutionary potential in the interplay between these religion and science, as seen in the example of Neurotheology.

In his interview, *Neurotheology*, with NPR, neurologist Andrew Newberg studies spirituality as a neurologic process. He conducts a series of fMRI's to examine the differences in brain activity of a theist versus an atheist when prompted to contemplate God, meditate, or pray. After his study, Newburg, cautioning his audience against neuromania, emphasized the inability of the scan itself to prove or disprove God's presence. Newburg urges his audience to, "be careful with the conclusions we draw for the religious and nonreligious regarding what the nature of these experiences are". True there is a great deal of brain activity, however we must remain considerate of the significance of the body and spirit, wary of the narcissistic tendency of the neuromanic psychiatric practice. Let us consider religion and science not as mutually exclusive opponents, but rather, to borrow Nietzsche's metaphor, as sisters and twins. Neurotheology is a new, comprehensive discipline with revolutionary potential. Is it not true they have the same goal? Perhaps the interplay between science and theology produces a sum greater than its parts.

Similarly to religion and science, religious ritual and spiritual experience alone are limited in their singularity. When taken together, the two enhance one another, and thus create the capacity for greater depth in the experience of the divine. In her journal, *Spiritual but Not Religious*, American scholar of religion and Harvard Divinity Professor, Amy Hollywood, makes a case for moving beyond the common contemporary view that religious ritual is dogmatic, authoritarian, and cult-like. She believes that spiritual experience can be found within religious practice, and that it is through deep participation and meditation on the divine that we most reliably experience God. She gives the example where scripture illustrates in extensive detail regulation of skin diseases and which foods are clean or unclean (Leviticus 19:37). Living with a disciplined routine, however mundane, can allow for constant communion with faith as it provides a regimen to enhance faith in practice. The relationship between religion and spirituality, in this case, is mutually beneficial, as the two dance together, enabling a more meaningful experience of the divine. A similar example of this dynamic, spiritual practice is found in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, where Annemarie Schimmel focuses on the mystical interpretations of prophecy and the aesthetics of calligraphy. Schimmel writes, "[t]he divine truth was at times revealed to the mystic in visions, auditions, and dreams, in colors and sounds, but to convey these nonrational and ineffable experiences to others the mystic had to rely upon such terminology of worldly experience…" The creative remedy steps into the practice of calligraphy, in order to more comprehensively portray its meaning by adding an artful dimension to writing. Taking the example of calligraphy in Sufism, the mutually beneficial relationship reveals itself again between writing and art. The union between the two reintroduces interpretation and illuminates a world of meaning that neither one could when standing alone.

Self and other, male and female

In *Spiritualizing Marginality*, Amen Jaffer researches *hijras* in Pakistan who "define themselves as a distinctive gender that is neither male nor female" (1). During the establishment of the marginalization of the *hijra* community by the state, Sufis in Pakistan embraced the *hijra* self. While *hijras* were "constructing a spiritual gender identity for themselves" (176), Sufism offered *hijras* a

possibility to access power, legitimizing their alternative social organization. The characterization of the "third gender" seems to imply a certain sequence of gender: first, second, and now third. It reminds me of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Her thesis argues that the Second Sex (women) is conceived in relation to the First Sex (men). She refers to foundational narrative to explain this categorization (for example, Genesis 2:22), saying "[t]he category of Other is as original as consciousness itself. The duality between Self and Other can be found in the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies; the division did not always fall into the category of the division of the sexes (...) No group ever defines itself as One without immediately setting up the Other opposite itself". The introduction of the third sex by *hijras*, however, completely disrupts the self-other duality, and exposes the male-female gender binary as a social construction. This movement takes us beyond the dichotomous thinking, into a new space of spirituality, responsibility, imagination, and social justice.

Rhetorical and dialectical, portrayal and reportage

In the introduction to his book, *Self Consuming Artifacts,* Stanley Fish defines two opposing modes of literary presentation: rhetorical and dialectical. He notes that the rhetorical form is gratifying as it asserts fashionable and customary Truths: "it satisfies the needs of its readers… to mirror and represent for approval the opinions its readers already hold" (1). Fish emphasizes the limitation of rhetorical speech, as it tends to canonize the status quo, and "claims to corral truth, and this discourages active and self-critical participation in the search for truth" (15). He contrasts this with the dialectical presentation, or an enigmatic style which generates endless interpretation. Fish calls this form disturbing, "for it requires of its readers a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by" (1). The interplay between rhetorical and dialectical interpretations is democratic, as it compels us to take responsibility for interpretation amidst ambiguity.

The dynamic between the rhetorical and dialectical is similar to that of portrayal and reportage. By presenting them with what appears to be a complete and ultimate Truth, reportage satisfies its viewers in the same way rhetorical writing does. In his essay, *Die Linkskurve: Reportage or Portrayal,* Georg Lukács distinguishes between the two titular modes of writing. In it, he describes the goal of reportage as "[the depiction] of the objective facts" (48), and complains that, while doing so is fine in journalism, it makes for bad storytelling because "the subjective factor [the writers] push aside still appear in their work" (49). The goal of reportage is honorable and necessary, however, as we have seen, it is harmful to pretend as though our perspectival photography is capable of complete objectivity. Perhaps then, in the pursuit of truth and peacebuilding, there is more capacity in creative portrayal than we may assume.

Let us conclude by considering examples of creativity in the liminal space between portrayal and reportage as a form of social justice in the context of photography. In her book, *Conversations on Conflict Photography*, Lauren Walsh argues, "[t]he goal of conflict photography… isn't solely to offer knowledge in the form of the photo, but to spark curiosity in order that the viewing public will be piqued to learn more about a given situation" (Walsh 6). Ron Haviv, for example, is criticized for the aestheticizing tendency in his photography, but he uses it purposefully. Ron Haviv critiques a photo devoid of reportage, saying, "[e]specially in this sense of getting people to engage, there's no purpose for that picture existing. Instead, you photograph something as difficult as a dead body, using aesthetic tools— light composition color— and in essence, seduce the viewer into the image". Creativity, in the case of Ron Haviv, is used as a means to justice. In his interview, Marcus Bleasdale explains, "photography fails if you just put it out there to say, 'Look at this. Isn't it horrible?' You have to say, 'Look at this. Isn't it horrible? But here's how you can make it stop'" (Walsh 38). This is where the creative remedy steps into photojournalism: to represent the experience of the subject, while also maintaining the viewer's trust in the integrity of the documentation, in order to inspire engagement and peacebuilding.

An epitomic example of social justice found in the interplay between portrayal and reportage is found in Daniella Zalcman's *Signs of Your Identity.* This is an ongoing project made in collaboration with Catherine Blackburn, Gregg Deal, and Mo Thunder to create a series of portraits that tell the story of coercive assimilation policies in Indigenous communities. Zalcman set a clear intention based on portrayal: "This exhibition is meant to honor the experiences of these survivors while looking to the

future and to the possibility of reconciliation". In her work, Daniella Zalcman makes no effort to maintain the coveted and illusory title of "objective observer" as she takes artistic liberties, such as double exposure, collage, and painting, in her portraiture. It is through creativity that Zalcman not only refigures the relationship between portrayal and reportage, but uncovers a deeper honesty by honoring the subject's experience, and thus, creatively rebelling against the standards of "objective" photojournalism.

Conclusion

"Indeed, at hearing the news that 'the old god is dead', we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel illuminated by a new dawn; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation - finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any danger; every daring of the lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an open sea." - *Gay Science,* Friedrich Nietzsche

All the forms Truth has taken in my interdisciplinary research - from God, to philosophy, to the photo - has lead me to the understanding that Truth is what we must believe in and live by. Truth has emerged and re-emerged as an unanswerable question; a living, breathing, enigmatic, and poetic force that is not dissimilar to ourselves. The singular, fixed, and accessible Truth, as it were, is illusory. As we have seen, reducing Truth to a didactic message is the birthplace of harm, misinformation, oppression, and tyranny. My contrary practice is one of social justice: to redeem Truth with the creative remedy. The redemption of Truth is found in the liminal space between antithetical values, in the refiguring of categorical frameworks, in poetic reinterpretation of prophecy, in honoring the experiential, in the pause of uncertainty, in the wisdom of childishness, in the scrutiny of solitude, in a self-sacrificing dialect, in incessant reimagining, and in infinite seeking. A similar sentiment is illuminated poetically by Sufi mystic and Arab Muslim Saint, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya. It leaves us with the powerful message that not even the divine needs Truth.

I don't want the House,
I want the Lord of the House.
God isn't inside it. God isn't outside of it–
The truth is, God doesn't need it.

On Thanksgiving, my best friend asked me a question: if you could ask a crystal ball to tell the Truth about yourself or the world, what would you want to know? I used to always give the same answer: I would ask if there was a God. After four years of seeking Truth, I now see the crystal ball as a metaphor. All I know is that I cannot know, and do not want to know. Truth is a poetic life force we believe in and live by, and our salvation rests in its unknowing. It is this unknowing that advances history, and it is the unknowing that brings beauty to life. Redemption is found in unknowing Truth – but it does not end there. This is what lies Beyond Truth: the art of unknowing.

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List of Works: Beyond Truth

Pre Modern / Early Modern

The Holy Bible, 4th cent CE
Phaedrus, Plato, 340 BCE
The Symposium, Plato, 385 BCE
Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya poetry, 8th century CE (*CPC)*
Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas, 1274 CE
The Praise of Folly, Desiderus Erasmus, 1511 CE
95 Theses, Martin Luther, 1517 CE

Modern Humanities

On Photography, Susan Sontag, 1977
Gay Science, Friedrich Nietzsche, 1882
Signs of Your Identity, Daniella Zalcman, 2022 (*CPC, HIS)*
Conversations On Conflict Photography, Lauren Walsh, 2019 (*CPC, HIS)*

Modern Social and Natural Sciences

Capital: Volume One, Karl Marx, 1867 *(HIS)*
The Culture Industry, Theodore Adorno, 1944
Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Sigmund Freud, 1921
American Prophecy, Race and Redemption in American Political Culture, George Shulman, 2008 *(HIS)*

Area of Concentration

Beyond Good and Evil, Friedrich Nietzsche, 1886
Self-Consuming Artifacts, Stanley Fish, 1972 *(HIS)*
Die Linkskurve: Reportage or Portrayal, Georg Lukács, 1932
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Political Poets: Narrative Imagination and the Art of Politics, William Adams, 1619
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