the supporters of an alternative theory, because this assumes that the argument being made is necessarily right.

Another way of determining whether a theory is superior to a rival theory is to make the claim that it is more powerful and has more powerful effects. Self-evidently, some theories are more powerful or have more powerful effects in the world than others; however, this cannot provide us with an argument that might suggest that it is possible to say that it is a better theory qua its theoretical adequacy than another and rival theory.

What are we left with? There are four ways of distinguishing between different theories or models. The first is epistemic: a theory is superior to another because it is more empirically adequate and thus is more truthful. The second is the converse, so that a version of reality is superior to another because it contains fewer contradictions, disjunctions, and errors. A third approach focuses on the giving of reasons, and concludes that some reasons and systems of rationality are superior to others, and therefore should be preferred. A fourth approach is pragmatic: a theory is better than another because it is more practically adequate or referenced to/part of extant frameworks of meaning. A combination of all four reasons is, I suggest, appropriate. And this allows us to distinguish truth from falsehood. The question as to whether we now live in a post-truth world is of course a sociological question and demands a sociological answer. My view is that to distinguish between a truthful and a post-truthful time in history is a piece of rhetoric, worthy of insertion in the Trump auvre and banal in its own right.

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Manipulation or Study: Some Hesitations About Post-Truth Politics

Evidence-based policy and post-truth or post-factual politics seem to be completely opposing phenomena. While the first asks for a close or even intimate relation between policy making and true knowledge, the second refers to a state of affairs where truth no longer prevails but mere opinions and emotions structure the field of politics. Evidence-based policy in education dates back to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Recent political events such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump have been instrumental in coining the term post-truth and post-factual, or at least, for them entering our vocabularies. Both the chronology and the contrasting assumptions might lead to the conclusion that the (short) era of evidence-based policy has come to an end, and that Brexit and Trump signal the era of post-truth politics. But are these phenomena completely different or even opposing? Perhaps

they have more in common than what is visible at face value. It is impossible to develop this argument in detail within the scope of this note, but, hopefully, some indications will clarify why such an argument is worth considering. The argument runs as follows: both evidence-based policy and post-truth politics articulate the merging of politics and truth into mechanisms of manipulation. If this argument makes sense, perhaps there is a possibility to reclaim the university as a place for study where the claims of both politics and truth are suspended.

It is worth recalling the essay *Truth and Politics* of Hannah Arendt, originally published in the *New Yorker* in 1967, as well as her essay *Lying in Politics* published a few years later. The opening paragraph of *Truth and Politics* immediately sets the tone of her argument: "No one has ever doubted that truth and politics are on bad terms with each other, and no one, as far as I know, has ever counted truthfulness among the political virtues" (Arendt 1967, 296). In these essays, Arendt disentangles the complex relation between politics and truth, or between the politician and the truthteller. One of her objectives is to understand and criticize "the mass manipulation of opinion and fact" in modern states through the "re-writing of history" or techniques of "image-making" (ibid., 306). Arendt argues that lying and manipulation always have been part of politics. But there are many genres of lying and, in modern politics, two new genres seem to have appeared: the lies of the "public relations managers in government" and the ones of the (professional) "problem solvers" (Arendt 1972, 7ff.). Both are involved in making and selling (their) images, and they are experts in using the faculty of imagination to deceive an audience as a means to achieving whatever aim or objective. A lie, for Arendt, is a deliberate falsehood and always opposes what she calls factual truth ("Germany invaded Belgium", "Obama was born in the United States"). Factual truth refers to a given state of affairs and thus bears the mark of the past. For this reason, factual truth can put limitations on political action, hold policy makers accountable or at least "bring the forces of imagination back to earth" (ibid., 8). By contrast, the active manipulation of factual truth, as well as the deception of public opinion, allows politicians to get their hands free and to become compelling. But in modern, democratic societies, Arendt argues, organized deception of the masses is not sufficient. The deceptive lie, image or story can only become an adequate substitute for factual reality when it is accompanied with self-deception. The lie has, so to speak, no ground and can only be compelling if the politician, or the problem solver and public relations manager, believe their own lies; their conviction is the only thing that might give some public credibility to their lie.

It takes a lot of effort to keep a lie alive. The lie – either as created image or story – needs to be kept intact from the confrontation with new truths or opinions by adding in constantly new manipulations and new images, otherwise factual truth will become powerful. So although the hands of the liars are set free, they immediately have their hands full with keeping the image or story intact or replacing it with more compelling ones. As a consequence, politics is turned into an endless manipulation of opinion and fact, and can in its actions be little more than a nearly endless process of manipulation. This explains why truthtellers who defend (a) factual truth are often the worst enemies from the perspective of image-building politicians; they question directly or indirectly the propagated image or story. But, according to Arendt, their oppositional voice is rather weak: "The deliberate falsehood deals with contingent facts; that is, with matters that carry no inherent truth within themselves, no necessity to be as they are. Factual truths are never compellingly true. (...) Facts need testimony to be remembered and trustworthy witnesses to be established in order to find a

secure dwelling place in the domain of human affairs. From this, it follows that no factual statement can ever be beyond doubt" (Arendt 1972, 6). The strength of a lie and the power of deception is that it draws on the contingency that makes any truth fragile. For Arendt, this explains why the position of the liar is both attractive and advantageous: "It is this fragility that makes deception so very easy *up to a point*, and so tempting. It never comes into a conflict with reason, because things could indeed have been as the liar maintains they were. Lies are often much more plausible, more appealing to reason, than reality, since the liar has the great advantage of knowing beforehand what the audience wishes or expects to hear. He has prepared his story for public consumption with a careful eye to making it credible, whereas reality has the disconcerting habit of confronting us with the unexpected, for which we were not prepared" (ibid., 6f.).

It is not difficult to recognize in current events, which have been named as paradigmatic for post-truth politics and policies, some of the mechanisms that Arendt described in her essays fifty years ago. Brexit and Donald Trump's election could easily be seen as the triumph of making stories and images for public consumption and of declaring classic truthtellers as public enemies, or at least the enemies of the people's so-called real interest. Arendt's point of view indeed helps to understand, for instance, the extraordinarily harsh reaction of politicians to those who want to mobilize factual truths about the (costs and benefits of the) European Union in order to inform public opinion. Perhaps the pre-election period also started to create a scene where truth and (deliberate) falsehood became almost interchangeable, and that is coming close to an "entirely defactualized world" (ibid., 26). Such a scene can lead to a feeling of complete disbelief and even a disinterested or disoriented public sentiment indicating the dramatic moment that the distinction between truth and falsehood itself was given up as a guiding principle.

But the recent events also point to another, relatively new mechanism. An alternative to the state of affairs where built images are completely substituting factual truth (which, according to Arendt, would be a totalitarian state) is that the politician frames his or her own story as an opinion or personal belief. The consequence of this personalizing move is that it becomes very hard for truthtellers (and their media) to qualify what they are saying themselves as being more than an opinion or belief. In other words, if the total displacement of factual truth turns out to be impossible or too radical, the only option left is to actively create a personalized and personalizing political arena of opinion, belief or even emotion. The outburst to certain media for making and spreading "fake news" or to certain scholars for promoting "fake science," results in the installation of a space of equivalence where everything can be taken into account on the condition that it is personalized as opinion, belief or interest. A truthteller confronted with this manipulation either disappears from the public scene or – if they want to be heard – has to personalize his or her truth claims, and, as a consequence, market and sell these claims as opinions or personal beliefs. The truthteller, in the latter case, has to become a manipulator themself.

Today, social media and its network logic play a key role in building this personalizing arena of opinion. The leading personal opinion is the opinion with the most number of (equally personalized) followers. These followers have to be fed or multiply themselves constantly in order to keep the story alive and to stay in pole position. The real power of the post-truth claims on Twitter and other social media is that they can shortcut all sorts of analog institutions and media that could confront imagination with a reality check of some sort. What the new digital media make possible is that the leader is able to address everyone immedi-

ately and personally, or at least that the ongoing flux of stories and images seduces everyone permanently to become a follower. The result is that the leading post-truth statements on social media are opinion and news at once, with the consequence that the leading ones will be covered – critically or not – by the old media. Much more could be said about the current political situation, but it is probably sufficiently clear that the term post-truth politics could be reserved for a new configuration of politics and truth. The key strategy in this configuration is not the replacement but the substitution of truth by lies or by leading opinions, as well as the transformation of politics into an endless cycle of manipulation.

When looking from an Arendtian perspective, evidence-based policy is perhaps not to be considered as the opposite of manipulative power, but as just another form of manipulative power, which might explain why the protagonists of evidence-based policy (at least in the strict sense) are often not the outspoken opponents of post-truth tendencies. If this is the case, today's "evidence producers" could be regarded as the offspring of the class of professional problem solvers who Arendt had in mind fifty years ago. This becomes plausible when stressing that what counts as evidence in evidence-based policy is knowledge of "what works."

For educational research, the implication is that the technical criteria of efficiency, effectiveness or performativity decide on what counts as evidence and that what is needed is the constant manipulation of educational phenomena in such a way that they can be measured in terms of performance or input-output ratio. Educational research thus becomes techno-science, with "evidence-tellers" who not only make truth claims (about what works) but at the same time perform an action, that is, their truth-telling is at the same time problem-solving (about what works better). Knowledge on what works includes prescriptions to manipulate education in view of increased technical performance. The consequence of educational research becoming a techno-science is, therefore, research itself being turned into a policy technology. Techno-science and, what could be named, techno-policy march hand-in-hand.

Two aspects have to be stressed at this point. The ideal operation of evidence-based policy – meaning that research and political action merge – would be an (automated) monitoring and feedback system. This is exemplified in popular policy imaginaries to replace the slow, bureaucratic inspection apparatus with a fast and automated school feedback system. The operational logic is that past or current performance motivates the manipulation of educational settings in view of future performance. Second, evidence-based policy does not only operate through quantitative data of measured performance. These data can always be complemented with qualitative data that are shaped in terms of examples of best performance (the examples presented, for instance, in the EU Education and Training Monitor or the top performing countries in PISA rankings). These qualitative data have to be turned into attractive, recognizable, and hence contextualized, images and stories, in order to impose on them the type of manipulative power that is part of performance measures. The images of better-performing schools or countries both remind schools and countries there is always room for improvement and give a sense of direction to improvement initiatives. The resulting mechanism is to integrate feedback (on past or present performance) and feedforward (on opportunities for improved future performance). What is at stake here is not educational policy becoming manipulative through substituting truth-telling with lies or opinions, but educational research becoming manipulative through substituting politics with feedback and example-setting. Evidence-based policy making is about allowing science to become political and politics to become scientific. The consequence, for educational practices, is that they are transformed in settings that can be manipulated. And the price to pay is this:

in principle, everything in education, ranging from teachers and students, handbooks and methods, to gender, family situation and school environment, can be treated as a variable (independent or not) which is vulnerable to manipulation.

If the above sketches of post-truth politics and evidence-based policy indeed indicate the appearance of a new configuration of politics and truth, it is worth exploring some of the challenges posed to the university. Universities can comply with the game of manipulation, branding themselves as leaders through creating followers and subscribing to the principles (in itself the result of a political act) of performance and impact as the defining criteria for their business in research, education or service. For sure, this option can make universities, and their academics or students, relevant or popular if at least the university is successful in becoming itself a key manipulating agency. Another option is that universities place themselves outside the game of manipulation by making factual or rational truth public and re-educating the public about the value of validated knowledge. But this position results in isolation or – if the university does want to reach out to the world – could lead to stepping into the trap of a kind of academic manipulation. This manipulation starts from the assumption that the masses are not able to think or to act properly without someone explaining to them the factual world, and that manipulation of the masses is justified in the name of truth. It is an old type of manipulation, famously defended by Plato – and his story of the necessary lie – as part of creating the ideal state. Perhaps there is another option if the university recalls how it was established in the dark Middle Ages as *universitas studii*.

As an association of students, the university was not just a place for learning and training (motivated by the pursuit of personal formation or professional training), nor a place for the production of new knowledge (driven by the search for truth). It was a place and time for study. To study something is different from learning something. The study of law or a language, for instance, is different from learning the law(s) or learning a language. Study is driven by curiosity or care, that is, thinking under the assumption that – as Isabelle Stengers (2005) would say – there always might be something more important. Study practices start from the assumption that, and materially seek to create conditions where, something we did not or could not take into account actually becomes real, questions us in our relation to the world and invites us to be engaged in – drawing on Bruno Latour (2004) – the "progressive composition of a common world." To study education, for instance, is not just about getting to know the world of education as it is, but to take care of it, to become responsible for it, to relate to it as a matter of concern, to protect it in the sense of opening up a space to think about its past, present and future. The university is not about producing or passing knowledge and to study something is not just learning to know something (new). The magic power of study practices is that it allows something to start to speak, start to become visible, and thus is turned into a thing that can make us think. Moreover, to study something is not to manipulate it or to impose some sense on it, but to try to find out or to create a situation in which we can become attentive to what things have to say. Being a student, therefore, is not about learning to become a truthteller, and not about preparing oneself to act as a problem solver or evidence producer. What characterizes a student, while studying, is perhaps foremost their hesitation; their way of looking, speaking and knowing is interrupted or slowed down; for what calls for our attention can always be something more important (Stengers 2005). While the act of manipulation is the sign that power and knowledge or truth and politics have merged, hesitation marks the disconnection of power and knowledge. For the student being in a state of hesitation, it is impossible to be involved in political action and

it is equally problematic to make knowledge claims. To reformulate and summarize this: by taking care of something, by turning something into a matter of concern, by allowing it to speak or become visible and to make us hesitate, practices of study suspend the claims of both truth and politics, of both knowledge and power.

If this third option is worth exploring, perhaps it is important to reclaim the university as a site for study and for students, and to avoid being addressed as researchers or teachers and learners. The university, however, not as the site to return the light of truth in a post-truth condition, but as the site to suspend the power of manipulation, and prepare for new connections between politics and truth. Also, historians and philosophers of education have an important role to play in reclaiming the(ir) university. Not to mourn lost relevance and status of their theories, nor to sit down and wait or pray for techno-driven universities to finally become hospitable again towards historical and philosophical research. History and philosophy of education, concerned with the university and the world, could engage in taking care of the university, turning it into a matter of concern and become involved in the re-composition of the world of education. They could play a role in reclaiming the university by studying when and how the university in the past, but probably also at certain places today, played its unique role in suspending the claims of both truth and politics. This type of positive, world-disclosing philosophical and historical study would do more justice to what is of concern today than recalling once more the history of the university as a history of falling prey to or acting as an accomplice in manipulative politics or manipulative science.[7]

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