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IT JUST FEELS RIGHT: AFFECTIVE VERIDICTION IN THE ERA OF POST-TRUTH

Abstract

When considered in the context of affect theory, post-truth is quite plausible. Affects come from deep inside of us, convincing us of their prominence over everything else, including rational thought. The embodied quality of affects leads to their misconception as fact. Because affects are felt so powerfully, they are often believed over anything that may indicate something contradictory.

The post-truth world is an affective imaginary where people who do not believe consensual facts and truths as they are presented are offered established alternatives. Through the lens of affect these alternative facts are better understood as affective facts. Affective facts are perceived and trusted as facts. The major achievement of rightwing populist movements is their creation of a fully operational logical apparatus that functions through affect, so that any information it comes across is filtered through and recoded according to affective facts and truths. That they are based in lies is irrelevant. In this context there is no possibility of the fabled “speaking truth to power”. Old forms of resistance are outmaneuvered by an emergent politics of competing affects.

The new master narratives are intensity and confusion, where affect gives semblance to a new ontology of governance. Michel Foucault discussed this as the notion of veridiction, where truth is constructed for populations in order to align them with state rationality. We are witnessing the far-right in the U.S. attempt an extreme experiment in veridiction. Through a case study of the 2016 election campaign and first 100 hundred days of Trump’s presidency, we aim to explore attempts by the far right in the U.S. to harness affect and cultivate a new regime of truth, an alternate reality for supporters.

Keywords

Affect; veridiction; post-truth; far-right; alternative facts.

Post-truth is a curious idea. At first glance, the notion of a post-truth world presupposes the laughably naive confidence in an era of truth existing beforehand. If anything the notion of post-truth reveals a higher order of truth by reminding us that what we immediately understand as truth is a political luxury, open at any moment to affective annihilation. Today consensual facts and truths are under siege in a fashion so unbelievable that it is disarming, but with such potency that it should have been understood as inevitable. Through affect the seemingly impenetrable modern world is being assailed by truth’s oldest of rivals: mendacity and absurdity.

Post-truth attracts people from all across the ideological spectrum, but its ideas have been reappropriated strategically by far-right movements to expand and secure political territory. Affect is being used by the far-right to repudiate and supplant tradi-

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tional politics by subverting the reality within which they operate. The success of the resurgence of extreme right ideology lies in their use of affect to not only rally support, but to construct and maintain a fully-functioning logical apparatus that operates through affect¹. Essentially the far-right are using affect to perform action on the logic of logic by offering an alternative perception whose intensity supersedes established facts, truths, and realities at a primary level.

In 2017 millions of people in the United States have passed a threshold where established facts and truths are being actively disregarded. Today in America 81% of Republican and Democrat voters cannot agree on basic facts². This appalling figure is a towering triumph for far-right politics. The very foundation on which common ground can be found has been ruptured. When basic facts can't be agreed upon, discourses built upon these facts are undermined. The far-right are weaponizing affect, they're impairing the conditions under which consensual truth is understood by inviting followers to dismiss rational thought in favour of the thrill of sensation. For the far-right the abolition of facts is one step in a far more insidious process. Post-truth to the far-right is about ontological reterritorialization through the administration of affect. Politics throughout the contemporary West are negotiated through affect, with no more obvious example than Donald Trump's victory in the United States.

Let's go back to the inauguration day of Trump, where media reports³ emerge claiming the crowds are the smallest ever recorded. Along with many of these reports is a paring of photos, side by side. One is from the Obama inauguration in 2009, the other from the Trump Inauguration in 2017. The Obama crowd is plush and overflowing, but Trump's crowd is sparse, the same space more empty than full. The next day Trump's press secretary Sean Spicer claims in his daily press conference: "This was the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration. Period"⁴. Spicer is not referring to Obama's crowd, but Trump's. He also calls the news media coverage of Trump's tiny crowds dishonest and ill intentioned.

Coming from an official representative of the president, the comment is so comically mendacious many simply cannot take it seriously. It seems too preposterous to imagine people watching at home could actually believe Spicer. But as the social sphere erupts with laughter and news media denounce the pathetic duplicity of the attempt, the treachery of the strategy is forgotten. The crowd claim is just one in an unending series of falsehoods perpetuated by Trump and those who speak for him. Individually each claim is more outrageous than the next, but collectively they work together to develop and maintain affective resonance among supporters. As long as the affective intensity is sustained, it does not matter what Trump claims.

At a post-inauguration rally in Melbourne, Florida, Trump points to a supporter in

¹ "This is not to say that affect is not a legitimate way of knowing, or that reason does not suffer its own perversions, but rather to point out that in 2017 affect is being harnessed by the far-right to call into being political realities. For a more comprehensive discussion of the substantive and transcendental potential of affect, see ch. 1: "The Slinky", in *Masamune's Blade: A Proposition for Dialectic Affect Research*, edited by P. Zuurbier and F. Lesage (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016).

² A. Edwards-Levy, "Trump and Clinton Supporters Can't Even Agree on 'Basic Facts'", *HuffPost*, October 14, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/clinton-trump-facts_us_5800e7dbe4b0162c043b6d5a.

³ J. Mason, R. Rampton, "White House Accuses Media of Playing Down Inauguration Crowds", *Reuters*, January 24, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-media-idUSKBN15600I>.

⁴ L. Robertson, R. Farley, "Fact Check: The Controversy over Trump's Inauguration Crowd Size", *USA Today*, January 24, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/01/24/fact-check-inauguration-crowd-size/96984496/>.

the crowd and calls him to the stage. A man of average height with a lean build, dark hair, and bulging eyes emerges. After a tense minute in the arms of the Secret Service, Trump devotee Gene Huber takes the stage. President Trump moves aside from the lectern and gives Gene the stage. After the speech, Trump shakes Gene's hand, hugs him, says something in his ear, and gestures him off the stage. At that point, Huber is interviewed on CNN and asked about his admiration for Donald Trump. Gene responds:

Every single second every day I am with you. I've got a six-foot cardboard box [*sic*] of president Trump in my house. And I salute that every single day. And I pray and tell him 'Mr. president, I pray for your safety today'. And I'm not lying, I do that every single day, to the president, that is cardboard⁵.

In terms of affect, what is particularly resonant about Gene's response is how he describes his relationship to Donald Trump, someone he had never met before this moment. Gene seems to truly believe Trump loves him, and that he loves Trump. Gene's devotion to Trump may very well be fanatical, but as Gene beams and effuses praise for the man whose image he literally worships it becomes clear that there is little beyond the surface of his intensity. Gene continues:

I've never been into politics in my life up until president Trump came down the elevator [*sic*] and he taught me everything. He taught me everything... There's no words to describe what this man is doing. He promised to do this, he promised to do that, you know you have a lot of voters out there, I have family members that say to me they voted for president Trump: "I hope he does this", "I hope he can do this". You know what I say? He will do this. That's why I love this man.

Gene's connection with Trump is deeply personal. But Gene's inability to articulate anything specific about Trump's politics reveals the affective plane on which the connection resides. Because of Trump, Gene now feels. Specifically, he feels about politics. Though he does not refer to an individual policy, or even accurately describe the moment of Trump's political debut where he descended on an escalator and not an elevator, he's convinced that Trump is looking out for his interest. This unconditional knowing is based in affect.

Brian Massumi discusses the process of misconception that goes on between affects and facts. Massumi writes that affect is used to:

Functionally substitute the affective fact of the matter for what is accepted as actual fact. The actual fact is neither directly contested nor forgotten, yet is disabled. It slips behind the affective fact, which comes to the fore to take over as the operative reality⁶.

For those caught up in the affective moment of the far-right resurgence the intensity offers them the pretence of truth. There is no reasoning, there is no amount of informing,

⁵ "Trump Supporter: I Salute a Cardboard Trump", *CNN*, February 18, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/02/18/donald-trump-supporter-gene-huber-intv-nr.cnn>.

⁶ B. Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of Threat", in *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by M. Gregg and G.J. Seigworth, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, 67.

explaining, or arguing that will shake the affective connections that lie at the heart of these facts. So claims to “alternative facts” made by Trump spokespeople are quite plausible in the context of affect. “Alternative facts” are *affective facts*, bits of information that evoke a reaction with an accompanying feeling which is preferable to the underlying truths associated with the contested consensual fact. These affective facts, whether they involve crowd sizes, walls, tragedies that never occurred, surveillance that didn’t happen, or any of the other deceptive claims made by Trump and his inner circle, are always constructed to align with the pre-established resonance. This resonance has been established around long-standing fears and anxieties, as well as a generalized political cynicism that has been waiting to be named and directed.

The reality that toddlers with firearms kill more Americans each and every year than Islamist extremists does not matter. For millions of Americans, one claim feels more true than the other; it feeds into the existing intensity. The affective fact is believed, and it becomes a logical foundation that other affective facts are developed around. Affective facts are not verifiable because they are affects. Far-right converts do not recognize consensus facts, nor do they desire to. As long as the affect stays lit any piece of information, any kernel of a relation to consensus reality can be reconfigured to fit the affective logic.

In the aftermath of the Trump victory it came out that though he had won the electoral college, he had lost the popular vote. One of the key claims of Trump and the far-right is that millions of illegal ballots were cast for his opponent. CNN held a group interview with five Trump supporters, asking them about this wholly unsubstantiated and disproven claim: “Voting is a privilege in this country, and you need to be legal, not like California where three million illegals voted” an elderly trump supporter named Paula tells CNN⁷.

Up to that point, the only notable example of voter fraud in 2016 is a case involving the former chairman of the Republican Party in Colorado who mailed in his estranged wife’s voting card with a forged signature⁸. When Paula is challenged on this the three-million-illegals-voted claim, she has no evidence other than ‘the media’ and an anecdotal example from a polling station that she and some of her colleagues on the panel refer to. Despite the absence of factual evidence they all speak with conviction.

“Do you think that three million illegal people voted?”

“I believe in California that there were illegals that voted”.

“How many?”

“I don’t. To tell you the truth, nobody really knows that”.

“But do you think three dozen, or do you think three million?”

“I think there was a good amount because the President [Obama] told people that they could vote and it happened in Nashua, we caught some people. They went into Nashua and they said ‘the President said I could vote, I’m here illegally’”.

“Did you hear President Obama say that illegal people could vote?”

“Yes”.

“Tell me, where?”

“You can find it. Google it”, another Trump says.

⁷ A. Camerota, “Trump Supporters Claim Stuns CNN Anchor”, *CNN*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/12/01/cnn-anchor-stunned-trump-supporter-newday.cnn>.

⁸ B. Siepel, “Ex-Colorado GOP Head Charged with Voter Fraud”, *The Hill*, March 22, 2017. Found at: <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/325140-ex-colorado-gop-head-charged-with-voter-fraud>.

The resounding takeaway from the interview is that Paula and her peers remain resolutely unmoved in their belief that three million people voted illegally in California. They come off as foolish of course. Even the reporter can barely manage to disguise their own shock at the pure baselessness of the claim, at one point physically banging their own head. Yet to Trump supporters the claim is soundly imbedded in a higher affective truth. After all, how else could Trump lose the popular vote? Pushed into a corner with actual facts the Trump supporters did not cower, they raised the intensity through attack.

In far-right post-truth ignorance, is not as much celebrated as it is flipped on its head. To be ignorant is to be of a higher level of consciousness. Trump embodies this, and in doing so he inspires followers to do the same. The post-truth world is one where people who don't believe consensual facts have alternatives that better suit their feelings. Massumi explains that affect is used to hijack logic while situating itself as logical:

An operative logic is a productive process that inhabits a shared environment, or field of exteriority, with other processes and logics. It figures in that field as a formative movement: a tendency towards the iterative production of its own variety of constituted fact. The forms of determination it brings into being as fact have an inborn tendency towards proliferation by virtue of the self-causative powers of their formative processes⁹.

When legacy media indulges affective facts by providing them a platform, the resonance is transmitted as it becomes chained to other affective facts, reinforcing the whole edifice. It is difficult to go back to the start to debate what has now been accepted, so any challenges have to accommodate the affective logic. But in accommodating affective logic these challenges succumb to it. Arguments shift to fit affective logic but in doing so they have already lost, they will only enhance pre-existing resonance or inspire new violent intensities in opposition. Appeals by the far-right use affect to supersede the discursive negotiation of fact and truth, they chain affective facts together to recode everything it comes across into their ideological construct. Each individual affective fact is already verified by the established resonance surrounding it. We can see this dynamic at play in Trumps tweeting about having been the victim of state surveillance.

Only a couple of months into his term, Trump finds himself at the centre of an investigation surrounding the ties between him, his campaign, and Russia leading up to, during, and after the election. In a response to the growing trouble Trump tweeted: "Just found out that Obama had my 'wires tapped' in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!"¹⁰

The story cycled through news media and the social sphere, with Trump supporters facing a challenge to their predictable ideological alignment: the Red Menace. The long-standing relationship between Russia and the U.S. has its own affects which contest the intensities Trump evokes in his followers. As the controversy plays out and the evidence piles up, Trump and his surrogates get more and more desperate to maintain resonance and provide some air of logical anchoring. At one point Trump spokesper-

⁹ Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact", 62-63.

¹⁰ P. Bump, "Why Does Trump Think Obama Tapped His Phones? A Point-by-Point Investigation", *The Toronto Star*, March 6, 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/03/06/why-does-trump-think-obama-tapped-his-phones-a-point-by-point-investigation.html>.

son Kellyanne Conway makes the claim that: “You can surveil someone through their phones, certainly through their television sets – any number of ways... [There are] microwaves that turn into cameras... We know this is a fact of modern life”¹¹.

Blaming Obama, crying McCarthyism, accusing microwave ovens, all of it is intended to divert from the reality that Trump has been under surveillance from agencies both foreign¹² and domestic¹³ for relationships with Russian government officials and organized crime members. The tweet in and of itself has just enough of a kernel of truth to feed the established logic. The overall point is to provide a semblance of fact to legitimate the affect and diffuse any attempt at rational thought or discussion. This intentional stoking of affects sets the political table for the larger project of creating the conditions through which a new regime of truth can be established.

The lies told by Trump and his surrogates should not only be considered individually, instead they can be better understood collectively as ongoing attempts to ignite affect and fan the flames among supporters. With each spurious, grandiose and false claim made by Trump and his people the goal is the continuation of the entrenched, smouldering intensity that has been developed by Trump and his predecessors for decades. When it seems like Trump and his surrogates are being incoherent, it’s because they are, at least according to the rational logic most people use to negotiate the everyday world around them. But they are appealing to affective logic and legitimating through affective fact. The ascendancy of far-right politics in the United States is based in the advancement of a regime of veridiction through affect.

In his *Birth of Biopolitics* lectures, Michel Foucault discusses veridiction as the process by which truth is constructed for populations in order to align them with state rationality. Foucault writes:

The constitution of a particular right of truth on the basis of a legal situation, the law and truth relationship finding its privileged expression in discourse, the discourse in which law is formulated and in which what can be called true or false is formulated and in which what can be truth or false is formulated; the regime of veridiction, in fact, is not a law of truth, [but] the set of rules enabling one to establish which statements in a given discourse can be described as true or false¹⁴.

Veridiction is the cultivation of perception by contouring the edges, prescribing the conditions that allow particular discourses to appear as truth. The continual provocation of affective logic within the political media spectacle affirms a perception that self-reinforces based on the most resonant yet factually-specious correlations. Bio-politics is

¹¹ M. Kelly, “Kellyanne Conway Suggests Even Wider Surveillance of Trump Campaign”, *USA Today*, March 12, 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/03/12/kellyanne-conway-surveillance-trump-campaign-wider/99109170/>.

¹² L. Harding, S. Kirchgaessner and, N. Hopkins, “British Spies Were First to Spot Trump Team’s Links with Russia”, *The Guardian*, April 13, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/13/british-spies-first-to-spot-trump-team-links-russia>.

¹³ J. Borger, S. Ackerman, “Trump-Russia Collusion Is being Investigated by FBI, Comey Confirms”, *The Guardian*, March 20, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/20/fbi-director-comey-confirms-investigation-trump-russia>.

¹⁴ M. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, translated by G. Burchell, New York: Picador, 2004, 35.

about the instrumentalization of populations, the administration of masses of people to participate in the neoliberal economy. This involves calibrating every single aspect of the bio-political subject's lives so that they are optimized to produce as labor. The ontological aspect of this process of bio-political conditioning is known as veridiction.

The U.S. far-right has used affect to construct a regime of veridiction. What Massumi describes in the imposition of an operative logic of affect is a similar process to Foucault's discussion of veridiction. Massumi writes:

Each regime of power in the ecology of powers will have its own operative logic implicating unique modes of causality... The causal and temporal processes involved will endow the objects of each regime of power with an ontological status different from those of any regime. Correlative to its ontology, each regime will have the dedicated epistemology guiding the constitution of its political "facts" and guaranteeing their legitimation¹⁵.

Affect ensures favourable conditions in advance, so that any fact and logical inference surrounding it is accepted. Trump claims: "I will build a great wall – and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me... I will build a great, great wall on our southern border, and I will make Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words"¹⁶. The premise is farcical, but the impossible logistics of the claim, both legal and financial, are subsumed in the larger resonance. The entire proposition of the wall is legitimated beforehand through the existing intensities around immigration, inequality, drug war, ISIL, etc. For Trump's supporters, the wall will do whatever they need the wall to do. Anything that does not fit the ongoing resonance is ignored or dismissed immediately. There are few if any entry points for contestation, though countless individuals, organizations, and media outlets try. The truth that feels right is the one taking priority for huge portions of the population. Affect provides a thick, impenetrable shield that only fortifies itself with each attack.

Massumi discusses the ontological implications of the administration of the operative logic of affect over populations through his notion of ontopower. Massumi writes: "Ontopower is a name for a power of becoming whose force is maximally abstract, whose power resides in 'conceptual persuasion'¹⁷. Ontopower is a means for Massumi to conceptualize the instrumentalization of affect involved with the Bush-era "War on Terror". The logic of pre-emption conditioned the perceptions of the public, reterritorializing through the ceaseless immanence of threat. Massumi sees ontopower as over-arching through bio-politics, writing: "Ontopower is conceptually distinct from biopower, and that it processually encompasses it, along with its companion modes of power"¹⁸. But Massumi's discussion of ontopower and bio-politics makes no reference to veridiction. Given the close alignment between the ideas, veridiction can perhaps be seen as a more granular aspect of ontopower. But operative logics of affect are only one means by which processes of veridiction are established. Though the implications of his argument of pre-emption remain resonant, the narrow scope of Massumi's discussion make his claim to the pre-eminence of ontopower seem overstated. In 2017 the attempts by the

¹⁵ Massumi, "The Future Birth of the Affective Fact", 62.

¹⁶ Telegraph Foreign Staff, "The Trump Manifesto". *The Telegraph*, June 17, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/us-election/11679626/The-Trump-manifesto.html>.

¹⁷ B. Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, 221.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

U.S. far-right to construct a regime of veridiction encompasses far more than the manipulation of fears around terrorism.

According to Foucault veridiction is “a site of verification-falsification for governmental practice”¹⁹. The process of veridiction is one of a continually ongoing test. In the case of Trump, these tests use affect to disrupt facts, truths, and the underlying conventions they operate under. Supporters are given the choice: Follow the affect, or the rational fact? Do they adhere to the affective logic, or the established logic? This is a test. What feels more true?

Each of the endless stream of false claims by Trump and his surrogates challenge his supporters to continually follow the intensity. Any one false claim that is not completely dismissed is treated as though it has been verified, and it along with new versions and variations are promoted. Through repetition and insistence the resonance and plausibility of the false claim is enhanced and eventually it begins to gain traction. From there the now somewhat believable false claim is pushed to the absolute limit of verification, just before it faces enough resistance to risk affective reversal. At this point the most seemingly preposterous conclusions are extrapolated from the now-established affective fact. Whatever inferences resonate to the extent that they are not totally discounted are picked up on, and the process begins anew, all of it aggregating and compounding. The line shifts as the distance between what was once understood as truth and the new affective reality grows, while at the same time the distance travelled in the process of veridiction is forgotten.

During the campaign, each time Trump said something more offensive, he dared followers to leave him. The first test Trump offered was his “Mexican rapists” comment. As soon as it was not summarily denied and contemptibly rejected, he moved on to the wall. Day after day, tests both large and small accumulate. Their affective intensity won’t allow them to be completely abandoned, so they are verified and built upon. During the first debate, Trump claims: “I did not support the war in Iraq. That is a [*sic*] mainstream media nonsense put out by her”²⁰. The debate moderator challenges Trump on this, since on many occasions surrounding the war Trump publicly supported the Bush administration, all on public record. In response, Trump attempts a meandering, and at times incoherent, explanation that somehow this is not what he said. Realizing the error, Trump goes back to what he knows: I was against the war. Even if I said I was for it, I was against it. Trump’s refusal to acknowledge his previous words is openly mocked by many, but for supporters Trump’s resonance maintains its consistency, if not intensifying in the wake of his intransigence. The inconsistency doesn’t matter. Since Trump and his surrogates were rarely-if-ever denied time on the air for lying, the affective facts they put forth were verified and built upon.

Trump’s particular brand of veridiction is based in the conditioning of a perception that is maintained in the immediate²¹. Affect exists in the immediate and the lies depend on it. For better and worse affect maintains perceptual immediacy. When people are focused in the immediate, they are never considering the larger picture. Historical context and larger implications are marginalized in favour of whatever is occurring in

¹⁹ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 32.

²⁰ “Trump: I Was Against Iraq War, Ask Sean Hannity”, *CNN*, September 26, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/09/26/clinton-trump-debate-hofstra-trump-iraq-war-sean-hannity-12.cnn/video/playlists/2016-presidential-debate-donald-trump-hillary-clinton/>.

²¹ For a deeper discussion of the relationship between immediacy and affect, see ch. 3: “Real Time”, in *Masamune’s Blade: A Proposition for Dialectic Affect Research*, edited by P. Zuurbier and F. Lesage.

the immediate instance. Immediacy never has to end, it is open to perpetual shifting and reshaping. Trump himself seems to be locked into the immediate, and he brings his followers along with him. Every flip-flop and contradiction affirms this. NATO is obsolete, NATO is no longer obsolete; scrap NAFTA, keep NAFTA; non-intervention, intervention. He is ideologically fluid, but his mode stresses urgency and presence. There is no time to think, there is only time to feel. Consider his attempt at a Muslim travel ban. Trump insisted the ban must happen right away, regardless of the legality²². Why? Because it needs to happen now.

By the time we get back to where we began, with Sean Spicer's comments on Trump's inauguration day crowd, almost every test Trump has employed has been passed. At this point most alternative facts have been verified by virtue of his victory. So Spicer pushes to a new, previously unimaginable limit: claiming Trump's crowd is the biggest ever in spite of photographic evidence to the contrary. Perhaps the instance had occurred earlier, but at that moment Spicer makes it clear: the purpose of the test has changed. It is no longer about affect versus rationality, the test has become one of obedience to the affect, and to Trump by extension.

While claims of fact and truth are being undermined, fealty to the system is also enforced through a demand to accommodate the process of veridiction. The verification-falsification test becomes not only one of perception, but one of conformity: *are you one of them, or one of us?* The next test that follows each normalized claim raise the stakes as followers become more and more complicit in the process. No one knows when the shift from verification-falsification to obedience occurs until it has already passed into the latter. Enough concessions and compromises occur as the affective logic takes hold, the endless repetition of the demands break through any logical armour. Midnight Tweets. Open conflicts of interests. Leaks and palace intrigue. Transparent bigotry. Strategic bombing. All are essential not only to keeping the affective firestorm raging, but to continue to test. As Trump is treated seriously not literally²³ consensus reality must bend to what he says in order to justify whatever nonsense comes out of his mouth.

Foucault's discussion of veridiction occurs within the context of neoliberalism. Today, the failure of neoliberalism has opened the terrain for far-right affective veridiction. The result is dueling regimes of veridiction: the neoliberal and the authoritarian. The ascendancy of far-right post-truth politics rides upon continuous waves of affect, a tide that slowly shapes everything they come across through ceaseless repetition. We're seeing in the U.S. and throughout the globe that affect is used to stoke panic, suspicion, contempt and malice, manufacturing new social divisions while re-establishing age-old ones. That it is based in lies and deception is not relevant. Whoever can inspire the most resonant affect wins. Old forms of political discourse and resistance towards it are

²² S. Siddiqui, "Trump Signs 'Extreme Vetting' Executive Order for People Entering the U.S.," *The Guardian*, January 27, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/27/donald-trump-muslim-refugee-ban-executive-action#img-1>.

²³ N. Berlatsky, "Peter Thiel Wants America to Take Trump Seriously, but not Literally. That's Dangerous", *Quartz*, November 1, 2016, <https://qz.com/824650/peter-thiel-wants-america-to-take-donald-trump-seriously-but-not-literally/>.

outmaneuvered by an emergent politics of competing affects – from the left, right, and centre – contested logics, and discordant perceptions.

Far-right veridiction is about destroying neoliberal states so that authoritarian ones rise in their place. That is the endgame. The competition for perception between the dueling regimes of veridiction occurs within people as much as among them. The unending tests challenge each individual in ways unique to them, and collectively they undermine the entire system as constructed. Most people can only follow one truth, so the dueling regimes of veridiction are creating communities and countries of people living together while engaged in separate realities. Whether followers are loyal to Trump or to the affect he provokes is unclear. The ‘movements’ fidelity is to the feeling and action, in embodying the ideology more than actually subscribing to it.

This is the intersection that we’ve come to at this moment. The absurdity of the administration of post-truth is indicative of the way in which truth is discursively created. Post-truth is the revelation of veridiction and in particular the instrumentalization of affect to create alternate notions of truth. Far-right populist movements are succeeding not only in emboldening an existing base and recruiting new people, their most remarkable achievement involves something much more threatening, the undercutting of some of the most fundamental facts and truths that our world operates under. Their major coup is the development of a logical apparatus based in affect that constructs alternate perceptions, truths and realities for their followers. Everything that is seen and experienced in the world is different for the supporters of the far-right. They have no faith in the core and underlying conventions and norms in what they perceive as a false, liberal society. Instead they privilege discourse that further undermines pre-existing knowledge and information because the sensations are appealing.

The affects manufactured and administered by the far-right have been compelling in claiming territory the traditional left held firmly. The tautology of affective politics has confounded the left as much as it has empowered the right. Critical theory is forced to argue in favour of things that it would have found itself critiquing under previous circumstances, while frustratingly finding itself aligned with the far-right on other issues. The gravitational pull of the far-right is unavoidable. But where critical theory endeavours to open perception, post-truth’s goal is the severe limitation of perception. The left-right political spectrum is now a quaint remnant of a simpler time, affective veridiction has resulted in a shift. Today the affective negotiation of politics has created a new division: on one side neoliberalism and on the other fascism.