

# Abstracts for Participants

## 'Truth and Truthfulness in Uncertain Times'

### Biennial Conference in Philosophy, Religion and Culture

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#### ***The Truth about Women in Ministry***

My paper is a description of the ministry of women in the apostolic period and also a description of the reasons for continuing with such opportunities for women in ministry in today's church. The paper presents cases of individual ancient women, taking information from the canonical scriptures, the apocrypha and other ancient sources. My presentation focuses on women in the ancient Greco-Roman world who had the responsibilities of priests. It moves from there to the experiences of women priests in Christian Churches today. It makes arguments based on the prophetic calling of Christianity. It examines the responsibility within the Christian community to provide appropriate ministry to all members of the Body of Christ and all those who seek healing and grace within the Christian communities.

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#### ***"What is Truth?" Said Jestling Pilate. And Did not Stay to Hear.***

My title is also the title of Sir Francis Bacon's essay 'On Truth' written in the sixteenth century. But it seems to me typical of many people today in a culture in which, as Jean Baudrillard argues, everything is oversignified so that meaning itself not only becomes undesirable but also seems unattainable. At the other extreme fundamentalists of all kind insists that they and they alone know what 'truth' as they define it is and that they, alone possess it. In this paper, however, I want to focus on a particular example of the clash between differing notions of cultural 'truth' which is evident in responses to the on-going crisis of violence in Aboriginal communities.

What is involved here in the responses of many non-indigenous Australians I suggest, is cultural dogmatism, 'the idol of an answer which fails to meet the question in all its radical breadth, and yet at the same time seeks to bring the question to its end. (Karl Rahner), a misappropriation of the notion of truth since it represents a fundamental closure in the face of the wholeness and complexity of reality which, Rahner goes on to argue, turns what is infinite into an absolute and will not allow for difference or novelty. Against this I suggest with Theodor Adorno, that reality (which I take as synonymous with truth here) is 'not yet real', not yet realised in the world as it stands. Our task therefore is to interpret and respond to the situation in which we find ourselves world with openness and respect for difference, realizing that we must 'stay to hear' what that difference may be telling us about the truth of things.

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#### ***Pierre Gassendi (1592-1654) and His Response to Uncertain Times***

Pierre Gassendi was an early pioneer of corpuscularianism and of the modern mechanical world-view. He worked to restore a version of Epicurean atomism.

He was also Provost of the Cathedral of Digne in Provence. He was a hyphenated priest several times over: priest-philosopher-savant-scientist. Always he was a pastor.

Early seventeenth-century Europe was in disarray. The crumbling of the Aristotelian system, the impact of Copernican astronomy especially as propagated by Galileo, rejection of tradition, unhealed wounds from the Reformation, on-going religious wars, political disunity within France, plague and the grinding poverty of the mass of the population – all resulted in intellectual, political, religious and social dislocation and a widespread sense of *anomie*. *Anomie* is described as: 1) a social vacuum marked by the absence of social norms or values; 2) the state of alienation experienced as a result of the absence of social norms or values.

In all this, Pierre Gassendi enjoyed intense popularity with many different types of people - the humble and the highest of the land, the unlettered and the savant, the devout and the libertine. I offer, Gassendi style, a probabilioristic hypothesis to explain why people responded so positively. Undogmatic, non-authoritarian, empirical, probabilioristic, tolerant, flexible, free-thinking, but with a firm core supported by tradition and with an utterly orthodox religious stance which (by contrast with other alternatives such as deism and Rosicrucianism) left the superiority of doctrinal theology over philosophy undisturbed - people felt that Gassendi and his philosophy offered them what they most wanted: an anchor to keep them from being swept utterly away, with plenty of rope attached to allow them to feel free.

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### ***Truth as Faithfulness***

For over a century philosophers have narrowed down the concept of truth to what I called 'the linguistic conception'. In my *Truth and Historicity* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1992), and in various papers since, I have contended that this fails to provide an adequate and a comprehensive account of truth. In particular, I maintain that the sense of truth as faithfulness, exemplified in non-linguistic contexts, needs to be taken more seriously than hitherto. With rare exceptions, philosophers have shown no interest in this latter sense of truth. But what if the primary locus of truth is not to be found in the linguistic domain at all, but that its proper use there is derivative upon its use in the context of action. Many analytic philosophers tend to treat action as an ontological anomaly in an otherwise physical world. I maintain, on the contrary, that the category of action is metaphysically 'deep' with essential connections to the concepts of truth and error. Those are the thoughts explored in this paper.

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### ***Orientalism: An Australian Application***

As propounded by Edward Said, "Orientalism" is the process in which a dominant Western discourse displaces the idea of the "East" as peripheral, inferior and needing control. When we look at this paradigm with reference to Muslims in Western countries we see how this 'other' is created; as an internal enemy that justifies draconian laws and creates media representations that fall way short of reality. Currently, such a reading is appropriate for Australia.

The significant 'other' in our suburbs of Australia are the Arabs and Muslims. They seem to find their way to the centre of every social and economic problem. The Orientalist narrative may help us understand why this is so, and how truth and truthfulness operates in uncertain times. Themes relevant to this conference include 'Lebanese Gangs', 'Australian Values' and how Arabs and Muslims can't (or won't) assimilate, and 'illegal immigrants'.

The aforementioned themes debated in this one sided western dominated discourse are what gives the impression that Islam is violent, oppressive and patriarchal, ultimately portraying a narrow view of Muslims, and what the Islamic religion is fundamentally about to the lay Australian community.

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***Truth as Dynamic 'Essencing': Between Heidegger and the Tradition***

Over the last few decades, the peril of 'meta-narratives' or absolute claims to truth have become clear in the context of a realisation of mechanisms by which truths are culturally and linguistically constructed, often with a view to domination. Yet on the other hand, we are also rightly dissatisfied with a view of truth that sees it purely as a matter of individual or collective assertion (my 'truth' vs your 'truth', or the competing truths of various contingent and ungrounded paradigms) each of which is as viable as any other configuration of 'reality'. In a sense we almost instinctually feel that 'the truth about truth' lies somewhere *between* (Gk: *metaxu*) these two extremes of absolute dogmatism and absolute relativism. The 'phenomenological realist' model, I will suggest, continues to offer a compelling way of understanding the nature of this 'between', and therefore of avoiding either an illegitimate subjectivisation or objectification of truth via a 'metaxological' account of the same. In his 1927 lecture series, *Die Grundprobleme Der Phänomenologie*, Martin Heidegger put the matter as follows:

[W]hile truth [*Wahrheit*] belongs in a certain way to things, it is not present among things themselves as another extant entity [*Vorhandenes*] like them. And on the opposite side, truth is not in the understanding if understanding is thought of as a process within an extant psychical subject ... [T]ruth neither is present among things, nor does it occur in a subject, but it lies – taken almost literally – in the middle 'between' things and *Dasein* (GP: 214/305).

In this paper, I would like to explore this notion of truth as arising *between* the worldly subject and objects in the world, as an event of the un-covering (a-lethia) of the essential nature of things, albeit from a contingent, finite, situated perspective. But further - in a sense that is inspired by, but distinct from, Heidegger's own account of truth - I would like to suggest that this understanding can form the basis for a much needed re-interpretation of the metaphysical category of essence, shifting it from a conception that is wholly intrinsic to things, to a more dynamic approach that sees it as emerging in the interaction between individual/culture and things in their 'objectivity'.

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***The Seekers of Truth, the Egalitarian Myth and the Aristocracy of Spirit: Reconnecting Today with Mystical Tradition***

This paper shall deal with issues concerning the access to truth, having as pretext of discussion St Silouan's parable with the hen, the rooster and the eagle.

One of the most striking features of modernity is the attempt to democratise the access to knowledge. Reacting to the previous hierarchical system, perceived as unjust 'epistemological' pre-eminence of the socially privileged, the promoters of the Enlightenment launched the egalitarian manifesto labelled by Karl Popper as the 'myth of public opinion'. According to this manifesto, within the modern frame all have equal access to knowledge and the opinion of the majority establishes what the truth is.

Whilst generous in its aspiration to uplift the masses' level of awareness, the egalitarian manifesto failed by ignoring what represented common knowledge to any traditional culture: the transcendence of truth, the indefinite degrees of perception, and the existential prerequisites of the 'intellectual' access to truth. This resulted into regrettable confusion between epistemological consensus and truth. Consequently people belonging to modern society are less motivated to seek the truth (or to acknowledge the existence of multiple levels of perception) and more interested to establish a generally accepted representation of reality. The unexpected outcome of the democratic dream, at least in respect of knowledge, was the perfect relativisation of truth and the extinction of major spiritual ideals. The existential consequences of this failure are beyond the reach of customary statistics.

Given the anthropological efficiency of traditional systems, it becomes obvious that regaining mankind's nobility requires faithfulness to the truth and to traditional ways of accessing truth. During the first centuries, awareness concerning the existence of various perceptions of Christian truth had been expressed in the consciousness of the two levels of tradition and corresponding degrees of initiation. In line with the very structure of the liturgy, with its two main sections, the Cappadocians mentioned tradition's levels of dogmata (the inner side) and kerygmata (the external side).

Furthermore, a whole range of 4th century contemporary catechisms before and after baptism indicated the existence of a process of initiation. My paper will focus however on the contributions of later authors (Sts Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory Palamas), who have clarified what was the content of the inner side of tradition. They also elucidated the issue of who has the privileged access to Christian truth, identifying the true mystagogues not with the representatives of established hierarchy but with the aristocracy of spirit as represented by the saints. Ultimately my paper points to an existential theory of knowledge.

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***Truth-Telling and Denial in Counselling and Psychotherapy***

This paper will examine the extent to which Jesus' words "the truth shall set you free" has profound relevance in the arena of counselling and psychotherapy.

The **act of denial defined by Freud as a defense mechanism** is associated with maladaptive behaviour. Such denial is **essentially a denial of some aspect of truth** in daily life, either about oneself, oneself in relationship with others, with the world, as well as with God.

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***Gandhi on Truth and Truthfulness***

Gandhi has been variously described as 'the great apostle of truth' or 'one of the greatest votaries of truth' to have walked this earth. Often he described himself as 'a humble searcher after truth'. Gandhi's quest for truth knew no respite. Its realisation entailed endless public experimentation and total commitment. Truth, for Gandhi, was 'the sovereign principle' of life and conduct, the very substance of morality. This article examines some of Gandhi's most important sayings relating to truth and will distinguish the various senses of truth in his writings. It will concentrate on the his close connections between truth and personal truthfulness, his identification of truth with God, and the all-important relationship between truth and non-violence. It argues that Gandhi's chief message for any time, especially in times of uncertainty, is to concentrate all our efforts on the discovery of truth.

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***No, I Don't Agree to Disagree: Reliabilism and the Evident***

Epistemology concerns several different questions, but the one that concerns me is, "What belief-forming processes should we endorse if we are to avoid false and obtain true beliefs?" The answer I take it is that we should rely on the processes that we believe actually result in a high proportion of truths. Unfortunately, we live in a world with fundamental religious and other ideological disagreements. This forces us either to suspend judgement on the disputed topics, assume we are just lucky, or assert that we are in an epistemically superior position to those who disagree. That sort of epistemic luck cannot be appealed to without incoherence. And suspension of judgement is not a recipe for achieving true beliefs. This motivates the search for what is genuinely evident in the sense that it is so obvious that we are prepared to assert our own epistemic superiority over any who disagree.

Using examples of religious disagreement, I shall consider several objections to this rather conservative insistence that some things are evident. Some of these are pessimistic inductions – against the indefeasible, against the a priori, and against the self-evident. Other objections include: the

failure of widely used inferences to be justified using the self-evident; the political implications of appeals to the evident; and the charge of self-referential inconsistency.

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***Cognitive Restraint***

As part of the "Restraint Project" ([www.maths.unsw.edu.au/~jim/restraintproj.html](http://www.maths.unsw.edu.au/~jim/restraintproj.html)) we examine the virtue of "cognitive restraint", the ability to withhold assent to propositions that are not well-evidenced. Propositions such as "if you blow this bomb up at the market you'll go to heaven" are among the more dangerous ones that need scepticism. Blind faith, whether religious, political or personal, is not rational or safe and in consequence is not praiseworthy. Nor does it lead to truth or truthfulness. Mindless scepticism is no more rational than credulity. With a glance at the theory of proportioning evidence to belief in probability theory and at the Anglophone tradition of "reasonableness", we consider educational strategies that have been and could be used to induce cognitive restraint. They include the study of advertising and political claims and urban myths, training in debating and rhetoric, the enhancement of science teaching by history and philosophy of science, and in religious schools, apologetics.

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***'Truth' and Orthodox Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics***

This paper presents a case that in none of the major fields of thought and spirituality, with the arguable exception of natural theology, does traditional Orthodox discernment and method generate any body of conclusions or formulations of which it would be legitimate to say that they are 'true' or 'probable'; at least, as the word 'truth' is conventionally understood. Orthodoxy does not understand the dogmatic formulations of the Faith as constituting propositions. While moral rules are not propositions, they are regarded as definitive in the Western Catholic tradition by virtue of the magisterium of the Church. Orthodoxy, however, neither subscribes to the Western understanding of the magisterium nor does it understand Christian ethics as being constituted of sets of moral rules. Apophatic theology, a patristic multi-layered hermeneutic, and a preference for sophiology over epistemology conspire to yield an understanding of the Faith which contrasts with that which has largely prevailed in the West since at least the sixteenth century. However, none of this means that there is no place for necessary or contingent truths in the generation of the formulations of the Faith, as opposed to their status within the body of authoritative teaching, nor does it mean that Orthodoxy lacks any concept of 'Truth'. Following the Gospel, truth is understood by Orthodox as inhering in the person of the Risen Christ. The concluding section of the paper seeks to outline how this Christocentric conception impacts on Orthodox hermeneutics, theology and ethics, and hence guides Orthodox Christians in out of joint, materialistic and uncertain times.

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***A Monkey Wrench in the Works: How exclusive Truth Claims in Religion Impact on Interfaith Dialogue***

It is difficult to come into genuine dialogue with another when the starting point is that the other is certainly wrong in his or her understanding of fundamental, and deeply personal, truths. This paper explores how leading thinkers of the five major world religions have thought through the issue of their respective religions' exclusive claims to truth, and how they have resolved this issue in such a way as to permit them to enter into genuine dialogue with those of other religions. As a starting point for this

exploration, the continuum from exclusivism to pluralism will be used as a framework. However, this framework will be used critically, due to the recognition that it has evolved out of Christian thought and may not equally well reflect the range of views to be found in other faith traditions.

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***Truthfulness in Action, Without Complicity?***

The proposal of the Australian government to process asylum seekers "off shore" in order to strengthen Australia's relationship with Indonesia raises ethical questions about cooperation with others. This topic has a long history in Catholic moral theology where principles have been developed to characterise cooperation in pursuit of the good while avoiding complicity in the wrongdoing of others. This paper will examine some current debates between Catholic theologians over the interpretation of "justified material cooperation", and illustrates the relevance of these debates to some of the political and ethical issues of our time.

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***The Mode of Dispute***

Sextus Empiricus wrote:

According to the mode deriving from dispute, we find that undecidable dissension about the matter proposed has come about both in ordinary life and among philosophers. Because of this we are not able either to choose or to rule out anything, and we end up with suspension of judgment. (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge, 2000), Book I, §165 (p. 41))

In other words, Sextus claims, a certain kinds of disagreement about *p* warrants suspension of judgment with respect of *p*. A version of this conclusion has recently been defended by Richard Feldman, and a version of its denial has been defended by Thomas Kelley. We will say that a proposition is *disputed* when there exist two people, who are equally rational and who both have the same body of evidence, where one believes *p* and the other believes  $\sim p$ . We will say that these people are each *party to a dispute over p*. In the sense used here, *rationality* is a matter of thoughtfulness, intelligence, and sensitivity to defeating evidence. The question, to which Sextus gives a negative answer, is this: is it possible for someone to justifiably believe *p* when she believes that she is party to a dispute over *p*?

In this paper I argue that the fact that you are party to a dispute over *p* does warrant suspension of judgment – but not suspension of judgment with respect of *p*. Rather, if you believe *p*, and learn that you are party to a dispute over *p*, you are required to suspend judgment with respect of the proposition that you know *p*. But you are *not* thereby required to suspend judgment with respect of *p*. In other words, I propose the following principle:

**Humility Principle:** If you are party to a dispute over *p*, you ought to suspend judgment with respect of the proposition that you know *p*.

Importantly, this does not entail the following skeptical principle:

**Feldman's Principle:** If you are party to a dispute over *p*, you ought to suspend judgment that *p*.

I explain the motivation for accepting the Humility Principle, and not Feldman's Principle, and discuss Clifford's claim that it is always wrong to believe without evidence.

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### ***The Myth of Ancient Relativism***

Did Protagoras advocate a form of Relativism? What was the meaning of 'Man is the measure of all things—of all things that are, and of all things that are not'? Did he intend this to express relativism, that there is no such thing as absolute truth, that all truth is only of the true-for-me, true-for-you kind? And if he *did not*—and I will argue that he did not—then why did Plato use Protagoras when he wanted to discuss and refute relativism, and why did he use the person of Theaetetus to defend the version of relativism that he was attributing to Protagoras? If relativism existed at all, who advocated it, and how important were they in Greek philosophy? We will attempt to answer all these questions, and in the process we will see that relativism, which has often tried to claim an ancient and venerable pedigree, is as strikingly implausible as many modern philosophers have thought.

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### ***Kant, Mill and Green on Religion and Criticism***

I first ask in what mode Kant, Mill and Green would have us be religious if we are going to be so, and then consider two propositions: first that we ought to agree with them in that matter (if so, why?), and second that if we seek to be religious in that mode, we are likely to move away, soon or eventually, from any present religious orthodoxy we may adhere to.

I have a particular love of Chapter 2 of Mill's *Liberty*, read as an epistemological and educational document and not only as a great plea for freedom of thought and expression. Should we accept and apply to our own thinking about seeking truth in or concerning religion, and to any teaching of theology as well as of religious studies, what I shall call Mill's principle? It is given at the end of para. 7: "[the person who] has sought for objections and difficulties, instead of avoiding them, and has shut out no light which can be thrown upon the subject from any quarter ... has a right to think his judgment better than that of any person, or any multitude, who have not gone through a similar process".

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### ***Anglican Episcopacy post Gene Robinson – How do Anglicans Hold the Demands of Context and Christian Meta-Narrative in Balance?***

This paper argues that disagreement over who may or may not be appointed to positions of leadership within the Anglican Church will be the defining Anglican ecclesiological debate of our generation. Historical evidence is put forward to show that disagreements regarding leadership are not new among Anglicans and that it has had a formative influence on the development of the Anglican Communion. The paper also seeks to reply to an address made by Bishop Michael Langrish, bishop of Exeter, to the ECUSA House of Bishops at Kanuga (North Carolina) in March 2006. Bishop Langrish asks, in his address, how Anglicans of opposing theological convictions may legitimately proceed with Episcopal appointments post Gene Robinson. He cautions against the weight placed on "context" as the deciding factor in the appointment process. In reply, it is argued that any attempt to construct an Anglican ecclesiological meta-narrative as the sole repository of legitimacy, disregards Anglican history and the existing Anglican ethos. Finally, some canonical alternatives are examined which seek to keep in creative tension the legitimacy of context and the need for structured cooperation to maintain the integrity of the Anglican Communion as a global complex of churches.

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### ***The Consolations of Boethius***

In *The Consolations of Philosophy*, Boethius presents the standard position of ancient philosophers on the nature of happiness. Starting from the premise that happiness requires security of possession, he argues that since worldly goods cannot be possessed securely, they cannot confer happiness. Current understandings of human action and satisfaction leave no place for this sort of argument, despite the initial plausibility of asserting that lack of security of possession is an obstacle to happiness. The paper argues that it is current understandings of action, rather than Boethius, that are at fault here; it proposes and defends an alternative account of action and happiness that supports Boethius's conclusions about happiness. These conclusions, in turn, make possible a defence of the notion of truth in action.

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### ***True Friends/True Selves***

What is it to be or to have a true friend? Views on this question within the history of philosophy appear to differ. Aristotle suggests that friendship of the best kind, arguably that which best approximates the notion of true friendship, is a relationship in which friends love one another for their own sakes and regard one another as second selves. Cicero also explains friendship at its finest as involving a transference of one's natural feelings for oneself to one's friend. However there are conceptions of friendship that celebrate difference and the profound separateness between self and other as the crucial element in friendship. Underlying these latter conceptions is the concept of an encounter with oneself in friendship in which a tension between care for a friend and identification with the other is juxtaposed to self-awareness, self-regard and autonomy. This paper explores the notion of truth in the context of those tensions.

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### ***Exceeding Truth: Jean-Luc Marion's Saturated Phenomena***

Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness arises from a critique of modernity, in particular its claims about a knowing subject's capacity to arrive at objectivity and truth. Marion identifies a common set of fundamental presuppositions in a line of thought that he traces from Descartes and Kant, through to Husserl and even Heidegger. In various ways, each of these thinkers understands phenomena in terms of a limited horizon that is imposed by a constituting subject.

Marion rejects this subjective starting-point as essentially inadequate, at least for any phenomenological project that adopts Husserl's ambition of returning "to the things themselves." Instead, he argues that phenomenology must begin with the "absolute givenness" of phenomena in themselves. Far from understanding the subject as a sovereign ego that imposes conditions and limits on phenomena, and is thus the constituting origin for objectivity and truth, Marion proposes that the subject is itself constituted by the phenomena that impose themselves on it; the subject is given along with the self-giving of the phenomena, and is thus renamed "the adonné".

The paradigm Marion uses to make his case is a class of phenomena that he calls "saturated", because the intuition they offer exceeds any capacity for a subject to grasp or constitute them in terms of concepts or intentions. These phenomena saturate subjective intention, and their truth is beyond any limits or conditions of a constituting subject's understanding. Marion gives five examples of such phenomena: historical events, paintings, flesh, the face of another, and revelation. These phenomena become the new norm in terms of which all phenomena are to be understood, replacing the natural sciences' norm of what Marion calls "common-law phenomena." While such "common-law phenomena," which are the objects of the natural sciences, can be known with epistemic certainty, and conceptually grasped in their entirety, this is only because they are impoverished in intuition – their appearing is limited to the restricted horizon of what can be known by a subject.



This paper will outline Marion's theory of saturated phenomena, highlighting the possibilities it offers for understanding phenomena on their own terms without reducing them to conceptual truths. The possibilities of saturated phenomena for exceeding truth are very significant for our understanding both of fundamental dimensions of our human reality, and also of that which radically transcends us. The paper will also give an initial indication of some concerns with the dramatic and strident claims made by Marion, in particular with their implications for the utter passivity of the *adonné*.

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### ***Fundamentalism: Freedom or Fear***

Historically, fundamentalism came to be in an anti modernist, Christian environment in the United States at a time when Liberalism began to dictate the direction of religious scholarship. However, these fundamentalists were chauvinistic in their approach to their beliefs and before long they developed an "I believe therefore you must" approach to their faith. They were strongly opposed to political systems that allowed people the freedom to express their own beliefs and often used violence to prevent others from doing what they didn't want them to do. They did not understand that their own freedom to act was supported by the political systems they violently tried to overthrow.

Fundamentalists want to enforce their brand of freedom on everyone else by making them afraid of any alternative other than cooperation.

As time went by the term fundamentalism was also applied to people of other religious persuasions who were willing to further their religious goals using violence. Some examples include neo-animists, Muslims and Hindus. Not only did these fundamentalists pursue their brand of religion in their own homelands but some of them took this battle to the rest of the world.

How can we deal with fundamentalism in today's modern world with the threat of sudden and violent death hanging over us? The first consideration would be through dialogue; is this possible with people who have the "I believe therefore you must mentality"?

No country on earth is free from the threat of fundamentalism. So a solution has to be found quickly. While we search for a solution every effort must be made to educate the people on the fringes of fundamentalism and remove their support. The press must be encouraged not to highlight their work and take away the publicity they long for to further their brand of freedom.

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### ***Truth and the Responsibility of the Theologian in Public Discourse***

This paper will explore the role of the theologian engaged in public conversation; in order to achieve this within an exacting framework, my primary focus will be upon the life and times of the former Jesuit George Tyrrell. In the process, the paper will reflect upon Tyrrell's use of the axiom *Lex Orandi* and sketch a possible link to the *Sensus Fidelium*, a paradigm given credence at Vatican II. Arguably, Tyrrell's work in pursuit of truth experienced the greatest theological suppression of the modern era; nevertheless his thought has contemporary resonance for all those engaged in contextual theological dialogue. Tyrrell paid the ultimate price for his endeavours, he was excommunicated and died shortly afterwards, at the relatively young age of forty-eight. Despite almost total neglect, this essay will argue that Tyrrell's theological vocation contains a significant *aide de mémoire*, not only for those engaged in the contemporary ecclesial context. This paper will further explore Tyrrell's adaptation of Samuel Coleridge's critique of the theological enterprise. In particular, Coleridge's assault upon: "Clergymen who publish pious frauds in the interest of the Church", they are, Coleridge argues, "orthodox liars of God." Finally, drawing upon the experience of Tyrrell, this work will comment upon the contemporary 'public' role of the ecclesial theologian, as they attempt to navigate between the perceived *Scylla* of impending cultural nihilism and the *Charybdis* of religious fundamentalism.

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### ***The Seventh Level***

The question "What is Truth?" appears to require a descriptive answer implying that Truth can be treated in the same way as a material, physical distinct object. An alternative question could be "How true is X", where X typically represents a proposition to validate. The question has an aspect of evaluation, apart from knowledge of both X and standard against which X is measured. This kind of value judgment is carried out continually, whether consciously or not, by every human being. In this paper, the human mind is first modeled in six levels where knowledge, absorbed as meaning and significance, is used in such decisions in daily life. The seventh level is described in the second part of the paper as absolute truth, and is described as the reference, reality and standard of perfection. This level can transform all the remaining six, by providing clarity of vision, freedom and fullness of life. Accessibility to this new level, and through it to an inner world is the gospel brought to all humanity by Jesus Christ. The seventh level is typically seen either as a threat of dominion to be rejected, or an opportunity for life to be accepted. Rejection means that the sixth level sees "nothing" above it. Acceptance needs readjustment of key values and references, and results in regeneration and self knowledge and self growth. This struggle to recognize and accept the seventh level and its benefits are described in the third part of the paper.

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### ***Telling the Truth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century University***

The modern university has pretensions to being a place where truth may be pursued in a disinterested fashion. Academics possess what David Martin has called a 'special licence' and a capacity to ask questions 'without needing to answer them' and 'demand apologies without ever having to give them.' One might think of the universities as an estate within the state, one that is devoted to the pursuit of truth.

Of course, the above description is an idealisation, as all institutions have particular interests, even those that see their role as the pursuit of disinterestedness. In this sense, the 'special licence' of academics requires that they be reflective with regard to their own activities and to be honest when they fail to live up to the demands that the pursuit of truth places on them.

A problem must arise when the peculiar role of universities, ie the pursuit and transmission of truth, is compromised by other imperatives. The modern university must compete with other universities so that it might attract students and research money. Hence the modern university must create an image for itself; nearly every university in Australia portrays itself as the most innovative in the country and 'world class'. It must also suppress any information that might affect adversely its image in the market place.

Hence reflective practice in the modern university becomes highly problematic. Any reflective practice that may affect the university adversely is actively discouraged because it will have an impact on the university considered as a business enterprise. Consequently there is a whole set of truth seeking activities that may be seen as being 'off limits' in the modern university. These are activities that may have commercial implications by damaging the public perception of both the individual university and the 'tertiary sector' industry.

That an institution devoted to truth may not pursue a particular set of truths has disturbing consequences. Does it, in fact, corrupt the whole truth seeking enterprise and the institutions that undertake that enterprise? One consequence is, I believe, that we cannot invest too many of our hopes for the pursuit of truth in one particular set of institutions. We must recognise that the pursuit of truth requires a pluralist world.

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***Telling the 'truth' in times of war: Reflections upon Classical/Western traditions of thought, contemporaneity and the work of Marc Bloch (1886-1944)***

This paper will explore Marc Bloch's remarkable and insightful works, *Strange Defeat* and *The Historian's Craft*, written shortly after the invasion of France by Nazi Germany on May 10, 1940. Marc Bloch's works might now seem to be concerned with a recently past and paradoxically distant, yet once very contemporary world. However, these works remain signal exemplars of a present tense engagement with the world and the world of ideas. The distance between the past and the present can be uncomfortably close. We should pay close attention to writers who breathe an especial authorial character and life into their worlds. After all, the future of the book, its 'truths' and 'truthfulness' (that is, its 'true' usefulness) rests in the often unruly and surprising heads and hands of writers, publishers and their readers.

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***Social Science, Truth and Freedom in Uncertain Times***

Uncertainties of one kind or another have probably always been part of human life and affairs. However, this paper will argue that in order to understand uncertainty it is important to distinguish between different types of uncertainty, including those at the ontological and epistemological levels. The focus will then shift to the social as an emergent level of stratified ontology, currently characterised by a range of uncertainties generated from the crises of capitalism, the rise of neoliberalism, the impact of globalization, the development of 'risk society', the 'war on terror', and the growing threat of ecological crisis, to name but a few of the recent major developments affecting human life and society.

This paper will review the role of social science in relation to truth and human emancipation in the context of the uncertainty generated from these developments. It will argue that social science needs to defend and seek out objective truth if these developments are to be properly understood but that the truth in itself may not be sufficient for human emancipation from unwanted forms of determination. Political struggle and structural change are essential to such a project but these in turn require a grounding in objective accounts of the social world.

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***In Favour of Truthfulness***

Is the claim of truth-telling enough or should we demand a stronger standard of truthfulness. This introduction to the conference's public lecture will attempt to raise some of the issues that arise from the conference theme.

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***Fundamentalism and Terrorism: The Contemporary Religious Challenge***

For nearly a century the term 'fundamentalism' referred primarily to a set of specific Christian beliefs and an allied ultra-conservative attitude. Today usage of the term has broadened: 'fundamentalism', as a referent for the position of a 'closed mind' coupled with a negative if not hostile stance toward the status quo, has migrated into political discourse and the wider religious realm. Fundamentalism broadly names a religio-political perspective found in most if not all major religions. Most disturbingly, it is now associated with variant forms of religious extremism and thus religiously-oriented terrorism. And

it is Islamic modalities of terrorism that, rightly or wrongly, have come to take centre-stage in current world affairs.

However, I argue that the religious fundamentalism with which Islamist extremism is associated follows an identifiable paradigm that has a wider purview. 'Religious fundamentalism' denotes, among other things, a paradigm that paves the way from the relative harmlessness of an idiosyncratic belief system to the harmful reality of religiously driven and fanatically followed pathways to terrorist activity. In this paper I attempt to describe and analyse this paradigm with particular, but not exclusive, reference to Islam. Understanding its structure and implementation is, I contend, of vital importance in today's world.

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### ***The Disciplines of Truth and Pluralisms***

In this paper, I want to consider three recent lines of argument concerning truth, objectivity and pluralism. I want to examine the arguments of Bernard Williams in *Truth and Truthfulness*, Simon Blackburn in *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed* and Josef Ratzinger (Pope Benedict) in *Truth and Tolerance*. All are in various ways (to various extents) what might be thought of as "realists" about the nature of truth though in various ways all leave room for certain kinds of what might be called "relativism"- Williams (perhaps) about history, Blackburn about morality and Ratzinger about politics. My interest in this paper is to explore how far such distinctions between areas of thought that are "realist-true(/'truth-able') and others that aren't can be maintained in a plausible account of the nature of the disciplines of truth and answerability to something other than human ways of responding to the environment (divine, evaluative and natural). Since this is hardly more the indication of a project, my focus in this discussion will be the nature of historical time and of the distinction between mythic conceptions of the past and notions of the past more familiar in historical scholarship. A particular connection will be made to the place of scripture scholarship in a faith tradition with suggestion about the complexity of the notion of truth in interfaith relations arising from this.

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### ***'Conversation: Our Only Hope': An Exploration of David Tracy's Response to Uncertain Times***

At the dawn of the twenty first century, the theological enterprise is confronted with this cultural situation as its own setting. How can theology with its own claims to universal truth accept that it will be one voice amongst many? Can the theological project learn anything from postmodern insight? David Tracy, of the University of Chicago, is a Roman Catholic theologian who has tried to engage these questions and to weave them within a theological method. Tracy is convinced that, given the cultural milieu, there can be no return to a pre-ecumenical, pre-pluralistic, ahistorical theology. It is his conviction that only by respecting the postmodern drive to face otherness and difference, which lay at the heart of uncertainty, that theology, itself, will be restored as 'other': transgressive and disturbing. Such an approach, he believes, holds the potential for a liberating imagination and for a new discovery of truth, which he declares, "manifests itself in conversation."

Conversation, as a hermeneutical model, does not originate with Tracy, of course. It is the application of the model to the theological project, within a broader synthesis of assuming the postmodern challenge, which gives Tracy his distinction. The paper will explore the specific strategy Tracy offers of the engagement of 'the other.' It also explores that strategy's principal resource, an analogical imagination. It concludes with an examination of the development of a spirituality of conversation as a response to uncertain times.

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### ***Living in Personal Truth***

Persons are said to be living in personal truth when they are consciously actualising their personal possibilities in ways which truly promote their flourishing as human persons. Each person begins life with a finite set of personal possibilities which can be theoretically can be actualised in the living of life. However, concrete circumstances may never provide opportunities for the actualisation of some possibilities for a particular person. Hence the concrete form which personal flourishing will take cannot be determined in advance of actually living and making choices in concrete historical circumstances. The actualisation of some possibilities will preclude the actualisation of other possibilities. Certain action types of their very nature not only do not lead to lead to personal flourishing but actually impede it. It is important to be able to ascertain which actions are of this type. They may not be the ones promoted in the culture into which the person is born. The presentation draws on aspects of Heidegger's and Wojtyla's thinking.

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### ***Where 'Critical Theology and Critical Theory Meet': On the Relation Between Metaphysical Belief and Eschatological Hope***

This paper sketches a post-metaphysical conception of (Christian) 'faith' by drawing on the 'critical theology' of Jürgen Moltmann and the 'critical theory' of Slavoj Žižek. In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann finds common cause with critical theory in opposing theodicy: 'Critical theology and critical theory meet in the framework of open questions, the question of suffering which cannot be answered and the question of righteousness which cannot be surrendered'. The basis of this confluence, he suggests, is a shared rejection of belief in God as an eternal principle of being and a temporalising reframing of the problem of suffering. It is within this temporalised framework that Moltmann interprets Max Horkheimer's figure of 'the wholly other' as a 'negative theology' and as the ground of a 'protesting faith which takes us beyond the crude opposition of theism and atheism'. In the first half of the paper, I explore the nature of this alliance and ask whether it might help us articulate a robust understanding of Christian faith—not as a cognitive relation of 'belief' but as an existential comportment of 'hope'. In the second half of the paper, I approach the same question from the opposite side, as it were, by engaging with the recent writings of Slavoj Žižek. In Žižek's work we find a repetition of the same distinction between 'belief' and 'faith' (a distinction which, in both cases, is clearly indebted to Luther): one may believe in spirits without having faith in them; but equally—and this is Žižek's radical contention—one may also have faith *without* belief. For Žižek, this second, seemingly paradoxical possibility is the structure of our collective relation to the Lacanian big Other, the symbolic order. That is, the big Other is simply a shared fiction, but we are nonetheless bound to it. Here belief (in the sense of cognitive assent) is displaced, and yet faith is still 'performatively assumed'. I argue that a similar concept may need to be deployed to make sense of Christian faith within the eschatological framework proposed by Moltmann. But this only exacerbates the need to consider the implicit challenge of Žižek's form of ideology critique in relation to Christian faith: does he not show, through the very act of taking it as a paradigm case, that Christian faith is the most thoroughgoing of all ideologies? In the final part of the paper this question is addressed.

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### ***A Question of Two Truths Or On the (Ongoing) Tension Between Platonic and Epicurean Understandings of the Relations of Politics and Truth***

"how malicious philosophers can be! But I know of nothing more venomous than the joke Epicurus permitted himself against Plato and the Platonists; he called them Dionysiolakes, that means literally

"flatterers of Dionysius", in other words, tyrant's baggage and lickspittles; but in addition he wants to say, "they are all actors, there is nothing genuine about them"

"for Dionysokalos was a popular name for an actor". - Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, #7.

The influence of the neoconservatives in the current Bush administration, together with its controversial actions, have pointedly raised questions about the relationship between truthfulness and politics. The domestic policies of the neoconservatives respond to the perceived 1970s 'legitimation crisis' of the left-liberal welfare states. Neoconservatives argue that modern subjects have come to place too many demands upon the modern state, to both their own ethical, and to the state's political, chagrin. What is accordingly needed is a lowering of subjects' expectations of the state. Corollaries of this are the sponsorship of Church-delivered welfare and arguments for an increasingly unaccountable executive branch figured as the protectors of a morally and militarily imperilled nation. But both of these policy directions significantly challenge many of modern liberalism's founding suppositions. More than this, as continuing doubts surrounding the cause for war in Iraq, and related matters bring to the fore, a further corollary is an increased latitude for the state's political 'use and abuse' of truth and lie in an ultramoral manner.

As the imputed influence of Leo Strauss' 'Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy' on political actors (Wolfowitz) and leading advisors (Kristol[s], Perle) would indicate, these debates have a much longer history in Western ideas. Responding to today's debates, this paper will propose a grand hypothesis: that there are two contrasting traditions in thought about the relationship between truth and the political good. The Platonic tradition, which we take to run up to Nietzsche and Strauss, argues that truth-telling is always potentially politically dangerous, at least because of the bracketing of socially given presuppositions and relations of authority which found the theoretical inquiries of philosophers or scientists. The second tradition, beginning with Epicurus and running through to at least Freud, argues for a different and less intrinsically antagonistic account of the relation between truthfulness and politics. For this second tradition, truth-seeking and truth-telling is held to be a precondition for ethical and political freedom, insofar as knowledge sets itself against the most short-sighted and destructive of human affects: fear. The hope is that a clear-sighted framing of these two traditions might in turn allow us to frame our current political debates on truthfulness more clearly.

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***The Basis of Epistemic Humility: Fallenness and/or Finitude?***

Theological epistemology has all too confused the noetic effects of sin with (good) creaturely limitations on our knowledge, and in doing so, obscured the hermeneutics of suspicion behind the hermeneutics of finitude.

Some theologians and Christian philosophers see epistemic humility as a proper response to the fall. Yet human fallenness does not lead to fallibilism, but to a healthy suspicion of our ability to hide selfish motives, even from ourselves. The proper response to the fall is not simply to double-check our results against Scripture and tradition, but to become suspicious of ourselves. To explore this theme, I will make use of the distinction drawn by Merold Westphal between suspicion and scepticism.

Instead, fallibilism as an epistemic principle is more usefully related to our being created in embodied socio-cultural particularity. Because of creaturely finitude, we should have a proper creaturely scepticism towards our epistemological results; because of our fallen corruption, we should employ a ministerial suspicion towards our epistemic motivations.

To conclude, I will briefly sketch suggestions of some further epistemic implications from redemption and eschatology, to supplement the perspectives of finitude and fallenness.

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### ***Truth, Morality and Political Justice***

In this presentation I wish to explore the themes of truth: our ability to discover and know truth, how that is linked to telling the truth - in order for us to appreciate what the value of truth is.

How is truth related to justice- when something or someone is unjust, is it usually because the truth is first the victim-even through this situation may involve ignorance?

Our moral obligation to each other is to be truthful, but how do we dispel the myth of the so-called harmless white lie- by being guided by prudence?

What stands in the way of us and others being truthful? Why do some people prefer to not know or tell the truth? What part does fear play?

I will explore how this is played out in a broader social context particularly with regards our sense of justice in society. How much consideration do we give to the other when it comes to the truth in international politics and the history of injustice-perceived or otherwise?

Is fundamentalism truth, or an exercise in group subjectivity without due regard to the voice of others, and if so how can people be sure that other peoples version of the truth is true and just and worthy of endorsing?

Finally, I would like to draw parallels between a Benedictine approach to just relations-“that the strong have something to strive for, and that the weak do not fall back in dismay” to a vision of justice by a contemporary political theorist- Rawls.

Rawls Theory of Justice is both ambition and endowment sensitive- allowing those to have what they have, as long as the most disadvantaged don't suffer unduly. His Theory of Justice addresses the excesses of socialism and capitalism.

In a world where the disadvantaged don't suffer unduly because of the benefits of others - would fear and injustice be addressed? Would truth be more accessible to us?

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### ***Truth and the Function of Myth: the Atlantis Phenomenon***

Humankind must have its myths. It clings to them with a persistence that is quite illogical, and philosophy itself has been guilty of perpetuating them. I speak as one who has recently investigated the ancient traditions concerning Plato's story of a war between pre-historic Athens and the giant maritime power of Atlantis. Modern literature persists in claiming that the most ancient followers of Plato were divided over Plato's commitment to the truth of the story. We are keen to preserve a kind of insoluble mystery, so that we may choose to believe if we wish to. In fact these questions have been misunderstood since the time of Proclus who preserves the details of earlier interpretation. Early debate, in the 50 or so years after Plato's death, had in fact asked whether the story was meant to be taken as a story or whether it had some deeper meaning. By the end of the fourth century Iamblichus was claiming that a deeper meaning would not exclude historical truth, and Proclus follows him, assuming that the historical plausibility for which Iamblichus argued meant that things had happened more or less as Plato had said. Little by little we have allowed a story promoted by the great champion of the noble lie to gain more and more credence, until just about any underwater archaeological finds can be hailed as the founding of Atlantis. Platonists (some) have needed the mystery so that Plato should not seem too untruthful, scholars (some) so that the debates may continue, and archaeologists (some) so that they may acquire extra publicity and almost unlimited scope for wild theories. Myths grow and mutate, rapidly obscuring any truth that had been beneath them. Plato was aware that the myths concerning Socrates had done much the same thing, and the myths that have grown up about philosophy at the University of Sydney during the Anderson and Armstrong eras have not been so very different.

The purpose of the retelling shapes the form of the retelling in every case, shifts the emphasis, and ultimately distorts the truth. In these circumstances one should not be surprised that myths concerning national identity can preserve some of the grossest lies of all. A country's brief flirtation with certain values, e.g. 'freedom and democracy', 'mateship', or the fight against extreme racism, can generate its myth; the myth becomes culturally important, so that it cannot be questioned without somehow denying the 'self'; and once it is ingrained people feel free to act in virtually any way whatsoever because they cannot objectively see what they have become. Many a myth is ultimately harmless; an excess of myth combined with an excess of power threatens the very existence of our world.

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***Michel Haar and the Fallacy of Divine Objectivity***

This paper engages the work of Michel Haar to examine an experience of divinity that is entirely immanent, thus exposing the fallacy of Truth claims to spirituality which are grounded in objectivity. Haar claims, the Nietzschean concept of 'will to power' emerges from a 'Dionysian chaos', and manifests in the play of the mask (image), which constitutes reality. The chaotic origins of this reality, propose a legitimate alternative to the metaphysical conception that posits the mask as an inferior manifestation of the Real. Haar proposes that the mask is a manifestation from a primordial depth, the product of what he identifies as, the 'Overturning of Platonism'. The mask, as image, is the focal point of a tension between affirmation and denial. There exists a tension between an affirmation of the real, and its negation through metaphysical truth claims which establish objectivity. Nietzsche argues that a bias for certainty, inspired by an inability to affirm the real, leads man to create an objective realm as security against uncertainty (expounded in "How the true world became a fable").

The 'death of god' raises doubts about the legitimacy of claims to spirituality grounded in objectivity. Haar offers an opportunity to locate immanently, an experience of spirituality independent of a reliance on objectivity. He suggests, if we posit experiences of spirituality as immanence, then truth claims that abstract to the metaphysical can only perform a violence on the real. Haar asserts that the spirit that frees itself from resentment and guilt is a divine spirit, and represents, not an escape from, but a return to, divinity.

A change in the way that we perceive spirituality, from objectivity to immanence, requires not only a change in seeing, but also a change in the nature of truth claims pertaining to spirituality.

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***Ben Jonson's Volpone and the Gunpowder Plot of November 1605: reflections on 5/11 and 9/11***

The situation arose in London, 1605, where 36 barrels of gunpowder were found under the Houses of Parliament on the day before King James I, his family, the nobles and clergy, and all the politicians were to be present for the opening of a special session of Parliament. The situation was both like, and unlike, the 9/11 situation in the United States in 2001. It was unlike the New York and Washington attacks in that the plot to blow up the British Houses of Parliament was discovered beforehand, and prevented. 5/11 was, however, like 9/11 in exposing the vulnerability of a major society at its nerve centre. The situations may also be comparable in the reactions of the two societies.

The Gunpowder Plot of November 5, 1605, was seen as a Catholic conspiracy to take over England by force. Decades of tension since the 1530s between Catholics and Protestants made the Plot a climax of hysteria and paranoia. The aftermath lasted for centuries with Catholics suffering under Protestant rule. The Plot became legendary to the extent that Guy Fawkes is still celebrated in places around the world as the original "devil in the vault", or allegedly so.

What this meant for Ben Jonson, a leading dramatist and second only to Shakespeare at the time, was to challenge the paranoia and hysteria without appearing to refer to the actual events. He was a Catholic convert, yet close to the centres of power and culture. Dealing with "truth and untruthfulness in uncertain times" was a matter of life and death for him; he had already been jailed twice for "applications" in his plays, and had in 1603 been called before the Privy Council to answer charges of "popery and treason".

*Volpone*, or *The Fox* (to use its full title), widely regarded as the finest satirical comedy in English, is a masterpiece of farce; it is also a masterpiece of equivocation. For four centuries its possible political and contemporary meanings have been concealed. It survives for its outstanding formal qualities of theatre.

Feinting in the direction of an allusion between "the Fox" and Guy Fawkes, Jonson chose to use the abstract setting of Aesop's fable of the fox and the birds of prey, and also to locate what happens in late Renaissance Venice. It was an elaborate device that worked well. When some of his contemporaries interpreted it as having "applications", Jonson reacted furiously in an Epistle that was

published with the First Quarto in 1607. His anger has silenced critics since. It could be said that Jonson used “art” not to conceal “art” but to conceal “truth”. His real “truth”, as the paper sees it, lies in the recognition of a threat to the “respublica” of new and modern forces and energies in society realigning Money and Power in society. Its approach to religion is oblique, yet suggestive for a Catholic viewpoint at that time (and Jonson re-converted some years later) of a possible centrist and secular spirituality.

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***Truth and the Problem of History: Encountering the Vula'a 'Past'***

This paper is an exploration of the translation from oral history to written history which is presently being undertaken by the Vula'a people of south eastern Papua New Guinea. Based on ethnographic research and influenced by existential phenomenology it draws heavily on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to investigate the complex of myth, history and Christianity manifest in Vula'a representations of the past. We find that the Vula'a lifeworld accommodates what might commonly be perceived as contradictions--multiple versions of significant local stories, and an acceptance of Christianity without the forfeiture of pre-Christian cosmology. The translation of indigenous oral traditions into Western categories such as 'myth' and 'history' has challenged anthropologists since the inception of the modern discipline. Ideas about truth, rationality and alternative conceptualisations of time, which have been key issues of debate, are here reassessed in light of Vula'a experience. I suggest that if we are to understand this lifeworld we must move beyond simple distinctions between history and myth, fact and fiction, truth and falsity.

My interrogation of these dichotomies invites us to see myth as a mode of being and, consequently, as a form of truth. This is not, though, the truth of Western science, of proof and explanation. In Heidegger's terms it is 'essential' and therefore beyond the realm of provability. It 'allows a pluralistic embrace of various aspects of the world which are shown but which resist reduction to other things'.

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***Scruples and Hypocrisy***

The standard analysis of hypocrisy in the philosophical literature focuses on two elements: a) the existence of a disparity pair between one's explicit moral claims and one's deeds and b) a failure on the part of the agent to internalise the demands of morality. One tacit assumption in this literature is that a genuine attempt to reduce any disparity between thought and deed is desirable. But is this true in every instance? Could there be cases where such practical truthfulness is in fact undesirable? In this paper we revive the category of the overscrupulous to demonstrate two ways in which individual concerns with avoiding hypocrisy might be morally vicious. The relevance of these claims in moral psychology will be explored in some detail.

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***A Dissident Searches for Truth. Insights from the Book of Job***

This paper argues that the writer of the biblical book of Job portrays his main character as a community leader and staunch supporter of ancient Jewish religious traditions who is gripped by personal tragedy and becomes a religious dissident. Job's bitter experience causes him to lose faith in the truths he once held to be sacred and on which he based his whole life. His friends try to impress on him the abiding value of these religious truths but Job knows they are only mouthing platitudes and cannot reach the depth of his experience.

Job cries out in his pain and disillusionment for a rationale and in the process experiences an encounter with Truth itself in the form of the deity. This convinces him that truth is multi-dimensional and cannot be contained in any one human culture or tradition. He comes to realise that truth cannot be tamed or domesticated and learns to live with uncertainty and a greater appreciation of the truth that comes from experience.