

Today's Post-Real World

by janice *Saturday, Feb 17 2018, 10:10pm*

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Since acclaimed literary critic, theorist and analyst Roland Barthes announced the [death of the author](#), back in 1977, he knowingly and to an extent, unknowingly, predicted/pre-empted the post-reality/postmodern world we live in today, which I would name as the 'Post-Real' world in which reality is determined by the reader or interpreter of cultural signs, (language) symbols, images, including phenomenological material signs and symbols, like buildings, vehicles, cats, dogs, etc, etc, as cultural discourse, because all these artefacts SPEAK to us as language which must be interpreted.

Therefore in the act of interpretation the reader/decoder or interpreter becomes the author of his/her own experience and 'reality,' which is entirely subjective, as it is based on the interpreters emotional experience; for instance, a 'dog,' to a person that has been raised with these animals views dogs affectionately as companions, pets, playful, etc, however, a person that as an infant has been mauled by a savage dog, views these animals as dangerous and malicious, there is no escaping this subjective emotive interpretation, hence realities created are all filtered through our experience and the dynamics of culture. And as it is 'language' that sustains/creates cultures, there is no escaping culture as reader AND writer, though meaning is up for grabs. In other words, Barthes declared the death of not only the author and intended 'objective' meaning, but also the death of 'Truth' (objective reality) as implied or emphatically stated by anyone.

Needless to state, Barthes' well presented thesis turned religionists and others obsessed with what they imagine to be objective truth/reality on its ear, as it could easily be proven that such interpretations were entirely subjective and that reality is indeed based on the readers construction, again based on personal biases, cultural socialisation and personal experience.

What Barthes inferred is that we are all trapped/captured and SUBJECT to culture, its ever-changing dynamics and the effects it has on us all as subjects, indeed, we are all to a greater or lesser extent slaves to culture. For those not able to grasp this point I offer proof, now think of anything you like and realise that the thought process or 'content of thought' is entirely composed of cultural symbols, whether linguistic, image-based or otherwise we cannot escape the signs and symbols of culture our very thoughts are based on cultural products.

Now, some time has passed since '77; the world today could easily be read as a post-real world; for instance, we have an ignorant, pathological liar as president of the most powerful nation on earth. A sad irony perhaps, BUT this social media addicted simpleton thrives on Twitter, which messages are confined to less than 200 characters, yet these messages are the focus/food of his supporters and critics alike. Now consider the many articulate speeches of previous socially aware and intelligent presidents and the illiterate pathological ravings of Trump, who survives simply due to the fact that a culturally enslaved (via digital means) society has been socialised to absorb these digital expressions, factual or not, without referring to traditional analytic methods or to the exclusion of rigorous or even simple comparative analysis, though this applies less to his critics, though they too are clearly subject to digital slavery.

Readers would note at this stage that history, logic, philosophy, science and all the classical,

traditional tools of reference and assessment (analysis), including modernist thought, are secondary to the ravings on Twitter, (Google's) Youtube and Facebook, which mediums delight in popular myths, fictions and propaganda, as it profits immensely therefrom, not verifiable facts, which a Trump PR person (K Conway) attempted to counter by presenting Trump's transparent LIES and pathological ravings as, "alternative facts." Well, indeed they are based either on Trump's subjective extremely shallow world view and his ignorance, but to Trump and his supporters, they are 'facts.' And so it is not too difficult to appreciate that we live in a post-truth/reality era, where group (cultural) think is forged by the social (digital) media.

Verifiable facts no longer carry weight as they once did though of course Barthes proved that facts are subjectively processed. Nevertheless, most people are able to read a runaway truck bearing down on them and jump out of the way; however, these same people allow themselves to be led by the largely fictitious media which makes it profits, via lies, sensationalism, hysteria and fear, now note the emotive/emotional aspects associated with the linguistic delivery of media sell, especially FEAR and alarm.

Indeed, those that have realised that emotions rule above reason, marketers, advertising, PR, etc, exploit the situation to the hilt. But where have established shared values, 'truth' and at least a semblance to objectivity gone? Whether fictitious or not shared values have offered societies a secure, shared social space in which to function coherently and relatively comfortably for generations; today however, the values which were once the foundation stones of all cultures are gone. The world is now an amorphous glob moving in numerous conflicting directions and no-one group or entity is able to re-establish 'solid' values anymore, we only have vested interested today, whose sole motive is profit, in stark contrast to past leaders and other more noble guiding principles.

Moreover, COHERENCE has died today, and without it the post-REALITY society we live in today is doomed and Trump is the best symptom-example of this deteriorating process -- once society displaces coherence with garble and pathology, then it's all but over for that society/culture.

If you're looking for someone/thing to blame, then clearly it is the manic pursuit of profit above all other considerations, and of course wealthy elitists, oligarchs, socially control this manic process/pursuit though WE pay the price with unnecessary wars for profit and other social failures, though subjects on the media drip-feed, are largely unaware of the real dynamics at work.

Also see:

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/02/16/in-the-post-truth-classroom/>

Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-3192.html>