

# Media Development

2/2017

WACC

## Reforming the World

**P**orro filij **vii** ling-  
istadhar: thola i phua ia  
sub i symeon quoz. Filij thg  
la: ozi et raphaia: et iehel i ie-  
mai i sephai. i samuel pnceps  
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numerati sunt in diebus dauid:  
viginiduo milia sexcenti. Filij  
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chael et obadia et iohel et iesia  
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ad bella fortissimi: viginiduo  
et ducenti. Porro filij iadihel  
balan. Filij aut balan: iherus  
et beniamin et aboch et chana-  
na: et iochan et tharles i hailsa  
ar. Omnes hy filij iadihel pnce-  
pes cognationu suaz viri for-  
tissimi: decem i septu milia i du-  
centi ad pndu. pcedentes: sephai  
q et hapha filij hie et asim filij  
acer. Filij ac neptalim galihel i  
gumi. et aler et sellu filij bala-  
Porro filij manasse. esriel:  
stabinag: q lica pepie mach-  
re ptem galaad. Machir ac ac  
repti vroz filijs suis haphum  
et sephai: et habuit soroz et noie

aut ulam bedan hy luit filij ga-  
laad filij machir: filij manasse.  
Soroz aut eius regina. pepie  
viri decem: et abieret i moola.  
Erat aut filij semida abin et se-  
chem. et leri i amiam. Filij aut  
ephaaim luthala: barth filius  
et: thaat filius eius elada fili-  
us ei: thaat filius: eius: et huius  
filius zadab: i huius filius lutha-  
la i huius filius eze: i elad. De-  
cenerit aut eos viri gedy indig-  
ne: qia defendeat ut inuadent  
possessiones eoz. Huius igitur  
ephaaim p eoz milis dieb:  
et vicerunt fies eius ut consolare-  
tur eum. Angellulog est ad ux-  
ore suam: que recepit et pepie  
filij i vocauit nomen ei: breia:  
eo quod in malis domus eius  
oratus esset filia aut eius fuit sa-  
ra: que edificauit bethoron in  
tercioze i supiorum: i osenzara.  
Porro filius eius rapha et re-  
seph i thale: de quo nar: i tha-  
an: qui genuit laadan. Huius  
quoq: filij annuud q genuit e-  
lisama de quo oratus est num: q  
habuit filium ioseph. Possessio  
aut eoz et habitatio bethel cu  
filiab: suis: et tota oriente no-  
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ab: suis vlog: alfa et filiab: ei:  
intra filios q: manasse betha  
et filia eius: chanar et filia e-

ius mageddo i filias eius doz i  
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i laca soroz eoz. Filij aut bari-  
a: heber et melchiel: ipse est paf  
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phlat et somer i iochan et sua-  
a: soroz eoz. Filij iephale pho-  
sech et thamaal i alophy. Hy fi-  
lij iephale. Porro filij somer: a-  
hi et roaga et iaba i acam. Fi-  
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iemna i selles i amal. Filij su-  
pha: lue: aruaphed: et lual et  
brei et ianra bosoz: od i sam-  
ma et salula et iechan et bera-  
Filij iecher: iephone i phalpa  
i ara. Filij aut olla: arce i au-  
hel et relia. Omnes hy filij aler:  
principes cognationu electi at-  
q: fortissimi duces dunt. Nis  
at eoz etans que apta esset ad  
bellu: viginiduo milia. **viii**  
**B**eniamin aut genuit bale-  
mogenitū suū: albal se-  
nidum ahara receit. noaha q:  
num: et rapha qnum: fueratq:  
filij bale addao: et grea: et abi-  
ud: abisue quoq: et nenan et  
ahor sed et grea: et sephuphan  
et uram. Hy luit filij ahod: p-  
ncipes cognationu habitaciu in  
gabaa: qui exandati sunt i ma-  
nath. Moomā aut i archia i ge-  
ra iue et audulie eoz: et genuit

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WACC is an international organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community. Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication, and promotes open and diverse media. WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

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*Media Development* is published quarterly by the World Association for Christian Communication  
308 Main Street  
Toronto, Ontario M4C 4X7, Canada.  
Tel: 416-691-1999 Fax: 416-691-1997  
[www.waccglobal.org](http://www.waccglobal.org)

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Libraries and institutions in North America and Europe US\$75.

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**Cover design:** Brad Collicott

Published in Canada

ISSN 0143-5558

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The 3/2017 issue of *Media Development* will feature young writers exploring communication challenges in today's rapidly changing world.

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On 4 April 1967, the Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr gave his impassioned “Vietnam” speech at Riverside Church, New York. Most of that speech is as pertinent now as it was then. Take out the references to war and there are compelling arguments for truth-telling and a revolution of values. In a certain sense, that is the theme of this issue of *Media Development*.

Writing in *The New Yorker* (3 April 2017), the American author Benjamin Hedin noted:

“Half a century later, the Riverside speech also seems to carry the greater weight of prophecy. King portrayed the war in Vietnam as an imperial one, prosecuted at the expense of the poor. Vietnam, he said, was ‘the symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit’, and, if left untreated, if the malady continued to fester, ‘we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight’.”

Some might argue that this is precisely where the USA finds itself today – in a morass characterised by lack of respect for fundamental rules and the institutions on which good governance is based, lack of regard for truth, and a mix of conspiracy theories, racist rhetoric, and crackpot ideas.

What follows are passages from Martin Luther King Jr’s speech that could have been written yesterday, and probably would have been had King not been assassinated.

## On the need to act

“Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their gov-

ernment’s policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one’s own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on.”

## On the need to speak out

“Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak. For we are deeply in need of a new way beyond the darkness that seems so close around us.”

## On the need for transformation

“A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. On the one hand we are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life’s highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes



to see than an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

### **On the need for redistribution of wealth**

“A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa, and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say, ‘This is not just’. It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of South America and say, ‘This is not just.’ The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just.”

### **On the need for equality and justice**

“A genuine revolution of values means in the final analysis that our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Every nation must now develop an overriding loyalty to mankind as a whole in order to preserve the best in their individual societies.”

Communicators today – especially those much maligned public intellectuals, opinion journalists, and voices of conscience who open people’s eyes and ears to inequality and injustice – have a moral duty to tell it like it is, to disturb the world, and – like Martin Luther King Jr – to dream of a better future for all. ●

*The photo on page 4 of Martin Luther King Jr giving his speech at Riverside Church, New York, is courtesy of DailyKos/JPLime.*

### **Reference**

1. Benjamin Hedin. “Martin Luther King Jr.’s Searing Anti-War Speech, Fifty Years Later”. *The New Yorker*, 3 April 2017.

# A shifting media ecology: What the age of Luther can teach us

**Paul A. Soukup, S.J.**

*Well before people even named them, Martin Luther unknowingly stepped into one of the great debates about new technologies through his writing in the 16th century. The content of Luther’s writing did not matter as much as the new technology itself, in this instance the printing press. Though Luther continued his normal practice of academic writing, he did not consider (except in an immediate strategic sense) and most likely could not fully consider the extensions of his writing or the impact of that writing when he coupled it with new technology.*

Luther’s situation shows what can happen when new technologies enter into existing worlds. Drawing on a biological metaphor, the media ecology approach to communication study argues that we must see communication and communication technologies both as constituting an ecosystem and as existing within a larger cultural ecosystem. The communication ecosystem consists of not only the technologies themselves, but of the previously established habits and practices of communication, the economics of communication, the ideas circulating in society through communication, and even who can communicate with whom in society. Seeing Luther in a media ecology raises questions not only about the spread of ideas but also about the role of the means of production and the development of society itself through its communication choices.

By their very nature new technologies raise

questions that previous generations had not considered. Each generation develops its own tools, ethical practices, and means of assessment for communication – basically for an ecosystem that has reached equilibrium. However the older tools, practices, and means may not fit when the new arrives. Not surprisingly, people have trouble predicting what might happen and even more trouble faced with evaluating something new that presents a great number of affordances, that is, sets of possibilities and opportunities to do many different things.

Because a given culture may choose only a few of those things, students of media find it even harder to predict the future. Much of what we take for granted in our use of communication technology today results from choices that past users made, the structures they established, and the media ecology equilibrium they reached. So, when we find ourselves in a period of rapidly changing technological development, we find it easier to understand what might happen based on what occurred in similar instances in the past.

So, some 500 years after Martin Luther, we can consider some of the challenges that new media present to us today by looking at Luther's experience in the new media of his day. Even as we do this, we should keep in mind that this same reflection could take as a starting point any time in which cultures encounter something new. The study of communication technology offers several key periods: the 16th century (the time after the spread of the printing press), the 19th century (with the inventions of the telegraph and telephone) and the 20th century (both early, with broadcast technology, and late, with digital technologies).

#### **Four challenges**

The experience of Martin Luther illustrates four challenges arising from communication in a changing era, each involving a media ecology of technology, cultural practices, and ultimately ethics. Thinking in terms of an ecosystem of communication leads us to understand how a system in equilibrium becomes unbalanced with the introduction of a new technology, or a new source

of information, or a new legal structure of information – these events and others radically open the communication system to largely unpredictable developments.

The first challenge arises from new technology and its disruption of the media ecology system. As already noted, the new technology of Luther's day was the printing press. And, in Luther's time the equilibrium included church polity, the relation of Church and State, the role and practices of the university, the theological understandings of the Scriptures, the translation of the Scriptures, the manuscript tradition, an understanding of what it meant to be a Christian, the local town markets, and a host of other things. As befitted a university teacher, Luther himself used any number of methods of expression, from the spoken word with its echoes of orality in the use of slogans ("sola scriptura"), academic debates, university lectures, and written texts.

Luther, already known as a well-selling devotional writer and teacher, had a strong reputation in the book trade and a popularity among various audiences. Luther's theological writings became bestsellers of his day because Luther made use of the printing press or, perhaps better, the booksellers and the printers made use of Luther's writings to advance their own sales of materials. When he published his 95 theses as a way to engage other theologians in debate and to challenge the local church authorities, the booksellers saw another publishing opportunity.

Luther may have had the ideas, but the booksellers and printers spread those ideas for their profit. The fact that the booksellers seized on this work and popularized it around Germany may have surprised church officials, but from the perspective of a growing book trade, this made perfect sense. In effect, they popularized the writings far beyond what Luther would have expected. The booksellers most likely did not consider the norms of academic discourse, the depth of the religious ideas, the growth of faith, or any of the other larger consequences of the Reformation. Their motive had more to do with profit. The capital invested in the printing press and the return on their investment led the way.

Therefore, in thinking about communicating in an age of new technologies we should consider the unintended consequence for the ecosystem. A new communication technology opens up an existing system to new developments and possibilities, which can include the participants (printers vs. copyists, readers vs. auditors in lecture halls, local nobility vs. church leaders, etc.), the legal structures (the development of copyright, for example), the financing, and so on. Each raises ethical concerns.

The second challenge to communication illustrated in Luther's career has to do with public communication. Every era has its own set of publics for communication, that is, those people who would speak to one another, the topics about which they would speak, the circulation of ideas – in short, the audience. In the 16th century, these included academics, the church, the court, the towns, the guilds, etc. Each had its own “language” and specialization. The growth of the vernacular languages both contributes to and results from the rapid expansion of communication through the printing press.

Academic theology and, in fact all academic work, took place in Latin, as did government business, church practice, and what today we would call international trade. However, Luther, particularly in his devotional writings, already had a reputation as a German stylist. And so, his desire to have all the German people read the Scriptures in their own heart language led him to translate the Bible, both the old and the New Testament. From an academic perspective, the availability of corrected manuscripts in Greek and Hebrew led him to recognize the weaknesses of the Latin Vulgate translation. His creation of a catechism in German led to a new engagement with theological ideas among the laity. In undertaking both Bible and theology in German, Luther dramatically altered the equilibrium of the media ecology.

### **Ethical questions**

Each of these audience issues connected to the vernacular languages raises its own ethical questions. For example, new translations call for a consideration of the intended readers of them. The English

translations of the Scriptures during the time of Henry VIII illustrate the point in the debates between William Tyndale and Thomas More. More favoured specialized terms were brought into English for theologically-laden words because of the technical quality of the language (that is, the words carried a theological history with them) while Tyndale sought to use the more powerful English words or words that stood independently



*Portrait of Martin Luther by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1528).*

of a theological history. For example, More advocated “priest,” “church,” and “charity” where Tyndale used “elder,” “congregation,” and “love.” The words appealed to audiences in different ways: More focused on the church as guarantor of the Bible and Tyndale, taking the position of the Reformers, on the Lutheran sola scriptura,

In effect the use of the vernacular languages in the 16th century opened up technical discussions among theologians and translators to a much wider audience, an audience that lacked a certain knowledge and background to fully comprehend the debate. On the one hand, this offered a very good outcome, particularly in terms of personal growth and faith and the personal connection to

the Scriptures. On the other hand, this led to increased controversy over interpretation and the use of the Scriptures by groups with vastly different motivations.

Luther himself experienced this kind of dismay during the Peasants' Revolt of 1524, a revolt fuelled by, among other things, particular interpretations of religion and of the Scriptures. Similarly, other reformers at Luther's time advanced arguments that academic groups might have refuted, but that spread widely in the communication situation of the Reformation, as for example in the renewed appearance of iconoclasm in the West.

New audiences, then, illustrate another disruption of the equilibrium of the media ecology. The opening of theology, government, and business and the expansion of the audience move society closer to communication for all. At the same time, that very expansion raises questions about the end of communication and highlights the dangers of different groups vying for dominance of communication.

### **A new kind of rhetoric**

The third issue arising in this time of communication transformation has to do with rhetoric and argumentation. The medieval educational system prepared scholars and clerks for public communication through "eloquentia", dialectic, and rhetoric – largely oral methods that they adapted to the semi-oral worlds of the lecture hall and manuscript. However, a technology like the printing press that greatly expanded the audience and the ways in which people received communication necessitated a new kind of rhetoric. The rhetoric of the printed book (tone, arrangement of information on a page or in chapters, type face, etc.) took well over a century to develop. It took that long for people to best understand the form that worked in the absence of face-to-face debate, in the quiet reading of a book alone in one's room, in the longevity of the printed word.

Many of the writings of Luther and his opponents read today can seem somewhat shocking to those accustomed to the modern and quite moderate tones of academic debate. Those early

printed words have strong oral qualities, with echoes of the kinds of debate practices that we still hear in the British Parliament: cheering one's allies, name-calling (with names that seem perfectly inappropriate for theological or scriptural debate), the equivalent of shouting down an opponent, calls for order, and so on. They also include a kind of style marked by a flow of words, one without the kind of concise argumentation we might expect in a written text. These differences illustrate how the printing press changed the ecosystem of argumentation, proof, and the presentation of knowledge.

Any new technology of communication, particularly one that introduces different techniques of expression challenges us to develop the most effective way of communicating within the world inscribed by its affordances. Again this illustrates that the media ecosystem consists not only of the tools but, in this instance, of how people should use the language, how they can frame arguments, how they determine what counts for proof and knowledge, and even how people should address one another – the rules of politeness and etiquette suited to the medium.

Fourth, the changing ecosystem fostered by new communication opportunities raises questions about authority and the nature of authority. Here, too, by considering the balanced ecosystem before the printing press, we can see the ways in which a new communication world changes this aspect of human society as well. Most clearly during Luther's lifetime, European society experienced a shift from a hierarchical church and state authority (a church authority that controlled many of the means of communication) to a much more open communication system. Before the printing press, wide-spread sources of information largely consisted of sermons, letters circulated from the bishop, handwritten manuscripts, and religious and regal proclamations. Because communication existed in such a restricted world, those who had access to communication possessed a great deal of authority.

The access to communication, that is, the authority related to a person's position, education, or ordination. Luther's proposal of the priesthood

of all believers in effect made not only a theological point but also a sociological point, and one reinforced by new communication means. Opening access to a world of communication changed the medieval world and the very nature of authority, that is to say, who had the authority to speak, write, and even read. The two go together: authority flows from the one who expresses himself or herself, but authority also resides in those who receive the message. The interaction reveals the bounds of authority.

For any culture or society this raises ethical questions of how that society bestows authority on individuals and how the wider group recognizes that authority. One could list many different sources of authority, whether from academic, political, or religious sources or, as Max Weber does in his sociological studies of authority, from charisma, legal status, or tradition. Each correlates with communication practices and access to information.

Clearly, the 16th century witnessed a dramatic cultural change that impinges on authority. Without trying to attribute all of the changes simply to the printing press, we can say that what occurs in the 16th century involves a shift in the equilibrium of the media ecology and more general social ecosystems. All of the different parts shift simultaneously and begin to influence one another: the printing press plays a role; the changing understanding of theology plays a role; the rising book trade plays a role; the personalities of the people thinking and writing play a role as do the rise of the vernaculars and a new learning; the new occupations of printer and bookseller (the new gatekeepers to knowledge) play a role. The time of Luther holds particular interest because so many things shifted simultaneously.

### **Today's media ecology is unbalanced**

In our own day analogous changes hold relevance for us. We too live in a time in which the media ecology has become unbalanced. New technologies have had systematic and systemic influences on every aspect of our living: the digital technologies – the Internet, social media, smart telephones, and other things—the whole range of our

communication structures have affected the equilibrium of the media ecosystem. Just as in the time of Luther these technologies offer affordances for us to do things that we could not do before. They do not compel us to act or to communicate in particular ways nor do they compel us to change social norms; however, they give the opportunity for such changes to occur. Just as in that earlier era, we see a change in public communication in our day. Who has access to the technology? What can people communicate through that access? Who listens? What language do we use? Who constitutes the public? Who makes up the audience when “information demands to be free”, as the Internet libertarians hold?

In addition we find ourselves struggling with the appropriate rhetoric for the digital communication world. Some puzzle at the form and influence of 140 character messages on Twitter. Some take offense at the content that appears on Facebook or other Internet sources. Some wonder about the new elite that populates the world of reality television, YouTube videos, sports, or niche entertainment. We also recognize and struggle with the question of authority. Every established understanding of authority seems to face challenges, as has occurred in the political realm in recent elections across the world. Changes in authority linked to changes in communication practices appear in the rise of populist political movements and anti-globalization protests. People wonder about which sources of information and news deserve trust. Most likely the same applies just as much to religious communication and authority.

However, all is not bad. A media ecology out of equilibrium holds out many new possibilities. These new technologies offer access to communication to many people and groups who lacked a voice without them. As the ecosystem moves towards balance, people have opportunities to develop a new rhetoric, to understand authority in new ways, and to change existing structures. Past experience indicates that whenever the ecosystem of communication shifts, many other opportunities present themselves. Scholars may recognize these development in the past: Luther's world does help us to identify key challenges. Unfortu-

nately, scholars and others find it very difficult to predict how the ecosystem will rebalance itself. ●

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# Luther's media phenomenon

## Interview

*Martin Luther did more than just serve as a catalyst for the Reformation. By nailing his 95 theses to the door of a Wittenberg, Germany, church in 1517, he became the world's first mass media figure and launched a new form of theological writing, argues University of St. Andrews Professor Andrew Pettegree.*

Professor Pettegree discussed his research and his new book *Brand Luther* during a talk at Harvard Divinity School (HDS) on 29 March 2016 titled "Martin Luther, the Reformation, and the Creation of a Media Phenomenon". A special exhibit was put on display in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library in conjunction with Pettegree's talk.

Before his visit to campus, HDS communications spoke with Pettegree about how Luther was able to leverage the printing press and be propelled from a virtual unknown to the most published writer since the birth of printing.

*HDS: In your book you say that Luther "invented a new form of theological writing." Can you describe the type of writing he invented and do you still see aspects of it at work today?*

AP: I think the genius of Luther – the totally unexpected genius of Luther – is that he finds a way of writing very short works. If you look at the Sermon on Indulgences and Grace in 1518, that is both a masterpiece and a revolution. It's only 1,500 words long. It divides the teaching of the 95 theses into 20 short paragraphs, seldom more than two or three sentences, and it speaks in an accessible way to those without theological education. It can be read aloud in 10 minutes.

Theological writing before this largely depends on a massing of examples, on repetition,

and emphasis on complexity. Like so much academic writing today, it takes a lot of its armour and rhetorical strength from these qualities. One of the great things about Luther is that he just didn't care about the expected norms. Writing theological works in the vernacular was itself, in many respects, the start of the Reformation.

Having done what he did with the *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, this is something that is pursued pretty consistently through the opening years of the Reformation when he puts out 45 original works, half of them no longer than eight pages long. Once he discovers this path he pretty much keeps to it.

*HDS: How did Luther's writing style impact the spread of his message?*

AP: I think if you compare the publishing history of the 95 theses and on the *Sermon on Indulgences and Grace*, they're very indicative. His 95 theses is a relatively conventional invitation to debate, addressed to fellow scholars in Latin. The reprinting of the vernacular sermon is the moment at which the movement goes viral. It's reprinted 14 times in the first year and it moves through all of Germany's major centres of publication (with the exception of Cologne, which stays defiantly orthodox). That's a pattern that continues in the years following the Reformation.

That pattern is exactly what is required both to spread the message and to ignite the interest of the print industry, because that is also changing the model of publishing. Most texts published before the Reformation are complex, far longer, and require more investment. So, the commercial model for that is you publish a single edition in a major commercial centre where you can raise capital and then distribute this edition throughout Europe. That describes the publishing of the majority of theological works in this period.

What Luther is doing is creating multiple opportunities for multiple publishers because an eight page German tract can be turned off the press quickly. You get an extremely rapid return of capital, and it moves off to profit quickly. From the point of view of the industry, Luther has created for them a far more benign model of sales and

distribution.

*HDS: You call Luther the world's first mass media figure. What made him so?*

AP: He became well known very quickly. Also, he was not someone from a social level where one could have been expected to become a known face. He was not a ruler, he was not a dignitary in his own order, he was not a prince of the church. And yet, within two or three years of the publishing of 95 theses, he was the most published author in the history of printing, living or deceased. By 1521, there were more works published by Luther than any other single figure since birth of printing 80 years before.

It meant people were not only interested in what Luther said, but also in Luther as a progenitor of this phenomenon. Luther's personality and role became as important as what he was saying. You see this in engravings or woodcuts of Luther that were circulating so widely at the time. People wanted to know what he looked like.

He has all the trappings of celebrity down to people's fascination with his person and his desire to see what he looked like. To a surprising extent he embraced this. I found a remarkable little note in one of his letters in which he writes, "PS, I'm sending you copies of this portrait, which I have signed as you asked." I thought this sort of celebrity culture where a president or film star sends along a signed photograph was very modern. Yet here is Luther embracing it in the 16th century.

*HDS: How did Luther's actions fit in with his beliefs?*

AP: I think you have to take into account here that Luther's beliefs were evolving very rapidly and they were evolving in such a way that he always risked outrunning his supporters. Critical in that respect were his supporters in the Augustinian Order and most importantly Frederick the Wise.

What was more difficult was when the debate became an issue of authority rather than theology, at which point he began to move toward especially radical beliefs. If you call the head of your own church the Antichrist, that puts you in a very different position, and to some extent a false position, because Luther himself claimed always

to be a faithful Catholic and believed as much for the remainder of this life.

You have to understand with Luther his whole approach during the theses years was reactive. He was responding to his critics as his developing theology was criticized by them.

At every stage he's testing his supporters to stay with him or not. In such an evolving political situation it's hard to look for consistency in such a short period when Luther was thinking on his feet and reacting to events. That's an extraordinary part of his genius.

*HDS: Would the Reformation have happened without Luther coming of age in the printing press?*

AP: A Reformation had already happened, I suppose, with the 15th century Hussite, and if you look at the Bohemian Movement you can see the contrast with the Reformation a century later. Hus had been martyred and that had sparked a nationalistic revolt and ultimately a successful one. I think that helps explain why Charles V didn't give into the advice of his inner circle to have Luther arrested – he feared another Hus.

What I think the print gives you is the extreme rapidity with which Luther's views and news of Luther can be spread around Germany. But he probably also was the source of its limitations to the extent that Luther's Reformation is such a Germanic affair.

What was powerfully attractive to the people of the German cities and German princes was partly a strong nationalistic and anti-Italy tendency. In France, England, and elsewhere, there isn't that much resonance for Luther after the first excitement dies down.

Luther's Reformation is pretty much confined to a zone of German-speaking lands and those to the east and north where German commercial interests were strong. He is by far the least travelled and least cosmopolitan of the major reformers.

*HDS: Luther was an important catalyst in the theological revolution that led to the formation and start of Protestantism, but what did he mean for the beginning of printing and mass communication?*

AP: I think Luther offered print a reboot. Print had been fuelled in the 1450s by a whole range of false expectations. The boosters of print wanted more books for people like themselves. There was a great deal of humanist enthusiasm for printing, but it required many bankruptcies among the print fraternity before it becomes clear the established market for manuscripts doesn't provide a sufficiently substantial market size for what the print industry is to become.

People understood that the future of print lies in smaller books, it lies particularly in work for the state. Being the printer for the local bishop or local ruler was often a lifeline. It depends on finding new buyers and Luther offered them new buyers. There were people buying these reform pamphlets who were previously not buying books, and now they were buying lots of them.

Printing was established in many parts of Germany. What I think happens is when this moment is passed, the printers managed to hold onto these readers by redirecting them to other types of small books. It's no coincidence that the largest market for new genres such as news books is in Germany. It is in the age after Luther's death when you first see the market for commercial printed news getting underway.

*HDS: In addition to the Reformation, you've also written about the study of religious refugee communities in the 16th century in your book Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London. Given the various conflicts around the world going on today, what similarities do you see taking place?*

AP: When I started working on this, it wasn't a big topic. There were not a lot of people working on immigrant communities in the early modern period. Looking back (and this is work I did 30 years ago) you do see many of the same contours you see today. The exiles then were much more welcome by the ruling elite than by people who felt their jobs were being threatened and would be taken. They were receiving sympathy as fellow religious worshipers, but elicited lot of suspicion.

There were a lot of anti-Dutch feelings, which involved a fair amount of stereotyping. People would say that the Dutch were dirty and

squalid. If you look at it from Dutch side, they had a reputation for almost obsessive cleanliness at home.

In the 16th century, immigrant groups often settled in new homes very close to people from their own home villages. It is the sense of being overwhelmed that I think most frightened the indigenous population, and of course anxieties about employment. What I saw is a sort of equation. If the immigrant population is below 10%, it can be absorbed relatively easily. If it's above 50%, it doesn't cause a lot of problems because the newcomers begin to reshape the culture of their new home (Geneva is a classic example). It's in the middle stage that you get the most significant problems. That's when people remain a minority, but a very significant and evident minority.

However, there are differences. Certainly in Britain antagonism toward immigrants is often expressed in areas where very few are living. Here it seems to be largely fear of the unknown other. Antagonism doesn't seem to be closely correlated with experience.

And there is one further critical difference. We have far more of a scapegoating culture now than was case in the 16th century. Back then, people had far higher experience of misfortune. People who were faced with misfortune would look inside themselves for causes. Misfortune was seen as God-given infliction. I don't think that even in strongly Christian communities that that's the case today. People are encouraged to look outside for the source of the problems; the result is a political culture characterized by a far greater degree of anger and resentment. ●

*Interview by Michael Naughton published in [Harvard Divinity School News & Events](#), 23 March 2016.*

## Ten theses knocking on the door of public communication

Philip Lee

*In 1517, when Martin Luther hung his 95 theses on the wooden doors of Wittenberg Castle church, he did not intend to start the Reformation. That came later. What Luther really began was a communications revolution - and it is still going on.*

**T**he *Ninety-five Theses* (or *Disputation on the Power of Indulgences*) are a set of propositions setting out Luther's views on the practice of preachers selling "indulgences". These were certificates reducing the amount of time spent in purgatory for sins committed by their purchasers. Indulgences were sanctioned by the Pope, so Luther was basically challenging what he saw as an abuse of power.

Luther's theses were distributed throughout Germany and quickly found their way to Rome. In 1518, he was summoned to Augsburg, a city in southern Germany, to defend his views before an imperial assembly. A debate lasting three days between Luther and Cardinal Thomas Cajetan, a leading theologian of the day, led to stalemate. Cajetan defended the church's use of indulgences, but Luther refused to accept his arguments.

On 9 November 1518, Pope Leo X condemned Luther's writings as being in conflict with the teachings of the Church. One year later, a papal commission declared them heretical, but a second merely stated that the writings were "scandalous and offensive to pious ears". Finally, in July 1520, a papal bull was issued giving Luther 120 days to recant. Luther refused and on 3 January 1521 he was excommunicated.

Later that year, the Holy Roman emperor Charles V signed an edict against Luther, ordering

his writings to be burned. Luther hid in the town of Eisenach, where he continued work on his lifelong project: the translation of the Bible into contemporary German.

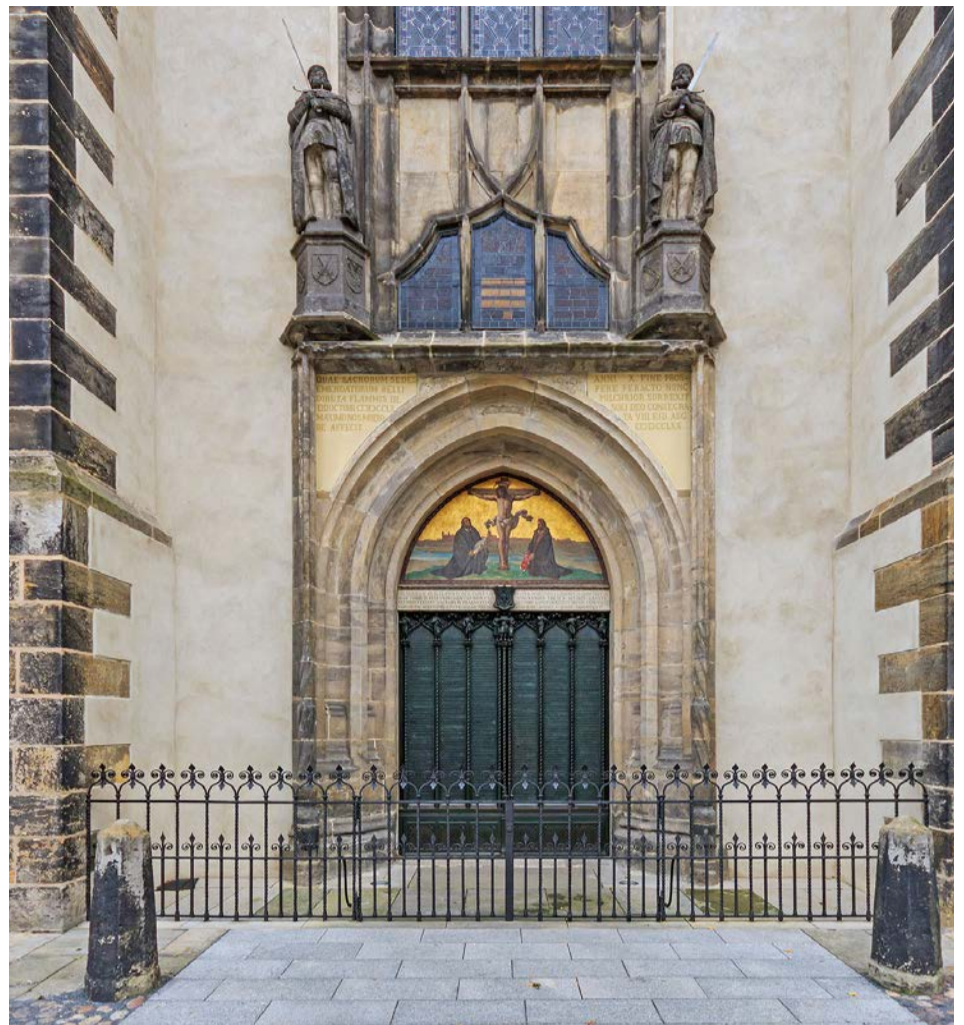
Luther's translation was eventually published in a six-part edition in 1534. It was not the first version in German, but it was the most influential in that it used the language of the people. To help him in translating it, Luther would visit nearby towns and markets to hear ordinary people speaking. Luther was motivated in part by his concept of the "universal priesthood or the priesthood of all believers", a Protestant Christian doctrine which states that baptized Christians are "priests" and "spiritual" in the sight of God. They have direct access to God through their prayers without requiring a human mediator.

The translation of the Bible into colloquial German was arguably an early instance of promoting freedom of information – making an arcane text intelligible and available to ordinary people. Later, Luther even had large-print Bibles made for people with failing eyesight (Lindberg, 1996: 92).

In this respect, it is worth recalling that Luther was not alone in contesting the subjugation of the masses. On 16 February 1525, some 25 villages around the town of Memmingen in Swabia demanded that the local council alleviate their poor economic conditions. The peasants complained about servitude, rent, access to land, and the clergy in Twelve Articles that strikingly include a call for recognition "that we are and that we want to be free". These Twelve Articles are sometimes considered the first draft of human rights and civil liberties in continental Europe.

### **Taking a rights-based approach to communication**

While ideas about rights and liberty have existed in some form for much of human history – one thinks, for example, of the Cyrus Cylinder dating from the 6th century BCE and of England's Magna Carta dating from 1215 CE – they bear little resemblance to present-day concepts. Today's rights-based discourse stems from the U.S. Bill of



*The wooden doors of Wittenberg Castle church have long since been replaced by bronze replicas bearing Luther's 95 theses. Photo by A. Savin ([Wikimedia Commons](#) · [WikiPhotoSpace](#))*

Rights (1789/1791) and France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1793).

Called first-generation human rights, they are fundamentally civil and political in nature, serving to protect the individual from the excesses of the state. First-generation rights include, among other things, freedom of speech, the right to a fair trial, freedom of religion, and voting rights. They were first enshrined at the global level in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948) and given status in international law in Articles 3 to 21 of the UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966/1976).

Second-generation human rights are related to notions of equality and began to be recognized by governments after World War I. They are fundamentally social, economic, and cultural in nature and they guarantee citizens equal conditions and treatment. Secondary rights include a right to be employed, rights to housing and health care, as well as social security and unemployment benefits. Like first-generation rights, they were

also covered by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966/1976). All three – the UDHR, the ICCPR, and the ICESCR – are collectively known as the International Bill of Human Rights.

Third-generation human rights are those that go beyond the merely civil and social, and are expressed in many progressive documents of international law, including the Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972), the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), and other examples of what are generally known as “soft law” (quasi-legal instruments which do not have any binding force, or whose binding force is weaker than that of traditional law). Because of the principle of sovereignty and the preponderance of dissenting nations, such rights have been hard to enact in legally binding documents.

The term “third-generation human rights” remains largely unofficial and covers a broad spectrum, including group and collective rights; the right to self-determination; the right to economic and social development; the right to a healthy environment; the right to natural resources; the right to participation in cultural heritage; rights to intergenerational equity and sustainability. In particular, as will be seen in the next section, they include communication rights.

### **Origins of communication rights**

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed an urgent call for a New International Information Order (NIIO), later to be known as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The term NIIO was coined at a seminar held in Tunis in 1976, which urged the Non-Aligned Movement to fight for “liberation from all kinds of neo-colonialism and imperialist oppression”, citing the peoples of developing countries as “the victims of domination in information and this domination is a blow to their most authentic cultural values, and in the final analysis subjugates their interests to those of imperialism” (*Information in the Non-Aligned Countries*, 1976: 25-26).

In 1978, UNESCO’s General Conference

instructed its Director-General, Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, to undertake a review of the main problems of communication in contemporary society seen against the background of technological progress and contemporary developments in international relations. The main issues raised in the subsequent NWICO debate were:

- \* How “Third World” countries were becoming increasingly dependent on rich industrialized countries for nearly all of their communications equipment, technology, skills and software.
- \* How poor countries were increasingly being integrated into a system dominated by multinational corporations, which for the most part only responded to the needs of private profit.
- \* How indigenous cultures were being progressively diluted by cultural integration leading to their steady deterioration and even disappearance.
- \* How information was being transformed from a basic right into a commodity to be bought and sold in the market-place.

Advocates of the NWICO pointed to the unfair advantages enjoyed by rich countries via international institutions created to manage frequency allocations for the electromagnetic spectrum; the threat to the survival of sovereign nations as a result of developments in satellite broadcasting technology; and gross inequalities in the intellectual property rights regime. They also emphasised the almost irreversible concentration of power in the hands of computer databanks and global computer networks owned and managed by multinational corporations primarily to their own commercial advantage.

Having comprehensively reviewed the situation, UNESCO’s International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by Seán MacBride, published its report *Many Voices, One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow*. Identifying the democratization of communication, diversity of media, and accessibility and affordability as key issues, the MacBride Report pointed out that democratiza-

tion could not simply be reduced to its quantitative aspects:

“[Democratization] means broader access to existing media by the general public; but access is only a part of the democratization process. It also means broader possibilities for nations, political forces, cultural communities, economic entities, and social groups to interchange information on a more equal footing, without dominance over the weaker partners and without discrimination against any one. In other words, it implies a change of outlook. There is surely a necessity for more abundant information from a plurality of sources, but if the opportunity to reciprocate is not available, the communication process is not adequately democratic” (*Many Voices, One World*, 1980: 173).

The MacBride Report was not well received in the USA, the United Kingdom, or Singapore, all of which withdrew financial support from UNESCO. As a result, civil society organizations slowly began to take matters into their own hands and in late 1996 a number of NGOs gathered in London to discuss issues related to communication and democratization. A Platform for Cooperation on Communication and Democratization was established, whose members set out to pursue advocacy of specific communication issues, to assess the feasibility of setting up a media research database and, in particular, to lobby the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) to include representatives of civil society in its decision-making processes.

Members of the Platform, under the guidance of Cees J. Hamelink, also articulated a *People's Communication Charter* aimed at mobilizing “individual citizens and their organizations to take an active role in the shaping of the cultural environment into which all children are born and in which all people live and learn”. When UN General Secretary Kofi Annan announced a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to take place in Geneva in 2003, the group was renamed the Platform for Communication Rights with the fol-

lowing aims:

- \* To work for the right to communicate to be recognised and guaranteed as fundamental to securing human rights founded on principles of genuine participation, social justice, plurality and diversity and which reflect gender, cultural and regional perspectives.
- \* To defend and deepen an open public space for debate and actions that build critical understanding of the ethics of communication, democratic policy development, and equitable and effective access.

In November 2001 the Platform initiated the campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS), arguing that the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society was not an end in itself, but a means to an end. For CRIS, the “Information Society” should use the right to communicate to enhance other human rights and to strengthen the social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities. In this respect, the Information Society should be based on principles of transparency, diversity, participation, social and economic justice, inspired by equitable gender, cultural and regional perspectives. The CRIS Campaign focused on areas that directly affected people’s lives, such as:

- \* Strengthening the *public domain*, to ensure that information and knowledge are readily available for human development and not locked up in private hands;
- \* Ensuring *affordable access to and effective use of*, electronic networks in a development context, for instance through innovative and robust regulation and public investment;
- \* Securing and extending the *global commons* for both broadcast and telecommunication, to ensure that this public resource is not sold for private ends;
- \* Instituting *democratic and transparent governance* of the information society from local to global levels;
- \* Challenging information *surveillance and censorship*, government or commercial;

\* Supporting *community and people-centred media*, traditional and new.

WSIS 2003 (Geneva) was followed by WSIS 2005 (Tunis). Overall, civil society organizations were disappointed by the lack of sustained achievements and many felt that, if there had been an opportunity for more inclusive participation, greater impact could have been made. Minor achievements in the outcomes were offset by major shortcomings: insufficient attention was given to people-centred issues such as human rights and freedom of expression, the financial mechanisms for promoting sustainable development, and support for capacity building.

Today, even with a preponderance of digital media platforms and social media, government institutions and corporate entities still dominate information and knowledge infrastructures and technologies. While we may be much closer to genuinely interactive communication, there are still many issues to resolve around security, privacy, surveillance, censorship, and ownership and control of data.

### **Communication and its relevance to human development**

Communication is recognized as an essential human need and, therefore, as a basic human right (Traber, 1992). Without it, no individual or community can exist or prosper. Communication enables meanings to be exchanged, makes people who and what they are, and motivates them to act. Communication strengthens human dignity and validates human equality. Recognizing, implementing and protecting communication rights helps underpin all other human rights (Girard & Ó Siochrú, 2003; Lee, 2004).

One of the pillars of communication rights is the imparting and exchange of information and knowledge, which are essential to tackling issues related to poverty, health, education, politics, governance, gender equality, the environment and the use of new technologies. Policies in these sectors are complex but, from the perspective of today's Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing and implementing com-

munication rights is crucial.

However, access to information and knowledge is only part of the picture. The United Nations Development Programme's Oslo Governance Centre has stated categorically that recognizing the link between human rights and social development matters, and that the human rights framework is an important tool in ensuring that goals are pursued in an equitable, just and sustainable manner (*Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals*). Human rights also provide a normative framework that grounds development work in a set of universal values.

Equally vital is effective implementation of the principles of inclusion and participation when it comes to drawing up policies aimed at overcoming social exclusion. The principles underlying communication rights determine who participates and whose voices are listened to when decisions are made. This is a *sine qua non*, since the core of all human rights standards is that their normative implications belong to everyone. Thus the very concept of communication rights implicitly requires concrete measures for the inclusion of all people everywhere.

### **Ten theses knocking on the door of public communication**

The [World Association for Christian Communication](#) (WACC) has consistently advocated the right to communicate in the belief that:

“Communication rights enable all people everywhere to express themselves individually and collectively by all means of communication. They are vital to full participation in society and are, therefore, universal human rights belonging to every man, woman, and child.”

Yet one persistent problem with the concept of “communication rights” has been how to translate them into practices that people understand and recognize as crucial to lives and livelihoods. The wooden doors of Wittenberg Castle's All Saints' Church have long since been replaced by bronze, although they still carry Luther's 95 theses in the original Latin. But if we were to hang

ten theses on the electronic portal of today's mass and social media, they would still reflect Martin Luther's essential claim for communication freedoms.

In this respect, the following ten theses are formulated as propositions illustrative of communication rights that everyone might reasonably claim as essential to good governance, good citizenship, and democratic accountability:

*Everyone is entitled to communicate, to inform, and to share knowledge.* This reflects the freedom of individuals and communities to express their opinions and aspirations.

*Everyone is entitled to dignity and respect.* This reflects the equality of individuals "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

*Everyone is entitled to just representation.* This reflects the need for balanced and fair representation in public communication and the need to counter misrepresentation.

*Everyone is entitled to their own cultural and linguistic identity.* This reflects the need for public communication to open up spaces for alternative worldviews.

*Everyone is entitled to communication skills and media literacy.* This reflects the need for adequate training and capacity-building.

*Everyone is entitled to accessible communication, information and knowledge at affordable levels.* This reflects the need for genuine accessibility to the communication infrastructure together with a minimum of economic obstacles.

*Everyone is entitled to take part in the information and communication society.* This reflects the need to dismantle political, economic, social, and cultural barriers.

*Everyone is entitled to independent mass and social*

*media.* This reflects the need for media accountability, transparency and the symbiotic relationship between good governance and good citizenship.

*Everyone is entitled to a diversity of opinions and points of view.* This reflects the need for a range of information sources as well as balanced and contextualised news.

*Everyone is entitled to fair and unbiased public communication.* This reflects the need for ethical norms and accountability at all levels.

These ten propositions underlie the theory and practice of communication rights 500 years after Martin Luther first challenged the selling of indulgences and then set about demystifying religion itself by making its basic texts available in the common tongue of his native land. Speaking truth to power and urging the democratization of communication are Martin Luther's legacy. ●

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Philip Lee joined the staff of the World Association for Christian Communication in 1975, where he is currently Deputy General Secretary and Editor of the international journal *Media Development*. His publications include *The Democratization of Communication* (ed.) (1995), *Requiem: Here's Another Fine Mass You've Gotten Me Into* (2001); *Many Voices, One Vision: The Right to Communicate in Practice* (ed.) (2004); *Communicating Peace: Entertaining Angels Unawares* (ed.) (2008); and *Public Memory, Public Media, and the Politics of Justice* (ed. together with Pradip N. Thomas) (2012). In 2013 he was conferred Doctor of Divinity (Honoris Causa) by the Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology and Church Administration in Chennai, India.

# What does the Reformation mean today?

Ralf Peter Reimann

*The 400th anniversary of the Reformation 100 years ago coincided with World War I when German troops wore belt buckles with the inscription "God with us" and fought against other nations who considered themselves Christians too. The celebrations had a belligerent and nationalistic undertone. What is the focus of this year's 500th anniversary? A Reformation Jubilee or a Commemoration of the Reformation? A heroic event of faith and the rise of Protestantism or the decline of Catholicism and the beginning of a visible division of Western Christianity?*

**T**he Reformation is a turning point in European history but it is also a global event. Of course, there were predecessors to Martin Luther, and his ideas were taken up by various movements and opposed by others in the course of history. The Reformation and Counter Reformation proved that society and states were no longer homogeneous, even if the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (meaning that the religion of the ruler dictated the religion of those ruled) tried maintain a religiously homogeneous state.

The Reformation as a movement was made possible by a media revolution, the invention of the printing press. Luther's ideas spread throughout Europe as pamphlets. Latin, being the *lingua franca* among the educated elites, allowed the exchange of ideas regardless of the existing national languages. Provincial Wittenberg became an international communication hub: students attending Wittenberg University from various na-

tions brought the ideas of the Reformation back to their home countries. The printing press helped to circulate the ideas originating from Wittenberg to the rest of Europe.

The Reformation also polarized and divided society: the unity of societies in Western Europe was shaken. Politics and alliances were now determined by two factions within the Holy Roman Empire in opposition to each other, the Protestants and the Catholics. There is no longer a universal truth but the individual's conscience proclaiming what he (500 years ago we cannot use the pronoun she) believes to be true, or as Luther confessed at the Diet of Worms, "I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen."

Ultimately, in the course of events now described as Reformation, the church hierarchy was abolished in the protestant territories, and the priesthood of all believers established, at least theologically.

## 500th anniversary of the Reformation

Half a millennium later, we are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. What does the Reformation mean today? What bearing does the Reformation have on democracy and society, on media ethics and technology, on globalization and development?

Today, we live in an interconnected and interdependent globalized world, a result of a process which started five centuries ago when America was discovered and Spanish and Portuguese ships circumnavigated the world. Again, we are in the middle of a media revolution; it is no longer the printing press but high speed Internet which disseminates information worldwide in a fraction of a second. Decades ago, in the era of mass media, television, radio, and newspapers served as a filter of information and as a multiplier. Today an individual can be a producer and a consumer of information: the so-called prosumer is the symbol of a non-hierarchical discourse.

The concept of the priesthood of all believers democratized the church; social media and the prosumer have the power to democratize the

information society – unless new intermediaries restrict free access to information. If we interpret the Reformation as the struggle of the individual opposing an all-powerful institution, – the monk against the papal church – then the individual's access to information and his and her right and ability to spread information freely must be strengthened against all-powerful Internet companies – Google, Facebook and others – which act as intermediaries, controlling the flow of information by secret algorithms.

An ex-monk in a small provincial town became a world-renown figure through printed pamphlets. Today revolutions can be started through individual social media reporting, and teenagers can become world-famous YouTube stars. The Internet multiplies the possibilities of the printing press, no place connected to the Internet is too remote not to have a worldwide effect. The Internet is a medium to change society. Whether politics or entertainment, unhindered Internet access is a prerequisite for freedom within a digital society. Net neutrality preserves this freedom as it guarantees to everybody the same treatment in transporting data.

Individual freedom is also challenged by big data. Digitalization of modern life produces data in an up to now unknown quantity. If such data are stored and analysed, human behaviour in general becomes predictable and pressure is placed on people to conform to the patterns deduced from big data analysis and freedom for non-conforming individual decisions is reduced. The Reformation is a reminder of how important individual freedom is and that action is required if freedom becomes restricted.

500 years after the Reformation, churches still have their hierarchies, their synods, and their church orders. However, social media usage is increasingly changing the church from within. Bishops interact with regular churchgoers on social media; people are by-passing church structures and ask or complain directly if they need information or want to address a problem. Hyperlinks have subverted hierarchies, even within the church. The emergent Protestant church aligned itself with the temporal rulers of the various Prot-

estant territories in the 16th century. This institutional dependence on the state has proven less and less adequate for the third millennium, and non-hierarchical communication through social media and the Internet might help the church regain its original network structure.

### **Reason becomes outdated**

The Imperial Diet of Augsburg recognized the Protestant Estates in 1530 in a pragmatic admission that there was no longer one universally accepted religious (Christian) truth. Individual conscience was placed above the magisterium, in Luther's words: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves)." Scripture has ceased to be an authority in a secular and multi-cultural society, but it seems that appealing to reason has recently become out-dated as well. Assessing facts and applying reason is no longer common ground for public discourse.

If facts have become an impediment to advancing one's own agenda in a polarized and divided society, then politics has moved to become "post-factual". "Alternative facts" have become a method to explain away facts which contradict one's political view. It is indicative of this development on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean that "post-truth" was named word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries in 2016. "Post-factual" was named word of the year by the German language society, also in connection with a rise of right-wing populism which relies on rumour and conspiracy theories.

The Reformers and their opponents disagreed in their interpretation of scripture, they based their arguments on different presuppositions but they followed the same rules of discourse. Following the Humanist approach *ad fontes* (return to the sources), the Reformation emphasized the importance of reading Scripture in the original languages because the reformers did not want to rely on inaccurate translations. The idea of getting to the roots and getting the facts right is inherent in the Reformation. If right wing popu-

lism twists the facts, following the notion that “the end justifies the means”, then Christians and citizens who hold the approach of the Reformation in high esteem have to oppose those tactics and support journalism which uncovers the truth.

The Humanist approach of reading and studying Scriptures in the original languages corresponds with the Reformers’ efforts to make Scripture available in the vernacular. Everybody should be able to read the word of God for themselves, education for ordinary people was stressed in Protestant territories, and school systems were established. This focus on general education is still important 500 years later.

The Reformation can be seen in the context of a media revolution, it can be viewed in the framework of globalization, it can be described as a movement which enhanced participation and education. The Reformation is also a focal point in European history: the individual defeats the authority of the institution. It is the beginning of the separation of state and church.

Writing from a Protestant perspective, these achievements of the Reformation are emphasized and celebrated as a success story. But for Catholics, the 500th anniversary is not a Reformation Jubilee but a Commemoration, as the Reformation undoubtedly also brought disunity to the church and split Europe and Western Christianity. In preceding centuries, the Reformation anniversary was seen as a continuation of the confessional struggles or from a nationalistic perspective, the German monk fighting for freedom from Roman papism. Maybe this is the first time that we shall have a fuller and more ecumenical understanding of the Reformation and also be able to address points of injustice and failure.

Unfortunately, the Reformation also gave rise to a new form of Christian Anti-Judaism. In his late writings, Luther espoused a hostility towards Jews which tarnishes the Reformation. During the peasant revolts, Luther sided with the feudal lords when the peasant movement grew too radical in his eyes, and he called on the state authorities to suppress the peasants with violence. In the Anabaptist controversy Luther also favoured the authorities to restore order and safe-

ty with force. Luther condemned Jews, peasants, Anabaptists and asked and encouraged authorities to kill them. Any celebration of the Reformation without addressing these downfalls would lack credibility.

### **A commemoration that acknowledges both success and failures**

In Germany, the heartland of the Reformation, Reformation Day 2017 is a national holiday. Today, about a third of the population is Protestant, a third Catholic and a third with no official religious affiliation. A public celebration of the 500 years of Reformation cannot be partisan but must include the perspectives of other faith groups and the religiously unaffiliated as well.

Applying the ideas of the Reformation to media ethics, to digitalization, to education and to participation may give fruitful impulses to the modern discourse. On the other hand, any commemoration has to acknowledge the failure and guilt towards Jews, Anabaptists and peasants. Other issues important for Protestant identity today are not reflected in the Reformation. Fortunately, the Protestant Church in Germany is not hiding those dark aspects of the Reformation but is actively addressing them.

First there was hesitation within the Catholic Church in Germany to become involved in celebrating the Reformation anniversary, but dialogue on various levels brought the two main churches of Germany together, an ecumenical healing of memories attended by the federal chancellor and the federal president is one important event in this year’s cycle of Reformation festivities.

Paul advises the Thessalonians in his first epistle, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Luther rediscovered Pauline theology, and Paul’s advice to hold fast to what is good may be applied when the ideas of the Reformation are adapted to our modern society. ●

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# L'avenir du protestantisme à l'ère numérique

Joël Burri

*Le protestantisme est né avec l'imprimerie, va-t-il mourir avec internet?*

Il est vrai qu'on lie souvent presse et Réforme, tant il est vrai que cette invention a joué un rôle primordial dans la diffusion des idées nouvelles. Il est probable que sans la machine de Gutenberg, l'impact de la réforme initiée par Luther, aurait été aussi moindre que celui des diverses «hérésies» aux revendications plus ou moins proches des celles du moine allemand qu'ont été les préréformes combattues par l'Eglise durant les siècles précédents.

Mais peut-on vraiment tirer le parallèle en imaginant qu'internet va permettre aujourd'hui comme l'imprimerie il y a cinq siècles, l'émergence d'idées nouvelles qui vont tout bouleverser? Peut-être, mais notons tout de même que jusqu'ici, le protestantisme a plutôt su tirer parti des nouveaux médias. Sans cesser d'imprimer beaucoup, les Eglises ont adopté le cinéma comme outil de mission, puis très vite la radio et la télévision. Et aujourd'hui, les offres religieuses foisonnent sur internet.

«En donnant accès aux Ecritures, la Réforme réduit la médiation du clergé dont le rôle de médiation est contesté», résumait le professeur de philosophie Marc Foglia lors d'une table ronde sur les effets sociaux de la révolution numérique organisée en 2012 par le Sénat français. «Internet poursuit un mouvement séculaire d'expansion de la connaissance», soutient-il lors de la même rencontre.

Je partage cette vision des choses: internet a permis un élargissement de «la distribution de

la parole savante.» Durant la Réforme, l'autorité du clergé a été ébranlée, la diffusion des thèses des réformateurs a été facilitée, mais tout un chacun n'avait pas la possibilité de voir ses idées imprimées: le procédé restait onéreux. Durant cinq siècles, le coût de la diffusion de la pensée n'a cessé de diminuer, élargissant d'autant la facilité de diffusion de la pensée.

Aujourd'hui, internet, qui s'est imposé dans notre société en à peine quelques années, entre le milieu des années 1990 et le début des années 2000, permet à tout le monde de publier ses propos et de les rendre accessibles dans le monde entier.

Forcément, le premier usage qui en est fait est de remettre en cause les pouvoirs établis. Et c'est probablement là que se trouve la véritable différence: de réformateurs, les protestants – du moins ceux qui s'inscrivent dans une lignée his-



torique – sont devenus un pouvoir. Et comme tous les pouvoirs, ils sont contestés par des mouvements auxquels internet donne un écho jamais égalé.

Tout comme les médias traditionnels sont en crise, puisque n'importe quel défenseur du «bon sens» ou de la théorie du complot est perçu aujourd'hui comme moins corrompu et plus crédible que le plus aguerri des journalistes; les spiritualités et religiosités de tous poils sont aujourd'hui considérées comme plus profitables à l'épanouisse-

ment personnel que ces Eglises qui ont fait tant de mal dans l'histoire.

Il en va de la tradition réformée comme de la presse ou des masses médias: leur âge d'or est passé. Ce ne sont plus eux qui dictent l'identité d'une région. D'ailleurs, qui le fait aujourd'hui? Lors de la même table ronde, le psychiatre Serge Tisseron analysait: «le passage de la culture du livre à celle des écrans est, comme l'indique les mots, un passage de l'unique au multiple. L'on ne lit qu'un livre à la fois, l'on regardera de plus en plus plusieurs écrans à la fois.»

Avant de développer sur les impacts psychologiques de la révolution numérique: «On passe d'une culture de l'identité unique à une culture des identités multiples. Pendant des siècles, tout rappelait l'individu à son identité: l'ouvrier s'habillait en ouvrier, même au bal du samedi soir. Aujourd'hui rien n'empêche de s'habiller en sportif, en académicien ou en bourgeois, voire en ouvrier, selon l'envie du moment.»

Reste que débarrassés de leur rôle de prescripteur d'identité régionale ou individuelle – et pour autant qu'ils fassent le deuil de cette fonction – les Eglises, comme les médias traditionnels ne vont pas disparaître! Ils pourront proposer une offre de plus spécifique, voire de plus grande qualité que seuls eux seront à même de proposer. ●

Joël Burri est rédacteur responsable de Protestinfo. L'article ci-dessus, publié à son site web, a clôturé la série «[L'imprimerie et la Réforme](#)».

# Nine elements of digital citizenship

## Digital Citizenship Institute

*Digital citizenship can be defined as the norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour with regard to technology use.*

*1. Digital Access: full electronic participation in society.* Technology users need to be aware that not everyone has the same opportunities when it comes to technology. Working toward equal digital rights and supporting electronic access is the starting point of Digital Citizenship. Digital exclusion makes it difficult to grow as a society increasingly using these tools. Helping to provide and expand access to technology should be goal of all digital citizens. Users need to keep in mind that there are some that may have limited access, so other resources may need to be provided. To become productive citizens, we need to be committed to make sure that no one is denied digital access.

*2. Digital Commerce: electronic buying and selling of goods.*

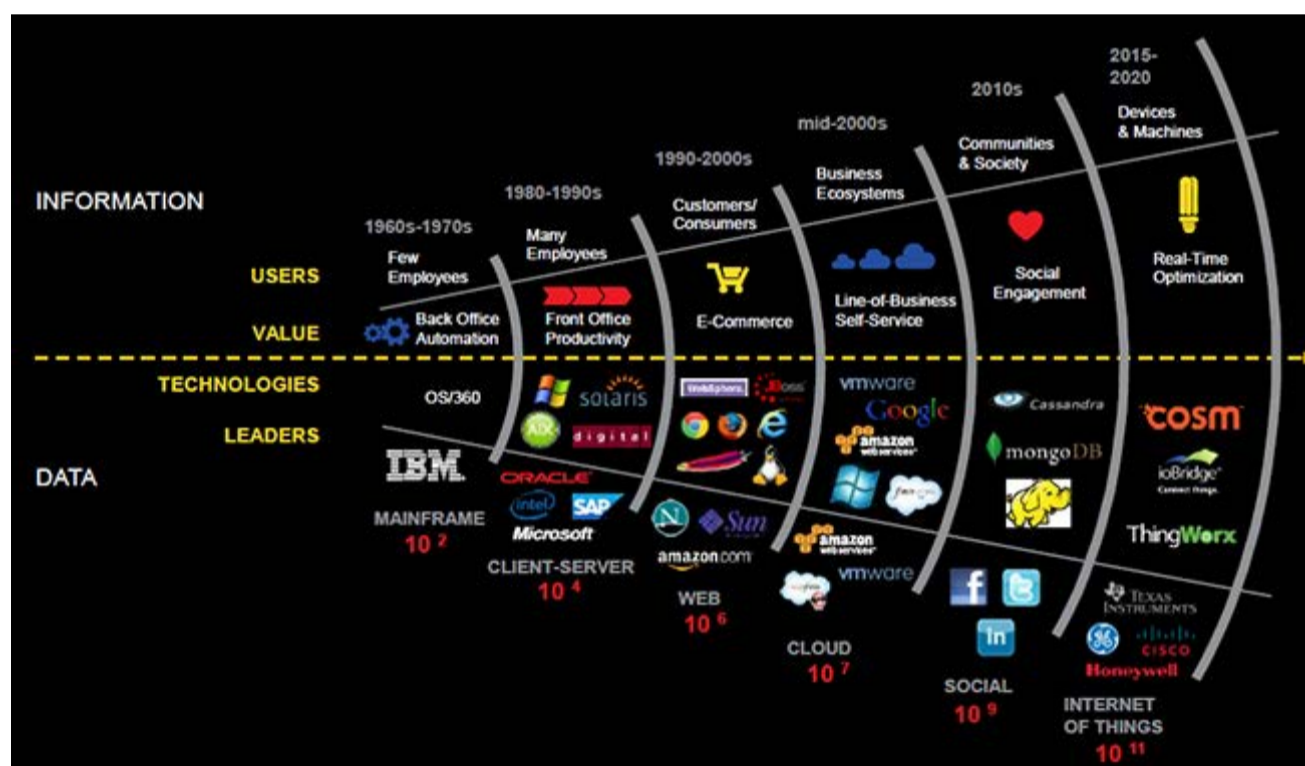
Technology users need to understand that a large share of market economy is being done electronically. Legitimate and legal exchanges are occurring, but the buyer or seller needs to be aware of the issues associated with it. The mainstream availability of Internet purchases of toys, clothing, cars, food, etc. has become commonplace to many users. At the same time, an equal amount of goods and services which are in conflict with the laws or morals of some countries are surfacing (which might include activities such as illegal downloading, pornography, and gambling). Users need to learn about how to be effective consumers in a new digital economy.

*3. Digital Communication: electronic exchange of information.*

One of the significant changes within the digital revolution is a person's ability to communicate

with other people. In the 19th century, forms of communication were limited. In the 21st century, communication options have exploded to offer a wide variety of choices (e.g., e-mail, cellular phones, instant messaging). The expanding digital communication options have changed everything because people are able to keep in constant communication with anyone else. Now everyone has the opportunity to communicate and collaborate with anyone from anywhere and anytime. Unfortunately, many users have not been taught how to make appropriate decisions when faced with so many different digital communication options.

#### 4. Digital Literacy: process of teaching and learning about technology and the use of technology.



While schools have made great progress in the area of technology infusion, much remains to be done. A renewed focus must be made on what technologies must be taught as well as how it should be used. New technologies are finding their way into the work place that are not being used in schools (e.g., videoconferencing, online sharing spaces such as wikis). In addition, workers in many different occupations need immediate information (just-in-time information). This process requires sophisticated searching and processing skills (i.e., information literacy). Learners must be taught how to learn in a digital society. In other words, learners must be taught to learn anything, any-

time, anywhere. Business, military, and medicine are excellent examples of how technology is being used differently in the 21st century. As new technologies emerge, learners need to learn how to use that technology quickly and appropriately. Digital Citizenship involves educating people in a new way – these individuals need a high degree of information literacy skills.

#### 5. Digital Etiquette: electronic standards of conduct or procedure.

Technology users often see this area as one of the most pressing problems when dealing with Digital Citizenship. We recognize inappropriate behaviour when we see it, but before people use technology they do not learn digital etiquette

(i.e., appropriate conduct). Many people feel uncomfortable talking to others about their digital etiquette. Often rules and regulations are created or the technology is simply banned to stop inappropriate use.

It is not enough to create rules and policy, we must teach everyone to become responsible digital citizens in this new society.

#### 6. Digital Law: electronic responsibility for actions and deeds

Digital law deals with the ethics of technology within a society. Unethical use manifests itself in form of theft and/or crime. Ethical use manifests itself in the form of abiding by the laws of society. Users need to understand that stealing or causing damage to other people's work, identity, or property online is a crime. There are certain rules of society that users need to be aware in an ethical society. These laws apply to anyone who works or plays online. Hacking into others information, downloading illegal music, plagiarizing, creating destructive worms, viruses or creating Trojan Horses, sending spam, or stealing anyone's iden-

tify or property is unethical.

*7. Digital Rights & Responsibilities: those freedoms extended to everyone in a digital world.*

Just as in the American Constitution where there is a Bill of Rights, there is a basic set of rights extended to every digital citizen. Digital citizens have the right to privacy, free speech, etc. Basic digital rights must be addressed, discussed, and understood in the digital world. With these rights also come responsibilities as well. Users must help define how the technology is to be used in an appropriate manner. In a digital society these two areas must work together for everyone to be productive.

*8. Digital Health & Wellness: physical and psychological well-being in a digital technology world.*

Eye safety, repetitive stress syndrome, and sound ergonomic practices are issues that need to be addressed in a new technological world. Beyond the physical issues are those of the psychological issues that are becoming more prevalent such as Internet addiction. Users need to be taught that there are inherent dangers of technology. Digital Citizenship includes a culture where technology users are taught how to protect themselves through education and training.

*9. Digital Security (self-protection): electronic precautions to guarantee safety.*

In any society, there are individuals who steal, deface, or disrupt other people. The same is true for the digital community. It is not enough to trust other members in the community for our own safety. In our own homes, we put locks on our doors and fire alarms in our houses to provide some level of protection. The same must be true for the digital security. We need to have virus protection, backups of data, and surge control of our equipment. As responsible citizens, we must protect our information from outside forces that might cause disruption or harm. ●

Source: *Digital Citizenship - Using Technology Appropriately*.

## The post-truth phenomenon: A challenge to WACC

Fr Benjamin Alforque

*In the last US elections, social media had the freedom to publish “fake news” like Pope Francis’ support for Presidential candidate Donald Trump, Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s illness and the murder of an FBI agent on the order of the Clintons.<sup>1</sup> President-elect Donald Trump himself declared, shortly after his inauguration, that his inaugural crowd was the largest gathering, far vaster than the protests that accompanied his proclamation. TV footages comparing the two events showed otherwise. Trump supporters asserted that the mainstream media were anti-Trump and “doctored” their footages to discredit the new President of America.*

**I**n the Philippines, the same media phenomenon was happening. But here, the followers of presidential candidates divided themselves into sharply opposing camps. Either one was in favour of the candidate of the former administration party – the “Yellowtards” – or die-hard fanatics of the new President-elect Rodrigo Roa Duterte or “Duter-tards”. And don’t ever say anything negative about one or the other; you will receive an avalanche of angry responses, name-calling and cusses, identifying you as belonging to one camp or the other, depending on who you’re commenting on. *Each of them will tell you what is true!*

This phenomenon – of citing “facts” which didn’t happen – but addressed to your emotions and feelings in order to convince you that “such is true” is called “post-truth”.

“Post-truth – adjective: relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” So says Oxford Dictionaries, announcing their 2016 word of the year. If we really have entered a post-truth era, as so many have written, what does that mean for the scholar and the student?”<sup>2</sup>

For WACC members and partners, we may ask: what does “post-truth” mean in our advocacy for communication rights, access to communication technology, and truth?

Post-truth is backed up by paid and volunteer writers who keep watch on comments in social media. They dish out supportive statements, invent data and facts, and appeal to your emotions and feelings either negatively or positively, with all the venom and passion they can muster. These are called “trolls”.

In Internet slang, a troll is a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal, on-topic discussion, often for the troll’s amusement. This sense of both the noun and the verb “troll” is associated with Internet discourse, but also has been used more widely. Media attention in recent years has equated trolling with online harassment.<sup>3</sup>

These trolls not only exist in social media like Twitter<sup>4</sup> and Facebook accounts. They are also found actively engaged in making commentaries on the news in the mainstream media. In the interactive portion of the coverage, they may give supporting statements to their favoured subject, or attack somebody who has a contrary opinion, or harass and demonize those who do not agree with them with harsh language, name-calling and labels that could put one’s life in danger, especially in authoritarian states where critics are called “enemies of the state” or “communists” or “terrorists”.<sup>5</sup> This “trolling” has actually put people’s personal lives at risk, compromised or killed.<sup>6</sup>

The “post-truth” phenomenon today, with

its attendant trolls, is backed up, probably not in a conscious way, by an ideological movement known as the “alternative right”. “Alternative right” or “alt-right” presents itself as an alternative to the prevailing consciousness in the political-cultural field. It identifies itself as “belonging to the alienated”.<sup>7</sup> It claims to belong neither to the mainstream conservatives nor to mainline liberals; it tends to be populist on the Left or the Right. In the US, “alt-right” surfaced prominently from the shadows with the appearance of candidate Donald Trump in the US elections.

Though they often disagree in tone and tactics, members of the Alt Right are bound by a few core beliefs. They regard most Republican politicians as Zionist puppets, captive to corporations seeking cheap labour. They tend to be protectionist on trade, isolationist on foreign policy and unmoved by cornerstone conservative issues like free markets or the Constitution. They reject the benefits of diversity and view demographic trends as an existential threat.<sup>8</sup>

When WACC advocates for equal access to communications technology especially for the poor, the indigenous people and the marginalized in general, it must contend now with the unknown forces of the “trolls”. The ideological inclinations now of different groups are harder to recognize, because the “alternative right” may exist in the heart of the mainstream conservative or mainstream liberals as well as in the left forces and populist ideologies.

One would think that with the advance of information technology, truth would be easy to come by. In fact the opposite is true. All data are available. Even false data presented convincingly as true. So, what is truth now?

### **Why is “truth” conceived this way now?**

There are attempts at tracing the historical development of the modern situation of “truth-telling and lying”, if only to understand how it has come about and what can be done about it. For the situation now is that “false truth” when directed to the emotion and the sentiments of the receiver, becomes “truth” in the receiver’s mind and heart, even if there are no facts or facts are contrary to

the proposed truth. The “liar” is the sender; the “lie” is the message, and the confused or fanatic audience is the receiver.

If there can be said to be an era in recent American history when the essence of truth was under critical scrutiny, it was the generation after 1960. In both popular and academic culture, that was when the belief that truth lay in a sphere of certainty independent of truth's inquirers began to fragment. Social scientists learned to grow much more self-critical about their methods. Anthropologists realized that they could not write themselves out of their ethnographies. Historians learned that archives contained fictions as well as facts.

Paradigms, in Thomas Kuhn's phrase, shaped the very worlds of assumption in which natural scientists worked. None of truth's seekers, it was increasingly realized, could wholly escape the perspectives and experiences they carried with them. What seemed "natural" was, as often as not, not natural at all but a product of culture and unspoken assumption.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of an individualistic society, where the community-of-truth seekers is relegated to the background as forces of social manipulators, “truth” is defined by feeling, by feeling right about it. Expressions like “if you like it, go for it”, “I’m OK, You’re OK”, and “Anyway, it’s your opinion, and everybody is entitled to his/her own opinion” typify the era when the erstwhile criteria for “truth” have crumbled away.

The advent of the revolution in information technology has created a global village,<sup>10</sup> making the world and its parts more accessible to one another. In this sense, “truthing” would have become easier as direct communications could be made between the sender and the receiver, and the message decoded and “fact-checked”. But the big business planners at Bretton Woods<sup>11</sup> succeeded in crafting a world economy at the GATT-WTO Uruguay Rounds of talks and created Globalization.<sup>12</sup> Technically, globalization is the reduction of the world’s economies into a single global economy within the framework of neo-liberalism under, at that time, a world monopolar power. Its new altar is the market, the world market. And its new idol

“Language and representation are no longer

said to reflect or express reality; there are no truths, only interpretations. 'There is nothing outside the text', and 'it is language which speaks, not the author'. 'Meanings' happen between audiences and freely circulating signs, and are not produced by a reality that exists prior to its representation. 'The dissolution of TV into life, the dissolution of life into TV' — perhaps remains the clearest example of how our lives are infiltrated by simulacra (copies without originals)."<sup>15</sup>

This Postmodern culture is a happy bed for globalization. With the loss of universal values in favour of the particular, the old question: Is this good? has no meaning. The Postmodernist question that makes sense is: Who/What is it good for?<sup>16</sup> Now you can start counting your money, your profits and the self-accumulation of your capital.

### **WACC, what will you do now?**

In your campaign for communication right to be accepted universally as fundamental human rights, who will believe you, when even the concept of human rights is being challenged by this culture of "post truth", "alternative right" whose bed is Postmodernism?

When you advocate that, in order for communication right to be fulfilled, the rights to access to communication technology should be equally exercised by all, especially by the poor and the indigenous peoples, who will go with you when communication technology is owned by a globalized few and sold to the majority?

What in fact is Truth to you now, WACC? How is it different from fact, or from reasoned fact or from a summary of a concatenation of facts, when in fact everyone is entitled to his own opinion? Do you understand now why Pilate asked: "What is truth?"<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, Facebook has attempted to operate a fake news filter in time for the German elections:

"The 2016 United States presidential elections saw the emergence of Donald Trump as the country's new head of state. However, that

election was hounded by a slew of fake and unreliable news which greatly misinformed the voting public. With the federal elections looming in Germany, Facebook will try to live up to its promise of eradicating hoaxes once and for all, by rolling out its fake news filter in the country. Starting today, Facebook users in Germany can now report stories that they deem to be false and mark these as 'disputed' news. The flagged items, as per TheNextWeb, would then be sent to Berlin-based non-profit media entity Correctiv, "the first [independent] investigative newsroom in Germany," with an explanation of the possible inconsistencies of the story. As announced previously, Facebook would also warn users before they share a fake news story, while also reducing the online visibility of disputed materials by making them appear lower in the news feed."<sup>18</sup>

In trying to liberate media and the people from Post-Truth, trolls, Alt-Right and from the bed of Postmodernism, some guidelines have been designed to help students and young people "better evaluate information from the web".<sup>19</sup> Students and young people should raise these questions when reading online: "(a) Who created this?, (b) Why did they create it?, (c) Whom is the message for?, (d) What techniques are being used to make this message credible or believable?, (f) What details are left out and why?, and, (e) How did the message make me feel?"<sup>20</sup>

It might be well for WACC to gather together those voices that seek the Truth beyond Post-truth. In that all-rounded conversation, they might be able to articulate a new way of Truthing, and, for the sake of communication rights as fundamental human rights, a new Ethic in the Cyber-world for the real world. ●

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### **Notes**

1. Nathan Pippenger, *Know-Nothing Nation*, in The Chronicle Review, January 15, 2017 on-line issue; also Henry Farell's *Facebook and Falsehood*, in Chronicle Review, January 15, 2107

- online.
2. The Chronicle Review, "The Post-Truth Issue", January 15, 2017, on-line.
3. Cf. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\_troll
4. US journalist reports on 'Duterte's army of online trolls', in INQUIRER.net US Bureau/12:37 AM January 19, 2017.
5. See for example, Philippine newspapers on-line, like the Philippines Daily Inquirer, or The Manila Times.
6. Safiya U. Noble, "Google and the Misinformed Public", in the Chronicle Review, January 15, 2017, online.
7. Time Magazine Covers The Alt-Right, Posted on April 18, 2016 by Luke Ford, The Billionaire and the Bigots. How Donald Trump Brought White Nationalists Out of the Shadows, by Alex Altman, *Time*, April 25, 2016.
8. Ibid.
9. Daniel Rodgers, *When Truth Becomes a Commodity*, in The Chronicle Review, January 15, 2017 online.
10. Eric McLuhan, son of Marshall McLuhan, suggested that his father got the concept from Wyndham Lewis's *America and the Cosmic Man* (1948) and James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), see his "The source of the term 'Global Village', in *McLuhan Studies*, 2/2, under Marg Cameron, Web Master @ 1996 Marshall McLuhan Studies. M. McLuhan developed this phrase in his *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Critical Edition, (Columbus: McGraw Hill Publishing, 1964). Cf. also an earlier interview with Nicolas Tesla with *Colliers Magazine* (1926) when he said: "When wireless is perfectly applied, the whole earth will be converted into a huge brain."
11. In 1944, some 44 nations signed the Bretton Woods Conference to reconstruct the world economy of WW II.
12. Cf. Various definitions of Globalization, e.g., Fr. Henriot, Pope St. John Paul II, among others.
13. Glenn Ward, *Understand Postmodernism*, (Ohio: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997), p. X-XI.
14. Ibid., loc. Sit.
15. Ibid., p. XII.
16. Ibid., p. 256.
17. John 18:38.
18. Khristian Ibarrola, *Facebook to operate fake news filter in time for German elections*, in INQUIRER.net/12:29 PM January 17, 2017.
19. Meghan Bogardus Cortez, *K-12 educators find they must teach students to better evaluate information from the web*, in Putting a Focus on Media Literacy in the Digital Age, Internet.
20. Op. cit., loc. Sit.

# The Digital Humanities from Father Busa to Edward Snowden

**Domenico Fiormonte**

*What do Edward Snowden, the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations, and Father Roberto Busa, an Italian Jesuit, who worked for almost his entire life on Saint Thomas Aquinas, have in common? The simple answer would be: the computer. Things however are a bit more complex than that, and the reason for choosing these two people to explain what the Digital Humanities are, is that in some sense they represent the origins and the present consequences of a certain way of thinking about computers.*

Although it is true that computer science was born from the needs of calculation (i.e. computing), in other cultures and languages the usual term is "informatics", or the science of information. The difference is not trivial, and in fact the encounter between the computer and words, or rather with language, can be considered a cultural watershed. Father Busa himself was one of the protagonists of this meeting which came about in 1949 when he visited New York to ask Thomas J. Watson Sr, the president of IBM, for permission to use computers to study the vocabulary of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Jones, 2016). That endeavour is considered by many to have signalled the birth of computer-based "Natural Language Processing", the inter-disciplinary field behind many of the digital tools that we use in our everyday life: from the technologies of T9 on our smartphone to voice recognition and synthesis, etc.

But these tools, although fundamental, are

not the most striking (or perhaps disturbing) results of this age of transformation. Through the gesture of entering words in a computer, Busa framed the basis of a new concept of hermeneutics that was no longer based solely on purely subjective interpretation, but also on automatic processing of linguistic data, and hence in some sense “objective”. Busa’s undertaking founded the discipline of Humanities Computing (although years later it was renamed Digital Humanities), but above all it laid the groundwork for a profound epistemological and cultural transformation. And at the heart of this revolution was the “written document”, the text, understood as an alphanumeric sequence. In an effort to best explain this revolution, I will concentrate on one aspect, the representation of the document, and return to the hermeneutical aspects in the final part.

### **The epistemological revolution of the digital document**

My own association with Digital Humanities (DH), as for many humanists of my generation, came from philology and textual criticism. My first foray into electronic textuality was in 1990, when it became clear that the confluence of informatics and the humanities would revive an inherent, almost arcane dualism: in the beginning was the data. But I was unprepared to tackle the conflict between information retrieval and interface, or between a textual paradigm based on the idea of information (text=data) and a vision of the textual document as a stratified historical-material reality, visualized not only as information, but also as an object (or series of objects), to be ultimately used and enjoyed. This dualism certainly did not only come about as a result of the encounter between informatics and text, but what we can say is that the process of digitization from this point on would “enhance” certain characteristics of the document at the expense of others.

The problem of the digital document in fact cannot be understood unless one first understands what digitization is and how it works: that is to say, the process of translating what we who undertake the work call “encoding” or more generally “representation”. The pioneers of *informatica*

*umanistica* in Italy (Tito Orlandi, Raul Mordenti, Giuseppe Gigliozzi, etc.) taught the students of my generation two key concepts: 1) the passage from the analogue to the digital implies a process that formalizes the object of research (from the single character to the more complex structures of the historical artefact); 2) each act of encoding, or rather each act of representation of the specific “object” via a formal language involves a selection from a set of possibilities and is therefore an interpretative act (Orlandi, 2010).

The fundamental difference is that the human language and its writing systems were always many and various, whereas formal computer languages are based on a *codex universalis*, an Esperanto derived for the most part from the English language. As George Steiner wrote in *After Babel*, “the meta-linguistic codes and algorithms of electronic communication are founded on a sub-text, on a linguistic ‘pre-history’, which is fundamentally Anglo-American” (Steiner, 1998: xvii). Digital “standards” always reflect a cultural bias, and the act of encoding is never neutral, but tends to assume (and overlap with) universalizing discourses that on the surface are hard to see.

An important standard for character representation with ASCII, the American Standard Code for Information Interchange created in the 1960s. That technology is continued today by Unicode, an industrial standard, which purports to represent the characters of all written languages. Beside the fact that it is directed by the usual mega-corporations, Google, Apple, IBM, Microsoft, etc., Unicode is underpinned by an alphabet-centric logic that penalizes non-Western systems of writing. Given this weakness, it should come as no surprise that it has attracted criticism on several fronts, including the charge of ethnocentrism (Perri, 2009; Pressman, 2014: 151), and also because it ignores the difficulties faced by languages of low commercial value in their efforts to be properly represented (and therefore at risk of extinction). To paraphrase Alexander Galloway, “technical is always [geo]political” (Galloway, 2004: 243).

Even if our lack of awareness as humanists might have deceived us into thinking that the

translation from the analogue to the digital was a neutral and painless process, we would soon have realized that, as with any change of format, digital representation can change and influence both the life of the original object and its digital future. And we would have discovered the “multiple biases” inherent in the digitization process. So in one respect we have entered in a post-Busa phase where interpretation is not something you can have without defining both the object and the source of your knowledge.

Busa never showed much interest in theoretical questions or in the link between hermeneutics and epistemology (and even less between semiotics and politics), or between the interpretation of the object and the nature of its representation. Perhaps this was because the question “What do I want to represent, and how?” would have provoked a series of more disturbing questions: “What is knowledge? Who produces it, how, and for what purpose?” These questions probably would have threatened to paralyze his pragmatic approach. On the other hand, it cannot have been easy to ignore the problem, since many philosophers, starting with Plato when discussing the transition from orality to writing, kept asking questions about the formats and systems of knowledge representation (Stiegler, 2006).

As humanists we then begin to understand that the problems information technology appeared able to resolve, soon created new problems which were not limited to a single discipline, like philology or textual criticism. To ignore the epistemological (and also ethical or political) problems generated by the confluence of the humanities and information science was certainly possible: but at what price? The more pragmatic among us would have been content to use machines for what they could immediately offer: the tremendous possibilities and tools for representing, archiving and automatic analysis of humanistic objects and artefacts. This approach seemed prevalent in the first historical phase of DH, reflected in canonical definitions like “the application of computational methods to humanities research and teaching” or “researching the Humanities through digital perspectives, researching digital technologies from

the perspective of the Humanities”.<sup>1</sup>

But what are the effects of these methods and technologies? The answer to this question coincides with the new phase that DH is actually in at the moment, a phase that forces us to consider the costs of all of the above, the ethical, social, and political implications of the instruments, resources and infrastructure, and the cultural biases inherent in their conception and design.

### **The social and political implications of DH**

Fr Busa’s “hermeneutic” approach has been the main focus of the past 20 years of DH, while the methodological and epistemological concerns have been pushed to one side. The reason for this is fairly simple. Since the overwhelming majority of evidence on which the memory of people is based (particularly in the West) is the written text, the computer, a manipulator of alphanumeric symbols, has been shown to be a powerful agent of their preservation and management. This need to unravel the concept of the “text as data”, as mentioned above, has pushed aside for the moment the question of interface, that is, ways for the text to be used and read.

The materiality of written documents, given their incredible linguistic and cultural diversity, their visual and pragmatic dimensions, etc. (especially holographs and manuscripts) does not marry all that well with the limited possibilities offered by information science – or at least doesn’t fit with what has been produced by those who have guided its development thus far. Therefore, up until the early 2000s, the Digital Humanities focused especially on the design of tools and resources for the analysis and preservation of written documents. The spread of the Web from the mid-1990s, despite the first rumblings on the theme of user interface development (which Busa always considered to be a minor problem), ended by confirming this tendency.

There was in my view a precise moment when this concept of “text as data” reached a point of crisis, by showing its dark side. As humanists we would probably have preferred to continue our work quietly as if nothing had changed, but at a certain point something monumental happened,

an event which has changed our relation with the digital dimension of knowledge, and hence of research. And this moment was the 6th of June 2013, when the *Washington Post* and the *Guardian* began publishing the documents supplied by Edward Snowden about mass surveillance by the NSA. The immensity of this event was immediately clear: a document published by the US National Security Agency and its British twin (GCHQ), said that in one month alone over 181 million records had been collected, including metadata and content (text, audio and video [Gellman and Soltani, 2013]).

The news that in July 2016 half of Silicon Valley, from Amazon to Google, had been co-opted by the Pentagon (Collins, 2016), and the dynamics of the last presidential elections in the USA confirmed, that the Net has become the field on which the geopolitical balances of the planet are played out. And at the centre of this “new world” is the idea of the “universal archive” where all data (past, present, and future) are stored. It is here that both the hermeneutical and epistemological questions fall down. In modern times, knowledge and interpretation depended on history, which we conceived as a linear process, i.e. based on space and time. But the dynamics of digital data seem to escape the logics of space and time, because the digital archive is ubiquitous and eternally present.

In my opinion, the heritage of Busa is reflected by the obsession with control (collection) and the analysis (interpretation) of data by government agencies and high-tech multinationals. Both have committed to the “hermeneutic” vision (although of the bare bones variety), or rather to the analysis of huge amounts of *our* data as the basis of *their* interpretation of the world. Welcome to the fantastic world of Big Data...

The question is no longer what the document is or how it is represented (an epistemological question) or how it is to be interpreted (a hermeneutical question). Even if the better forces of DH have insisted on this point and on the necessity of proceeding in this order (because interpretation of the object is inseparable from the circumstance of its representation), these “humanistic” scruples appear suddenly irrelevant. The actual question is

in fact “who are we really?” Or rather not us, but the creation through our digital footprint of an alter ego that the algorithms of Google or Facebook decree is more “true” than the other (which we mistakenly believe still to exist). But who will be able to decipher or take apart these stories (data + algorithms) which we daily write and re-write? And does it still make sense to investigate the instruments of production and preservation of memories and knowledge when we no longer have any control over them?

Geoffrey Rockwell and I recently tried to analyze a commercial surveillance package, Palantir, from the point of view of DH (Rockwell and Fiormonte, 2017). Palantir scans and combines data from “documents, websites, social media and databases, turning that information into people, places, events, things, displaying those connections on your computer screen, and allowing you to probe and analyze the links between them” (Anyadike, 2016). But these kinds of software can be also seen as story-telling tools, because they allow someone to build stories about us and through us. So there seems to be a “literary” and rhetorical side to surveillance software, which the digital humanist seems particularly well-equipped to analyze. After all, the story of Big Data is also our story. There seems to be an “original sin” present in Big Data, i.e. the information retrieval paradigm that treats stories as data and data as a resource to be mined. And this approach is clearly reflected in Busa’s original idea of computational hermeneutics: digitize your texts, get your data, then build an interpretation upon them.

*A posteriori* we can ask ourselves what happened on that distant morning in 1949 in the heads of Thomas J. Watson Sr. and Father Busa. Was the founder and owner of IBM conscious of what the vision of Father Busa would lead to? And could the Jesuit father have ever expected that his intuition would change not only our means of reading and interpreting history, but also how we construct it? No one can ever know. But history reaffirms once again the great responsibility of science – in this case the responsibility of the “ignorant” humanities. If anyone believes that the humanities do not have a future, it is good to read

again how 70 years ago a meeting between Thomas Aquinas and computers formed the basis of a revolution in digital communication. But from now on, the role and responsibility of the humanist will not only be to preserve and interpret the signs of the past, but to engage critically with, and where necessary unmask, the technological, political and social discourses that are shaping our knowledge, memories, and consciousness. ●

*This article was translated by Desmond Schmidt.*

#### Note

1. Selected responses to the question “How do you define DH?” from *Day of DH 2012*.

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Domenico Fiormonte (PhD University of Edinburgh) is currently a lecturer in the Sociology of Communication and Culture in the Department of Political Sciences at University Roma Tre. In 1996 he created one of the first online resources on textual variation ([www.digitalvariants.org](http://www.digitalvariants.org)). He has edited and co-edited a number of collections of digital humanities texts, and has published books and articles on digital philology, new media writing, text encoding, and cultural criticism of DH. His latest publication is *The Digital Humanist. A critical inquiry* (Punctum 2015) with Teresa Numerico and Francesca Tomasi. His current research interests are moving towards the creation of new tools and methodologies for promoting interdisciplinary dialogue (<http://www.newhumanities.org>).

# Regulations are a bigger threat than fake news

Cathal Sheerin

*Fabricated or inaccurate news stories are not new; they are the inevitable price we pay to be able to enjoy our precious right to free expression. Education, not regulation, is the path forward.*

There's nothing new about fake news, except, perhaps, its name; *lies*, government *propaganda* and *erroneous reporting* have been making unwelcome appearances in newspapers – thereby misleading readers and undermining journalism's essential role in scrutinising the powerful – *since the dawn of print media*. The year 2016 was the one in which fake news was considered to have had such an impact on political events around the globe that U.S. President Barack Obama felt compelled to *speak out publicly* against it, and high ranking politicians in *Germany*, the *USA*, *Italy* and *Spain* called for it (especially in social media form) to be banned or 'regulated.'

Fake news can be damaging (it inflames hatred and arguably contributes to the already *declining public trust in the media*), but suggestions that states should somehow control it pose a far lished on the internet. In order to maintain the integrity of an independent media and protect our precious right to freedom of expression, journalists, free speech advocates and news consumers must address fake news.

Defining fake news can be a contentious business, forcing us to address the changes that are taking place in journalism and to consider the role of political partisanship. Everyone recognizes the popular notion of what fake news is: reports that are *knowingly fabricated*, often *vicious*, *politically-motivated*, promoted on social media and sometimes *created in the Balkans by teenagers for*

cash.

However, if journalistic veracity is the prime motivation of pro-regulation politicians, that opens up a far wider debate. Governments routinely lie and

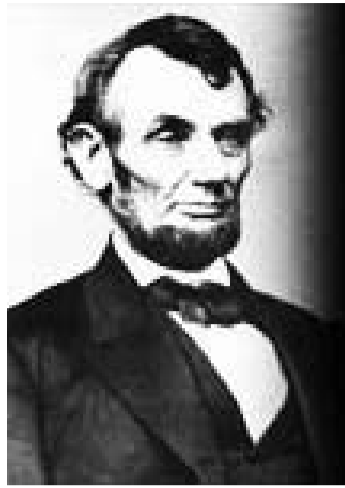
media outlets sometimes reproduce government falsehoods uncritically: is that fake news? Is one-sided journalism fake news? Is [poorly fact-checked, inaccurate reporting](#) fake news? Big stories often change as new facts emerge: is the well-intentioned, hard-working journalist who files copy that later proves to be inaccurate a producer of fake news too? Is the intention to deliberately mislead the essential ingredient of fake news?

If we accept that the defining characteristic of fake news is the deliberate fabrication and sharing of information with the intention of deceiving the public, then fake news is not 'news' by any accepted standard; it is merely false information communicated to others. 'News' - produced by journalists - should adhere to a range of professional standards, including that the facts be independently corroborated and that the story be in the public interest (lying to the public is not in its interest).

### Internet blurring and pressure

However, the internet - as it does with everything - complicates this picture. It does this mainly in two ways.

Firstly, the internet has blurred the boundaries around what is considered journalism. The huge growth of online bloggers, citizen journalists and other non-traditional news deliverers is a wonderful example of how the internet has democratised global communication. Some of these voices provide an essential service (especially when the mainstream or [state media](#) is ignoring an important story), but many of these voices blur report with comment (without warning) and operate without adherence to, or knowledge of,



“Just because you see something on the Internet with a quote, a picture and a date, it doesn't mean it's going to be true.”

- Abraham Lincoln, 2006

the professional journalistic standards that make a story reliable 'news.' A [2010 survey](#) showed that while a majority of journalists depended on social media for research, 49% of them felt that stories published on social media did not meet journalistic standards.

Secondly, the internet, the 24 hour news cycle, the competition for readers and diminishing revenues have all combined to put enormous pressure on traditional journalists to get the story first rather than get it right. This sometimes leads to [stories \(including fake ones\) being plucked from the internet](#), re-written and then published without having been properly fact-checked.

Both creators and consumers of the news are implicated in the rapid spread of lurid, dishonest stories that takes place in times of crisis. [Turbo-charged by social media](#), these stories feed off and exacerbate an already strained atmosphere in which fear, cynicism and hysteria dominate: tribalism takes over, reasoned debate breaks down and standards of proof often fall by the wayside.

A good example of all this in action is the still-evolving drama surrounding the US intelligence agencies' assertion that Russia directly interfered with the 2016 U.S. presidential elections (using [hacking and fake news](#)) in order to determine the result. The *New York Times* noted that this claim was [not yet satisfactorily backed up](#) by the publicly available evidence and Masha Gessen, the US/Russian journalist and [critic of both Trump and Putin](#), has [poured scorn on the official intelligence report](#). However, much of the U.S. media reported the intelligence agencies' opinion uncritically.

Worryingly, [a list](#) of news providers alleged to be acting as Putin's 'propagandists' was also

published. Before Gessen published her article, [Glenn Greenwald](#) – though he agreed that Russia might have meddled in the electoral process – also criticized the weakness of the evidence presented and called for [a greater degree of journalistic scepticism](#) when addressing hacking claims made by the U.S. intelligence community. For demonstrating this scepticism himself, Greenwald was targeted by public figures who accused him of being, among other things, [Putin's stooge](#); the high-profile democratic senator Howard Dean (showing that Donald Trump is not alone in his attempts to [undermine the independent press](#)) even insinuated that [The Intercept](#) (of which Greenwald is a founding editor) [might be in the pay of Russia or Iran](#).

This is the kind of discord, cynicism and distrust of the free press that the deliberate spread of intentionally false information is intended to generate.

### **Responding to lies and fabrications**

So how should journalists and defenders of free expression respond?

Firstly, we must accept that lies and fabricated or inaccurate stories are the inevitable price that we have to pay to be able to enjoy our right to communicate freely. Attempts by governments to determine and regulate what is (or what isn't) fake news should be rejected. In a recent article about social media and fake news, [Article19](#) points out that effective self-regulatory mechanisms already exist for the maintenance and promotion of journalistic high standards; government interference, it says, would be both dangerous and impractical:

“...prohibition of ‘fake’ or ‘false’ news has often served as an instrument to control the media and restrict editorial freedom.... Any legal prohibition of ‘fake’ news would inevitably create a chilling effect upon the media and anyone that contributes to public debate. Facts are by their nature complex and intricate, to the point that it is truly impossible to avoid slight inaccuracies in reporting. Demanding that journalists only publish reports that are absolutely true would simply

be impractical.”

Similarly, the independent press must be defended from [cynical attempts](#) by public officials to undermine it; suggestions that independent journalists are [traitorous, working with or paid by a hostile power](#) or [attempting to incite social discord](#) are often an early step on a road that eventually leads to a crackdown on the media.

We all need to become more sophisticated consumers of news. As the [World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers](#) reports, ‘news literacy’ projects are already underway. The aim of these projects is to teach young consumers of news and associated material on social media how reliable journalism is created and how to critically assess what they read: they are encouraged to look at sourcing and evidence and also to consider what might be missing from a story.

Education is the way forward, not regulation. And if all the current alarmism leads to more skilled, critical thinking about the news that we report and consume (false or otherwise) then fake news will have inadvertently provided a useful service. ●

*Source: [ifex](#) 12 January 2017.*

# On the screen

## Berlin (Germany) 2017

At the 67th Berlin International Film Festival (9-19 February 2017) the Ecumenical Jury made the following awards.

The Prize in the International Competition went to *Teströl és lélekröl* (On Body and Soul) directed by Ildikó Enyedi (Hungary, 2017), which also won the Golden Bear.

Many of us struggle with some kind of disability – whether physical or mental. *On Body and Soul* (still below) is a touching and twisted love story set in a slaughterhouse. The souls of the main characters seem to be connected but they struggle to come close physically.

Ildikó Enyedi creates a tender visual story, activating our senses, while raising questions about our connection to each other. The film shows ways we can overcome our incomplete natures and connect with other physical beings.

A Commendation went to *Una mujer fantástica* (A Fantastic Woman) directed by Sebastián Lelio (Chile, USA, Germany, Spain, 2017). This film is a moving story about a transgender woman in

Chile. Despite social ostracism and personal humiliation, Marina continues to fight for her rights while maintaining her dignity. Refusing to only be identified by her sex, she struggles to have the freedom to live up to her full potential.

The Panorama Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 2500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference, went to *Tahiqiq Fel Djenna* (Investigating Paradise) directed by Merzak Allouache (France, Algeria, 2017). A young female Algerian journalist is investigating various Islamic accounts of paradise.

This project shows the power of theological concepts and the influences they have on daily life, as well as displaying some of the fragmentations and diversities of Islamic religion. Merzak Allouache's film warns against the danger of interpreting paradise into a commodity where the cost is the life of young men and women.

The Panorama Commendation went to *I Am Not Your Negro* directed by Raoul Peck (France, USA, Belgium, Switzerland, 2016). Set in the historical context of the United States civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, and through the words of James Baldwin, this documentary continues to be relevant today, triggering universal issues of justice and human rights.

The Forum Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, endowed with € 2500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany, went to *Maman Colonelle* (Mama Colonel) directed by Dieudo Hamadi (Democratic



Republic of the Congo, France, 2017).

Honorine Munyole heads up a special unit of the Congolese police dedicated to helping women and children who have suffered from physical and sexual abuse. An everyday hero, Maman Colonelle, as she is known, brings her mission to Kisangani, offering strength, courage, and healing.

Filmmaker Dieudo Hamadi gets close to his subject, points to the traumatic aftermath of violence, and then shows the potential, if not for a utopia, at least for a reconstructed community of survivors where hope may emerge.

The Forum Commendation went to *El mar la mar* directed by Joshua Bonnetta and J.P. Sniadecki (USA, 2017). Being lost in the desert transforms into being lost in the cinema. The senses struggle to adjust, becoming attuned and opened to the sights and sounds of the vast, sometimes mystical space.

Joshua Bonnetta and J.P. Sniadecki's film teaches viewers to read the signs of the desert by reading signs of the film. We discover an indifferent place, as stories of migrants crossing the border from Mexico into the U.S. face an unforgiving landscape. A fierce but enriching experience.

The Members of the Ecumenical Jury Berlin in 2017 were: Zsuzsanna Bányai, Hungary; Annette Gjerde Hansen, Norway; Hermann Kocher, Switzerland; Markus Leniger, Germany; Charles Martig, Switzerland (President); and S. Brent Rodriguez-Plate, USA.

## Saarbrücken (Germany) 2017

At the 38th Film Festival Max-Ophuels-Prize Saarbrücken January 23-29, 2017, the Award of the Ecumenical Jury went to the film *Vanatoare* (Prowl) directed by Alexandra Balteanu (Germany, 2016).

The award is jointly endowed with € 2500 from the Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Saarland - Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V. and the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Evangelische Erwachsenenbildung im Saarland e.V., represented by the Evangelical Academy in the Saarland.

Motivation: *Vanatoare* (still below) depicts in realistic images the everyday life of three women in Romania. They sell their bodies to make it better. This does not happen voyeuristically - the camera does not feed on the object - but with a look that opens up a strange world which thus gets plausible. With economical means, long camera shots, a powerful sound design and a concentrated plot, a film has emerged that does not leave the viewers unaffected.

Alexandra Balteanu was born in Romania. After shooting a short documentary in Romania, she started studying film directing in 2010 at the German Film and Television Academy (DFFB) in Berlin. *Vanatoare* is her first feature film. ●

