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Reality and Illusion: commonalities of perception in the search for truth in selected texts, a linguistic approach

Author: Elizabeth Rainey

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Elizabeth Rainey (University of Chichester)

I- Introduction

Language has had a pronounced effect on defining humanity's idea of truth, often in the form of poetry, religious texts and political catechisms. So the structure of a text can help enhance its content, concentrating the focus of a contemplative act. In order to illustrate the concept of what is true or not, a number of texts here elucidate connections with truth and how it is usually perceived. By scrutinizing various religious passages, deontic or ethically inspired modalizing is seen to be greatly stressed and so also spiritual renewal is emphasized, oftentimes together with calls for political regeneration. The behaviour modification that results from this moralizing motivates people to achieve, sometimes to be model citizens or even to lay down their lives for their version of truth.

Mind management is therefore a central issue in the search for isolating or identifying truth or falsehood, and some prophetic vision of the future or of better times to come is also frequently present. Yet the epistemic use of modality can embrace both the contemplative and the need for lucid argumentation. Such a comprehensive cohesiveness is key to the management of the politico-religious mindset embracing common cultural needs in the human psyche. This may even take the form, in some cases, of social conditioning and arguably engineering.

Monitoring innermost motivational values allowed the state to root out sedition and test the loyalty of individuals. The voices of many in dissent resulted in the past in immigration, imprisonment or even death. In fact, the origin of the term *deontic* is derived from the Greek word *dei,* meaning 'right or true in regard to ethical behaviour or of obligation to the state', which was an honour code few Greeks dared to transgress and which had devastating consequences for their families if the code was breached. As such, it is consistent to look at earlier forms of speech writing from the Classical period when the art of Rhetoric was taught painstakingly through the uses of logical fallacy in the works of Aristotle and others.

For instance, through the centuries, not least as part of the classic *trivium,* techniques for the appropriate delivery of political language are outlined in works such as Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and studies in other works of Philosophy, Literature and Political Science, in addition to Applied Linguistics. These include works as diverse as Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Elyot's *The Governor*, Dummett's *Truth and Other Enigmas* and selected works of Russell or Anscombe. The teaching of rhetoric for the preparation of leaders was linked to control of the populace, essential to government. Below is one of the most lucid explanations of distinctions in modals and their uses, offered by Saeed in reference to the differences between epistemics and deontics, which relate directly to truth and right behaviour:

> Deontic modals, like epistemic modals, signal a speaker's judgments but while with epistemics the judgement is about the way the real world is, with deontics it is about how people should behave in the world. This means that the use of deontics is tied in with all sorts of social knowledge: the speaker's belief systems about morality and legality; and her estimations of power and authority.
>
> (2009, p.140)

These kind of taught skills are still associated with social engineering as has been pointed out by the work of Hammond and Derewianka (2001). Features of diction used in classical rhetorical training in preparation for political speeches were categorized minutely. These would have included, according to Cicero's *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *definition*, *coniunctio*, *correctio*, *gradatio*, *sententia or membrum orationis* or Englished, the rhetorical strategies of definition, conjunction, substitution for emphasis, climax, maxim and clause. In addition, figures of thought would be employed such as *licentia*, *contentio*, *imago*, or *signification*, or the techniques of frankness, antithesis, simile and emphasis. False appeals to pity, tradition, popularity and such other tricks like *ad hominem* remarks would be routinely made, to stir the populace into an anticipated emotional response, like a magician manipulating a crowd. Cicero's understanding of this was codified for the purposes of teaching, while he wrote in *Brutus* of one such potential public political officer:

> Titus Torquatus, son of Titus, was thoroughly trained in the school of Molo at Rhodes, and he possessed such fair natural endowment for ready and fluent speaking that, had he lived and profited by the law that forbade campaigning, he would have made the consulship.
>
> (1939, p.211: 245–255)

He added in *Orator*:

> Manners of speech fall into two sections, delivery and use of language.
>
> (p.357: 55–56)

Linking such general rhetorical manoeuvres is basically the teaching of the art of spin doctoring and nuances in language are conveyed in a number of ways including pauses in delivery, body language, tone of voice, use of metaphor and other aspects of rhetorical gamesmanship. Nor was their debt limited to Rome. Aristotle taught formal logic, so ideas of syllogism and faulty logic would be familiar to students of public speaking such as politicians and religious leaders. Circumvention

of these guidelines, then, would be part of a deliberate intention to evoke an emotional reaction in the public.

How this relates to what is acceptable or unacceptable in term of social norms and behaviour is related to conventional benchmarks for true or beautiful actions, pictorially represented in stained glass, frescoes, manuscripts or tapestries. The *Lady and the Unicorn* series, for example, depicting the five corporeal senses and one additional tableau, uses such titles as *Sight* or *Taste* (Freeman, 1976). Etymologically, *regard* means 'guard' or 'consider', so ingrained into this convention is a sense of wonder that seems inherent in humanity's desire both to express its view of itself as a custodian of standards and to reflect upon those standards. However, the desire of the unicorn is used to captivate and enslave the creature in order to teach a lesson about the nature of truth, as opposed to illusion and it stands in as a metaphor for Christ. Thus societal behaviour, belief systems and aesthetics are conjoined and there are surprising correlations of taste and perception of what is seemly and correct. Therefore, it is possible to say that there is much which links humanity and the ramifications this has for society are surely profound. Truth as a primary category of life, a standard that should be held up as an ideal, is extolled, often with white representing good, and black malfeasance. This attitude finds a voice through Blanche in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* as this tradition continues, reflected in use of aesthetic values of beauty and truth. Thus, Blanche is lionized as the epitome of correctness in the poem, the poster child of her era, her description almost pictorial in its lavishness.

II- True Love

How truth in social relationships is played out and modalized, is central to the theme, tenor, language and resolution in much of literature. So, well-worn phrases such as 'true north', 'true minds' or 'true blue', all pertain to what is unassailable and irreproachable and they refer to a

universal standard that is transcultural. Poetry is particularly expressive in vocalizing what is considered as praiseworthy due to its emotional appeal and form. In his evocative poem, 'Vertue', for example George Herbert, a noted Metaphysical and Anglican priest, illustrates the inevitability of death and the transitory nature of life on earth, through a series of metaphors (Vendler, 1975). The Christian ideal is juxtaposed with the temporary delights of a sunset, a box of confectionary and a flower. This is linked with 'shall' and to personification, to predict the end of the flower's life in addition to the life cycle or journey of the soul as here, 'The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,' which represents a shorter diurnal cycle. It is all the more insistent as in the previous stanza, reinforcing the ephemeral delights of life, the poet uses the modal 'must' to replace 'shall', reinforced by the relentlessness of the end rhythm:

> Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
> Like season'd timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives.
>   (Frowde, 1907, p88)

In addition, changing one word in the last line of each stanza underscores the tone of finality, hence 'for' becomes 'and', while 'thou' becomes 'all', as 'may' becomes 'must' and thus the degree of the modality is heightened.

Thus, in this instance, it is relevant to underscore how range of modality steadily increases as a musical score towards a peak and then diminishes. This is seen in the work of Hodge and Kress, whose linguistic observation that 'the order of modal verbs implies an order of judgment' can therefore be seen to be operant in the text. Since the end of the poem corresponds with a Day of Judgment and Death when the final truth is evaluated, so there is a linguistic and moral correlation of modality (1988, p. 129). This might also be interpreted as a sexually

explicit reference to climax, which the language indicates by the choice of 'dew,' 'fall,' 'tonight' and 'die', which adds intensification in the modalizing of voice. Finally, the metaphors of flowers and Spring, both temporary delights, are juxtaposed with the immortality of the eternal soul, described using the present preceded by the adverb 'then' as in, 'Then chiefly lives.' The brevity of the final line, with its resolution in Christian redemption, contrasts with the careless beauty of the poem's opening, full of alliteration, repetition and wonder, 'Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright!'.

Herbert combines imagery, personification in particular, with a contrastive rhythm to produce an outstanding Metaphysical poem incorporating a playfully shifting modality at its core. The final simile, 'like seasoned timber', uses the experience of time to juxtapose the innocence of the rose, using 'But though' in the penultimate line to heighten this contrast. Alliteration adds to the effect with the final stress placed on a life affirming 'live,' modified only by the use of the adverb 'chiefly.' Other poetic techniques such as assonance are also employed to co-ordinate with the modalizing options chosen by the poet to depict his version of a true Christian spirit, culminating in the final stanza.

Theological aspects are interspersed with an intensity of feeling that is at once cerebrally and emotionally charged, illustrating the kind of religious writing that was used widely by a number of saints and mystics such as St. Paul or John the Divine. The promise of a heavenly reward is the ultimate postponing of recompense and this future conditionality is a hypothetical modality that was very concrete to the believers, thus setting up a dichotomy between faith, defined in opposition to a *realis* or an objectively informed point of view.

III-The True Imperative

Biblical tradition is at pain to show how right behaviour was the product of submission to God's Will and how this social conditioning helps to protect the community of believers:

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
>
> (*Isaiah*, 2: 3-4)

Here Isaiah (KJB) uses 'shall' to indicate the future and what has become known as the Apocalypse along with 'the top of the mountains' as a kind of metaphorical geography, to represent both a particular *Zeitgeist* and a higher level of behaviour, closeness to God. This obedience to the 'law', is thus shown in a spatial-temporal analogy through the modality of the writer and his attitude to morality. Tense plays an important part in this revelation and in Isaiah's deontics, as translated, and there is a reward system in place for acquiescence to the social mores. The use of 'let us' is an invitation to action that is linked with a definite future outcome as the community will learn divine truth from God. So, this verse has been used by many orators, not least by Martin Luther King, as a call to political struggle (1963). The implied inevitability of the action is a direct result of the use of the future tense and so the law of ethical and by extension political cause and effect is being invoked.

Religious speech is often linked to spiritual exhortation and, as with the Ten Commandments, to behaviour modification. As a matter of course, a number of ethical injunctions contain a moral imperative, found in 'must', 'ought', 'should' or 'shall', as God in the Garden of

Eden prescribes for Adam and Eve not to eat the Forbidden Fruit. In the extract from the Authorized King James Bible of 1611 cited below, God uses 'may' as a milder form of sanction for what mankind is allowed to consume. Episcopalian scholars who were loyal to the State and its official established religion, used the Masoretic Hebrew as a basis for their Old Testament script (Daniels, 2003). Here God allows 'thou mayest' as giving permission for approved actions but 'shalt not' or 'shall not' for what is strictly forbidden, the eating of the fruit of knowledge, in the account of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden:

> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
>
> (*Genesis* 2:16-17)

Thus the naked beauty of mankind and naivety of prelapsarian humanity is linked to social disobedience and loss of innocence like other models such as found in deviation from the Platonic Ideal as in *The Cave*. The imagery of height and elevation to show a behavioural and political topology with closeness to right behaviour 'lifted up' as to a divine throne, the equivalent of Kingship, is reminiscent of the Elizabethan Chain of Being cosmology (Tillyard, 1961). Therefore, correctness of behaviour was seen as a sign of the ability to govern, while lower order behaviour is in general directly associated with the masses in the Renaissance.

To highlight this cultural continuity, the following passage is taken from the 'I have a Dream' speech by Martin Luther King, who makes reference to a portion of Isaiah (1963). However, unlike Isaiah, King uses a mixture of the present and the future to show that his

vision is yet to be realized but that it is also part of an ongoing political negotiation. As a preacher and a political activist, he both merges public speaking conventions routinely and uses prophetic and so predictive language to add authority to his words, which are linked to faith in God's goodness.

> I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; 'and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.' This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.
> With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope... With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.
> This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:
> 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.
> Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,
> From every mountainside, let freedom ring!'
> And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.
>
> (King, 1963)

Here King uses 'shall' to denote the future Kingdom of Heaven, where right shall prevail over evil and finally 'every valley shall be exalted'. This is a prediction about the future or an *irrealis* statement, since these conditions did not prevail at that time, but are part of his vision of a better world. In fact this was an indication of King's hopes for the civil rights of African Americans in the 1960s. His repeated use of 'shall' and

'will' is therefore both volitive and predictive, according to Quirk's interpretation of modality (1985). Hence the extract mixes both eschatological and political aspirations together, making the occurrence both a 'potential occurrence yet a necessary one', to use Palmer's modal definition (1986, p.47).

This use of 'let' is both a call to action and to moral empowerment, underscored by the use of the exclamation mark. This, taken together with the transition to the use of 'must' alongside the conditional tense, relating to the greatness of America, gives this statement a sweeping urgency. Furthermore, the move from a median to a high degree of modality at the coda of the extract shows a climax in his argument that is designed to galvanize his audience. His dynamic use of 'we will be able to' also underscores this determination that is internalized in this statement of intent. This appeal for social equality reverberates many of the Old Testament prophets, one of whom he cites to add Biblical authority, in their advocacy of justice and right conduct in the private and public spheres. Moreover, while an appeal to authority or *argumentum ad verecundiam* is a false argument and is as such not logical, this does not mean that the conclusion is necessarily untrue.

Later in the extract, King refers directly to the patriotic American song *My Country, Tis of Thee* and links this vision to political equality in his quotation 'sweet land of liberty.' This is an overt appeal to a political benchmark that was aspirational, seen as the Pilgrims' original intention of founding America as an ideal state, away from the political and religious oppression of England. Hence the discourse is modalized by including this stirring reference, that would have aroused his audience's patriotism and linked it in their mind to the Anti-Abolishment sentiments expressed in later verses of the song, making

liberty an all-inclusive socio-political objective. So the use of music provides additional verve to patriotic perspectives of truth.

IV- The Politics of Truth

In the debate below, alethic modality is used to indicate logical possibility and in *Prior Analytics*, for example, Aristotle wrote on uses of modality in logic with categories such as 'necessarily P' and 'possibly P'. Modality features strongly in many of these texts. In *In Interpretation,* for example, he commented on the refinements of language using the example of a sea battle:

> A sea-fight must either take place to-morrow or not, but it is not necessary that it should take place to-morrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place, yet it is necessary that it either should or should not take place to-morrow.
>
> (Barnes 1981, p.9: 19a-30)

This Boolean logic can be expressed either mathematically or linguistically as a reworking of the problem of future contingents. In his work, too, Thomas Paine makes religious and political liberty linked directly to right and discusses a range of possibilities or of outcomes. The advocacy of enlightened political attitudes and the tenor of that spirit is displayed in the passage below. In fact, Quaker meetings, like those attended by Paine, were often characterized by silence, until the Spirit moved the worshippers to speak and, as a result, their writing often has a frankness that is disarming, according to Davies (1988). His first assertion makes political liberty a condition of spiritual freedom by employing 'Because till', as a nexus of both sequence and consequence. He then develops his argument, equating the development of liberty with this same spiritual freedom, and employs terms such as 'whenever', aligning 'popish practices' with 'the lovers of arbitrary power'. So movements directed their followers to choose a path that was ethically proper, in this case pushing towards non-Conformism:

> First. Because till spiritual freedom was made manifest, political liberty did not exist.
> Secondly. because in proportion that *spiritual freedom* has been manifested, *political liberty* has increased.
> Thirdly. Whenever the visible church has been oppressed, political freedom has suffered with it. Read the history of Mary and the Stuarts. The popish world at this day by not knowing the full manifestation of spiritual freedom, enjoy but a shadow of political liberty.—Though I am unwilling to accuse the present government of popish principles, they cannot, I think, be clearly acquitted of popish practices; the facility with which they perceive the dark and ignorant are governed, in popish nations, will always be a temptation to the lovers of arbitrary power to adopt the same methods. As the union between spiritual freedom and political liberty seems nearly inseparable, it is our duty to defend both. And defence in the first instance is best. The lives of hundreds of both countries had been preserved had America been in arms a year ago. Our enemies have mistaken our peace for cowardice, and supposing us unarmed have begun the attack.
> A Lover of Peace.
> (*Pennsylvania Magazine*, July, 1775)

He then becomes concessive, 'Though I am unwilling' arguing that the government 'cannot' be free from accusations of wrongful conduct. Paine uses a series of axioms to achieve links in the sequence of statements, connecting between the larger pieces of thinking which are numbered, firstly, secondly and thirdly. His use of 'supposing' suggests the idea of a false reading of the *realis*, which leads to an inappropriate response on the part of the enemies of America. Finally, Paine asserts that 'as' spiritual freedom and political identity are 'nearly inseparable', it is 'our duty to defend both'. This leads him to a declaration of war on behalf of the United States and despite this call to arms against Britain, he describes himself as 'A Lover of Peace.' The shifts in logic are compelling if flawed but the use of cleverly constructed arguments means that Paine is very convincing and sincere in his delivery. Thus

truth can be apparently expounded with a genuine intention toward verisimilitude yet remain naive in its overall conclusions. This somewhat Pollyanna approach is extremely disengaging but ultimately, then, inconsistent.

Since every man's version of what is true displays idiosyncratic choices and as such Thomas More stood out as one of the most notable politico-religious advisors of his day. Since he chose martyrdom to follow what he thought was the true religious path, it seems churlish to omit his position on truth. In *Utopia* (1516) he sets out to describe a politically ideal world and outlines the religious practice of its inhabitants:

> Thus have I described to you, as particularly as I could, the constitution of that commonwealth, which I do not only think the best in the world, but indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves that name. In all other places it is visible, that while people talk of a commonwealth, every man only seeks his own wealth; but there, where no man has any property, all men zealously pursue the good of the public: and, indeed, it is no wonder to see men act so differently; for in other commonwealths, every man knows that unless he provides for himself, how flourishing soever the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger; so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public; but in Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything; for among them there is no unequal distribution, so that no man is poor, none in necessity; and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich; for what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties; neither apprehending want himself, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife?
>
> (*Utopia*, Book 11: Of the Religions of the Utopians, p.8)

Here More describes the inevitable rigours of a system where working for a living is considered normal and failure to do so results in certain death, 'he must die of hunger'. This is in contrast to his proposed system of government which, in a way, could be said to be a kind of precursor of the modern British Welfare state, with the sole exception of the 'endless complaints of his wife'. Here, in the phrase 'no man can want anything; for […]' he uses 'can' linked to a particular clause, 'for' and later 'so', in the hope of a better tomorrow. This rich use of transitionals allows for a contrastive state, between Utopia and its antithesis. This richness of intrinsic possibility is seen through the dynamic model 'can', which is used heavily (Bolinger, 1989). As the term utopian is formed from the Greek for 'no place', close too in meaning to 'good place', and was to be seen as a kind of Platonic abstraction, rather like Plato's *Republic*, and is universally applied to something 'ardent but impractical'. Thus, as with so many aspirations of reality, it is not reflective of More's own personal experience but rather his private desires and political wish list.

The same appeal to political and behavioural standards has been made of language itself, the medium through which so much aspiration is conveyed. The abuse and misuse of language by politicians has caused a great deal of annoyance to the public, not to say inconvenience, and this has spilled over into many new parties and denominations advocating change. As the untrue is deprecated in the political and religious canon, so, too, the campaign to restore other atrophied aspects of human expression from the profane surfaces at intervals throughout history.

V-The Truth in English

The decline of rhetorical standards is arguably another aspect of linguistic verisimilitude and is linked in this passage by George Orwell directly to a kind of political entropy, which he corresponds with the

loss of British economic muscle. His period spent as a policeman in the Indian colonial service, like all life experiences, may have contributed to his world view. This essay shows how he feels that 'slovenlyness' or imprecision in language begets woolly thinking, but can be righted with applied thought and effort.

In this extract he uses a succession of modals to enforce this idea, beginning with a sweeping assertion employing 'must'. He then modulates this using 'can', which he introduces with the contrastive 'but', thus linking cause and effect and so giving the writing a scientific quality:

> Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form ... It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration
>
> (George Orwell, Politics and the English Language)

Orwell explains later what political regeneration is that he is referring to but certainly the need for extreme care in thinking and so behaviour is illustrated here, as thought and action are so intimately connected in his mind. The link between language, modality and political activity is thus again enforced and becomes 'an indicator of political struggle', as Hodge and Kress expressed it (1983). However, his assertion is positive, as backsliding is reversible through proper attention to language

coupled with following the right processes in all actions. This is an attractive prospect for linguistics, highlighting accuracy as an inter-disciplinary *a priori*. Using 'if' and examples of other possible instance of cause and effect, the possibility of linguistic redemption is posited and highlighted as a potential outcome.

Furthermore, Jonathan Swift displays a flamboyant style in his satirical writing presenting a case against the ending of Christian practices below, with a notable use of rhetorical questions and whimsical speculation that is at once amusing, yet apparently sensible, on the surface. Swift focuses on the use of language by the clergy and playfully suggests an alternative nomenclature for thought that could provide equal service to mankind:

> I confess, if it were certain that so great an advantage would redound to the nation by this expedient, I would submit, and be silent; but will any man say, that if the words, whoring, drinking, cheating, lying, stealing, were, by Act of Parliament, ejected out of the English tongue and dictionaries, we should all awake next morning chaste and temperate, honest and just, and lovers of truth? Is this a fair consequence? Or if the physicians would forbid us to pronounce the words pox, gout, rheumatism, and stone, would that expedient serve like so many talisman to destroy the diseases themselves? Are party and faction rooted in men's hearts no deeper than phrases borrowed from religion, or founded upon no firmer principles? And is our language so poor that we cannot find other terms to express them? Are envy, pride, avarice, and ambition such ill nomenclators, that they cannot furnish appellations for their owners? Will not heydukes and mamalukes, mandarins and patshaws, or any other words formed at pleasure, serve to distinguish those who are in the ministry from others who would be in it if they could? What, for instance, is easier than to vary the form of speech, and instead of the word church, make it a question in politics, whether the monument be in danger? Because religion was nearest at hand to furnish a few convenient phrases,

> is our invention so barren we can find no other?
> Suppose, for argument sake, that the Tories favoured
> Margarita, the Whigs, Mrs. Tofts, and the Trimmers,
> Valentini, would not Margaritians, Toftians, and
> Valentinians be very tolerable marks of distinction?
> (Swift, An argument against Abolishing
> Christianity)

Swift begins with 'I confess' which immediately places the modality as one of religious openness and plain frankness. However, his use of 'if it were certain' modifies his statement to the level of improbability. By asking, 'if our language is so poor', he beggars belief that mere expressions can be a substitute for action. Thus Swift ponders the results for the political realm and if the Tories had had the word 'Margaritians' at their disposal what would the actual consequences of this new linguistic be for political or human endeavours? So, language and the ideas or institutions they express are a product of human imagination and are not to be limited by a lack of wit when evaluating truth. This division into what is nominal and what real was examined by Plato and the application by the clergy is the essence of the *realis* and *irrealis* in linguistic terms. The 'appellations' he refers to are the basic building blocks of language where new words merely refer to old concepts. Thus, such linguistic quibbling appears better than social revolution and a lively love of discussion and fanciful speculation may be regarded as healthy within a framework of core establishment values.

Swift goes on to ask whether language is a suitable rubric to find an outlet for spiritual ideas in the first place and whether it is merely a diagnostic tool. So, the invention of words is not a mark of mental or spiritual fertility but instead markers used for ideas.

VI-The Only Truth

In the Middle Ages, this correlation between the good and evil was experienced more keenly, with the shorter life expectancy and prescribed codes of conduct (Backman, 2003). *The Vision of Piers*

Plowman has long been associated with political revolt, like the work of other reformers, and was first read as a religious allegory of the Christian life of 'Do good', 'Do-Better', and 'Do- Best'. In this extract, Isaiah is cited in Latin as an appeal to right living, the Fall of Lucifer is described and Truth is invoked as the heavenly benchmark. The forces of evil had hoped for supreme power and had predicted supremacy but were thwarted, 'alle that hoped it myghte be so'. So, good will eventually prevail, 'hire soules shul wende to hevene', according to Christian doctrine. This use of modality contrasts with the state of affairs in heaven, which is described as a matter of fact or absolute faith in a triune God, using the present tense, as here: 'Ther Treuthe is in Trinitee and troneth hem alle.'

The use of modality in *Piers Plowman* is particularly eschatological in tone and in the first line from Isaiah (14; 13-14), 'I will set my foot in the north and I will be like the most high', it refers to the prideful ambition of Lucifer to seek power to rival God. The text below is presented in the original Middle English version with a number of the more difficult words included in a glossary at the end of each line:

> *Ponam pedem in aquilone, et similis ero Altissimo.*
> And alle that hoped it myghte be so, noon hevene myghte hem holde,
> But fellen out in **fendes** liknesse [ful] nyne dayes togideres, (**fiend's**)
> Til God of his goodnesse [garte the hevene to **stekie** (**shut**)
> And gan **stable** it and **stynte]** and stonden in quiete. (**steady and stayed**)
> 'Whan thise wikkede wenten out, wonderwise thei fellen--
> Somme in eyr, somme in erthe, somme in helle depe;
> Ac Lucifer lowest **lith** of hem alle: (**lieth**)
> For pride that he putte out, his peyne hath noon ende.
> And alle that **werchen** with wrong wende thei shulle (**work**)
> After hir deth day and dwelle with that **sherewe**; (**wretch**)
> Ac tho that werche wel as Holy Writ telleth,
> And enden as I er seide in truthe, that is the beste,

> Mowe be **siker** that hire soules shul **wende** to hevene,
> (**sure**, **go**)
> Ther Treuthe is in Trinitee and **troneth** hem alle.
> (**enthroned)**
> (Langland, *Piers Plowman*, 1: 119-133)

Like most of the work, the extract is highly alliterative and reflects conventional beliefs about truth as they are part of accepted dogma. The form and content are merged to express this modalized voice, as that of the true servant of God and of the political system of the day, authenticated by Holy Writ. However, modality is rather more sophisticated than mere prescription, and slights of hands were not unknown to the Medieval Church, not least through their sales of Relics. So, like the false assertions found in other forms of rhetoric, the Church used an array of language that could confuse their listeners, not being averse to commercial gain as a by-product. Language is therefore used as a method of control and even deception as well as a tool to elucidate or to praise. In 'The Golden Bough' this point is stressed and the author adds, 'At an earlier stage the functions of priest and sorcerer were often combined' (Frazer, 1996, p.63). This indicates a reverence for literacy in oral societies as the *de facto* truth at a time when few where able to read, manuscripts were expensive and learning was an elitist pastime.

VII-Conclusion

Therefore it can be seen that the idea of truth has been prevalent in literature and politico-religious thought from earliest times and permeates every discipline. How individuals respond to the experience of truth varies, but the collective response seems to be a need to aspire to reproduce it in every sphere. This continuity recognizes the centrality of truth in both the private and public arena. Speech making is delivered as a form of public edification and, like poetry, is intended to be performed. Therefore, the language employed needs to be

analysed in detail, with attention to phrasing, punctuation, grammar and lexis with the same attention of Miniaturist painters, to reproduce high levels of textual or pictorial verisimilitude. Just as this same Grail Quest for spiritual purity is seen in the work of many religious and political innovators, so, too, circumspect choices in language and thought can ultimately impact behaviour.

Thus it is entropy that is the enemy of civilization, the antithesis of adherence to a universal standard of values in language, behaviour and measurement. It is, therefore, incumbent upon humanity to remind ourselves of the existence of truth, and to advocate its centrality in every dimension of human creativity. Truth, then, does not simply mean the absence of falsehood or illusion, but implies the need for a sense of balance that is both physical and spiritual, the guiding principle of our existence. Nor is truth the product of any single culture but rather a state of mind that unites human kind in discerning of what is right. Consequently, humanity should offer truth as its root aesthetic since the want of it beggars our performance in every sphere of human relations.

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