

Regimes of Truth

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“Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.”¹

— Michel Foucault

This maiden issue of our journal’s silver anniversary volume presents five forms of social organizations wherein truth claims are systematically adjudicated: the academic community, the “covidized world” of Philippine society, the fantastic “empires of belief,” a traditional Chinese family, and the artistic community. In each instance, the social conditions that produce truth-claims are constrained and restructured by specific and local regimes.²

¹ Paul Rabinow, ed. *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 73.

² *The Foucault Reader*, 72.

These so-called “regimes of truth,” however, are redeemed from their historical contingencies by exposing the enabling social mechanisms that contain them. As a consequence, the imbedded structures of power within dominant social institutions are regarded as merely incidental by “specific intellectuals” such as writers, medical practitioners, bible scholars, physicists, novelists, and artists, as the latter bring their expertise to bear on the flimsy forms of thinking and motherhood statements that hover over the mindless subservience of the general public.

Our lead article, Jeffrey Centeno’s essay on “Writing and Being Human,” shows how the advent of social media is compelling academics and writers to raise the banner of truthfulness before the purveyors of fake news and alternative facts. Thus, the academic freedom accorded to educational institutions is now being called upon to deploy their critical faculties, moral ascendancy, and multidisciplinary evidence-based studies to serve the general public.³ Academic freedom, according to Centeno, “is never meant to be a license to express unverified, unfounded, and malicious claims.” Truth-telling, therefore, is not performed merely for the sake of self-cultivation. It is also a matter of serious concern for social development and the evolution of human flourishing.

³ Ateneo de Manila University, for example, has announced that it will institutionalize an opinion and survey research unit “that aims to advance empirical, interdisciplinary, and policy-oriented public opinion studies on democracy, governance, and development.” <https://www.ateneo.edu/aps/asog/news/apc-to-launch-boses-pilipinas>, accessed June 30, 2021.

Our second article, Aurelio Agcaoili's "Unmasking the 'New Normal' and the 'Vernacular of the Veracious' during a Pandemic" exposes the duplicity of words and the weaponization of verbal formulations such as "the new normal," "social distancing," and the "Kungflu virus." In the end, he argues that "There is only one way to address the false vernacular of the veraciousness invented by the ruling political and economic elites: more democracy, more transparency, and more respect for human language, a human language that imprisons but also frees." Even deliberate acts of concealing and distorting reality can be pierced and flipped over by human reflexivity.

Jovino Miroy's article, "Doubting Thomas and Contemporary Education," advances Agcaoili's insights by employing moments of doubt and critical thinking against the proliferation of "schools of magic" and "empires of belief" enshrined in television shows and stories of fantasy and horror. The application of skepticism on these worlds of make-believe seeks to initiate students to inquire about truth and reality. According to Miroy, "dubiety enables students and teachers to become flexible and agile learners, capable of investigating which concepts, mindsets, and theories are applicable or not in an ever changing world." He refers to the story of the doubting Thomas in the New Testament as an example of the restoration of sociality and community relations by means of critical thinking.

Our review essay, Mikhael Dua's reading of David Bohm's *On Dialogue*, retells how engaging in dialogue can

explicate shared meanings that lead toward mutual understanding. It breaks through solipsistic thought bubbles and pathological delusions of grandeur. In a dramatic description of these pathologies that are reminiscent of comic scenes in Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*,⁴ Bohm narrates the story of a woman who dreamt of being battered by someone else. She woke up from her nightmare only when someone turned the lights on and she saw that she was actually hitting herself.⁵ Bohm, like Foucault, also makes use of the metaphor of the mirror⁶ to demonstrate the emancipatory potentials of philosophical reflection.

Pathological conditions are also unraveled in Daniel Ratilla's book review of Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. He shows the stratification of truth claims in the speech acts performed by family members who had to deal with the weight of traditions and unquestioned beliefs. In the end, Ratilla tells us that this novel "reflects the changing faces of what we accept as truth: a relative truth mediated by language, time, and context; mediated by cynical elements as perception, superstition, authority, and necessity; but also by the purest of intentions: by loyalty and love."

⁴ Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, 152–153. In the Chapter on "The Birth of the Asylum," madmen were made to confront their delirium by making them observe their own pretensions through the insanity of their fellow patients.

⁵ David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 28.

Mikhael Dua participated in the Reading Circle conducted by the *Philosophy for Children and Youth Network in the Asia Pacific (PCYNAP)* for its registered members in September, 2020. -Ed.

⁶ Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* 152; Bohm, *On Dialogue* 29.

Finally, Peter Murphy's research note on "Meaning, Truth, Art and Education" brings us back to the world of the academe where, according to him, the "regime of truth"⁷ prevails over the meanings generated by works of art. He poses the problem of whether the analytic forms of thinking preferred by academics can fully capture the search for meaning and syntheses aspired for by artworks. He narrates how this dynamic tension between an analytic notion of truth, on the one hand, and the search for synthetic meaning, on the other hand, engendered the institutionalization of "research universities" wherein methods and procedures for creating knowledge colonized the other domains of human experience. Murphy then pleads for the activation of the human imagination in academic discourses in order to enliven the humdrum of disciplinary modes of thinking.

We anticipate that some of our future issues can map and point out some of the escape routes and strategies of evasion from these types of confinement.

Abangan! (Be on the look-out for them!)

⁷ Murphy actually uses the term, "regimes of truth," in his article.