



DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SEMINAR

Is Truth Dead? An Analysis of 'Post-Truth'

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Abstract:

The 2016 Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year was 'post-truth', which they define as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief”. The phrase saw a sharp rise in use in 2016, often in connection with the Brexit and Trump political campaigns. Journalists now routinely claim that we live in an age of post-truth politics. But it's unclear exactly what is meant by 'post-truth', and so unclear whether it's true that we live in an age of it. In this paper, I articulate four ideas that seem to be connected to post-truth, and offer four criteria for a useful, productive, and applicable notion of post-truth. I then argue that none of the ideas that fund the notion of post-truth meet all the criteria. As a result, I find the claim that we live in an age of post-truth politics to be at best highly misleading: a good bit of rhetoric, but not, ironically, in tune with the facts.

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