



Post-Truth

Knowledge As A Power Game

By Steve Fuller

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This book is the first to show that today's post-truth world-view is deeply rooted in the history and philosophy of religion, politics and science.

'Post-Truth' was Oxford Dictionary's 2016 word of the year. While the term was coined by its disparagers, especially in light of the Brexit and US Presidential campaigns, the roots of post-truth lie deep in the history of Western social and political theory. This book reaches back to Plato, ranges across theology and philosophy, and focuses on the Machiavellian tradition in classical sociology. The key figure here is Vilfredo Pareto, who offered the original modern account of post-truth in terms of the 'circulation of elites', whereby 'lions' and 'foxes' vie for power by accusing each other of illegitimacy, based on allegations of speaking falsely either about what they have done (lions) or what they will do (foxes). The defining feature of 'post-truth' is a strong distinction between appearance and reality which is never quite resolved, which means that the strongest appearance ends up passing for reality. The only question is whether more is gained by rapid changes in appearance (foxes) or by stabilizing one such appearance (lions). This book plays out what all this means for both politics and science.

Contents

Acknowledgements; Introduction: Science and Politics in a Post-Truth Era: Pareto's Hidden Hand; Chapter One: Brexit: Political Expertise Confronts the Will of the People; Chapter Two: What Philosophy Does and Does Not Teach Us about the Post-Truth Condition; Chapter Three: Sociology and Science and Technology Studies as Post-Truth Sciences; Chapter Four: The Post-Truth about Academia: Undiscovered Public Knowledge; Appendix: Prolegomena To A Deep History of 'Information Overload'; Chapter Five: Science Customisation: A Project for the Post-Truth Condition; Chapter Six: The Performance of Politics and Science on the Playing Field of Time; Chapter Seven: Forecasting: The Future as the Post-Truth Playground; The Argument in A Nutshell; Glossary; References.

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