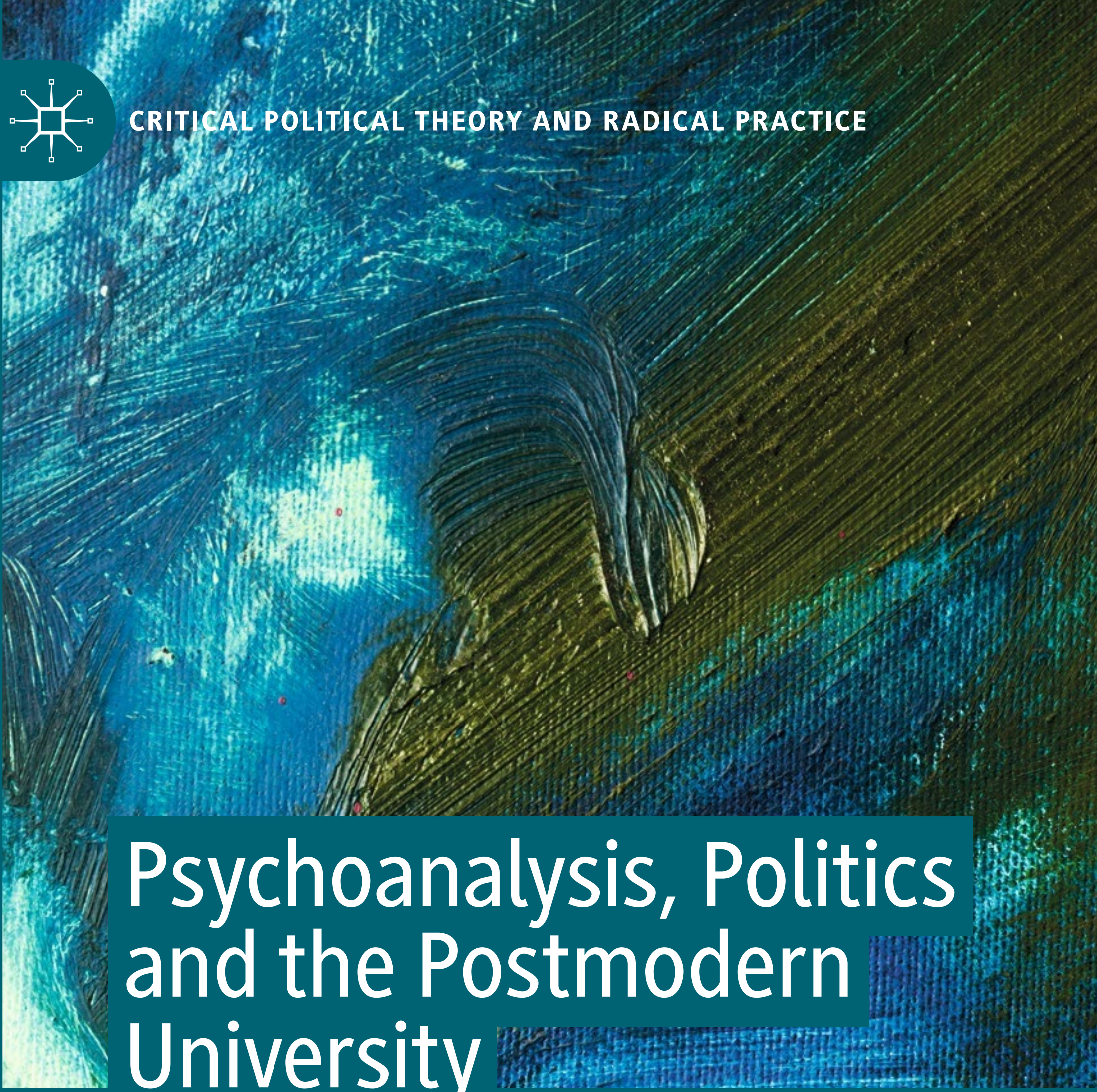

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For Paul, with thanks

PREFACE

When I began writing this book several months ago, I had just finished teaching a lively graduate seminar on Freud. It dawned on me that my recent survey of the history and politics of psychoanalysis still owed much to the efforts of my friend and former teacher, Paul Roazen (1936–2005). Though we lost touch for two years before his death, the news of his passing stunned me. When Paul and I became friends twenty years previously, he was considered a gadfly in psychoanalytic circles. Given how prolific he was, right up to the end, I fully expected him to continue disconcerting the "authorities" and making mischief well into his seventies. Unfortunately, he died at age sixty-nine, and news of his death only reached me as I was preparing to assume the chair of my department, so instead of giving him the tribute he deserved, I wrote a brief memoir which was published in *American Imago* (Burston 2006). In the years that followed, I was simply too busy with administrative and other commitments to celebrate his contributions to scholarship in a more robust and comprehensive fashion.[1]

As a result, perhaps, Paul's pioneering work has suffered from considerable neglect lately, and it dawned on me that a series of essays on Freud's impact on America and its universities—topics very dear to Paul's heart—might furnish a welcome opportunity to pay my respects, and remind future scholars of the pivotal role Paul played in creating (or at least deepening and enlivening) their own fields on inquiry. Though a political scientist by training, Paul was a pioneer in the history of psychoanalysis, a field that still has considerable relevance for clinicians, on the one hand, and for social scientists, on the other. Why? Because psychoanalysis is not only a method of treatment for disturbed individuals. Like Marxism, it was a mass movement and a philosophy of history, which spawned all kinds of fruitful developments (and quite a few blind alleys) in the social sciences during the twentieth century.

Paul began his career as a political scientist, so in that spirit, I devote Chap. 1 to enumerating and describing the dominant *types* of authority (religious, secular, and scientific), and the ways in which they clash and converge in the history of the West. These reflections on the nature and function of authority set the stage for much of what follows in subsequent chapters on Freud and Nietzsche. I then address what Erich Fromm described as different *modes* of authority, or the ways in which authority is wielded and expressed within each of these three domains. Rational authority, irrational authority, and anonymous authority do not denote spheres of competence or power, but modes of relatedness between those who possess authority and those subject to them.

It may seem like an odd place to begin, but this preliminary discussion on the problem of authority enables us to explore the role that different types and modes of authority play in the history of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic training, and the ways in which religious, scientific, and secular authority are implicated in structure of university life, and in the current crisis in the Liberal Arts, in the penultimate chapter on Jordan Peterson and the postmodern university.

Chapter 2 focuses on the reception of Freud and his followers in the United States. Among other things, I note the prevalence of irrational authority in psychoanalytic training institutes during the Golden Age of psychoanalysis in America and address the deep ambiguities in Freud's stance toward science and the humanities, and the goals and techniques of psychoanalysis. These unresolved issues—holdovers from the early twentieth century—set the stage for the bitter divorce between American psychiatry and psychoanalysis, the hostile overreach of many protagonists in the "Freud Wars," and the gradual replacement of an "American" reading of Freud with a "French Freud" during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Taking my cue from one of Paul Roazen's reflections, in Chap. 3 I explore Jacques Lacan's curious relationship to Catholicism and Judaism, and to Freud and his followers; a project that Paul began, but never finished, due to his untimely death. My rationale for doing this is that, in the wake of the Freud wars, Freud's reputation has declined precipitously, although a strange fascination with Lacan keeps scholarly interest in psychoanalysis alive in the humanities and social sciences, where Lacan's influence is ubiquitous. Unfortunately, however, reading Freud through a Lacanian prism, as many scholars do nowadays, can be deeply misleading. Why? Because on close inspection, his “return to Freud” was really nothing of the kind, and his repeated avowals of fidelity to Freud really mask a revisionist agenda. To be fair, of course, when it comes to their clinical applications, Lacan’s ideas must stand or fall on their own merits, irrespective of whether they tally with Freud’s ideas or not. Either way, the fact remains that, like Freud, Lacan’s style of leadership was authoritarian, though, unlike Freud, his polemics with the Freudian faithful were subtly infused with anti-Semitism, a topic most scholars have diplomatically tiptoed around, till now.

Chapter 4 addresses the relationship between the poetic and scientific modes of knowledge, the relationship between language and unconscious mental processes, and some reflections on the roots of religious belief in a way that circumvents the narrow and parochial perspectives embedded in Lacan’s Catholic triumphalism. Moreover, and more importantly, perhaps, it includes a summary and critique of Freud’s theory of the ego, and a corrective to some of the distortions of Freud’s concept of the unconscious entailed in the Lacanian reading of Freud.

Chapter 5 is a slightly different story. In the days preceding and immediately following the 2016 presidential election, email list-serves that link psychotherapists of various persuasions online were abuzz with cries of perplexity and outrage. I subscribe to three such list-serves, which supply windows into the hearts and minds of psychoanalytic, Jungian, and humanistic psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychotherapists, many of whom were struggling to come to grips with emerging social realities. What impressed me most about their soulful lamentations was that despite their disparate clinical orientations, the questions and comments posted by the clinicians were strikingly similar. One recurrent theme, of course, was: “What role does the clinician play in times of social and political crisis? How can we facilitate a psychological understanding of the patient’s (conscious and unconscious) response to events?” A similar, but often more urgent and personal, question was: “How do I address my patients’ (pre- or post-) election anxiety and/or depression, when I myself am terrified about the outcome?” Another was: “How do we address the anxiety of patients who belong to (racial, religious or sexual) minorities that feel menaced by Trump’s rhetoric?” And of course, another common concern (across orientations) was: “How can we bring our therapeutic orientation’s unique perspective to bear on the more widespread social malaise that spawned the Trump Presidency?" And "What, if anything, are our responsibilities as citizens and therapists and how do we disentangle and/or reconcile the two?"

On reflection, of course, the overarching similarities between the comments and questions that appeared on these list-serves, though striking, are not that surprising. After all, these are *precisely* the kinds of questions we would expect psychotherapists to ask themselves at times like these. Equally expectable were the spirited online squabbles about which factor(s) "really" thrust Trump into power. Misogyny? White rage? The Democrats abandonment of the working class? All three? (And so on.)

One thing that surprised me about this angry and despairing online chatter was the lack of serious reflection among clinicians about authoritarianism, or "the authoritarian personality." Evidently, clinicians prefer to leave this matter to social psychologists and political scientists to discuss. As I pondered this phenomenon at greater length, it occurred to me that the history of the "authoritarian personality" and its reception in the United States are a little known chapter in the history of psychoanalysis, one which has considerable relevance to contemporary political realities, and the unraveling of democracies around the world. That being so, I have attempted to describe the development of the concept of "the authoritarian personality" from its inception to the present, to address the various lacunae and omissions that crop up in the literature to date, and to underscore the unfortunate divergence and parting of ways between the clinical and social psychological research traditions that grapple with this issue, which is partly attributable to lingering controversies over the (non)existence of Left-wing authoritarianism.

Chapter 6 takes up a different but closely related subject. Up until very recently, people believed that the hallmark of a good education—be it a religious, scientific, or humanistic education—was a truth-loving disposition. The idea that a truth-loving disposition is a product—or alternatively, perhaps, a prerequisite—to a deep and sound education begins with Socrates and Plato, and is closely linked to a belief in the emancipatory power of truth, or the idea that "The truth shall make you free." During the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., stressed another closely related theme that is integral to the Western tradition, namely, that a truth-loving disposition and a loving disposition are closely aligned, and that hatred flourishes among lies and is greatly diminished by the power of truth. Is this a testable hypothesis?

Probably not. But consider the following. On June 10, 2019, Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo, and Meg Kelly from *The Washington Post* reported that President Trump made 10,796 false or misleading statements during his first 869 days of his presidency.[2] Do the math, and you discover that this astonishing output amounts to more than a dozen blatantly false or misleading statements a day. Even if we allow that some of these falsehoods were inadvertent, the product of wishful thinking and an overactive imagination, the fact remains that this torrent of untruths helped unleash a wave of hatred and violence in the United States unlike anything we've seen since the 1930s. Considering the damage wrought to our democracy in the process, it is incumbent on us to consider carefully whether we still value a truth-loving disposition, and if so, how do we justify it philosophically.

That being so, it is instructive to note that Friedrich Nietzsche, who has admirers on the Left and the Right, had a very ambivalent relationship to truth. Don't get me wrong! Like many of Nietzsche's fans, I am enthralled by the freshness and ferocity of his prose and was duly impressed by his defiance of conventional pieties and willingness to challenge authority of all kinds. For a time, I even considered Nietzsche to be a kind of tormented Teutonic truth teller. But as Paul Roazen often pointed out to me, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche said that slavery ("in some form") is indispensable for culture to flourish. And as I read him more carefully, it dawned on me that Nietzsche's relationship to "truth" is actually riddled with ambiguity. This raises problems, because Paul Ricoeur famously described Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud as practitioners of "the hermeneutics of suspicion." This was a convenient and rather popular way of describing their intellectual kinship for a time. But on closer examination, the habit of lumping them together in this category is potentially quite misleading and prompts us to ignore or overlook the deep and fundamental *dissimilarities* in their epistemological commitments and beliefs about the world. The triumph of Trump and the resurgence of Left-wing irrationalism in our "post-truth" and "post-factual" age obligate us to reconsider Nietzsche's "subversive" attitude toward truth and self-deception and to slavery anew.

Chapter 7 is a brief overview of the current crisis in the Liberal Arts, followed by a critique of Jordan Peterson. Peterson is Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto, a wayward Nietzsche fan, and a fierce critic of contemporary trends in university education, especially in the social sciences and the humanities. He rose to prominence by inserting himself vigorously into debates about the postmodern university, but his polemics focus relentlessly on merely *one* dimension of the current crisis of the Liberal Arts—the campus culture wars. Nevertheless, Camille Paglia describes him as the most important Canadian intellectual since Marshall McLuhan. Unlike Paglia, I grew up in Canada, and such comparisons make me cringe. When I came of age, Canada had already produced more than its share of public intellectuals, considering the modest size of its population. Northrop Frye, Marshall McLuhan, and Charles Taylor were probably the best-known figures, though Karl Stern, Karl Polanyi, Michael Polanyi, and Michael Ignatieff also enjoyed a measure of fame and were widely read and respected in their respective fields (and beyond). But these public intellectuals thrived in an age of print media—an age that, as McLuhan predicted, would soon be superseded. Though he sells his share of books, no doubt, Peterson really thrives in a digital ecology/economy. With millions of online subscribers, and more than 100 million YouTube viewings from his vast (mostly young, mostly male) online following, Peterson's Web-savvy approach to marketing his message have already enabled him to influence more people than Frye, McLuhan, and all the rest of them combined.

So, with that said, is Peterson really a "public intellectual," as Paglia (and others) claim? Or is he really just a Right-wing celebrity and culture warrior? Judged by old-fashioned standards of intellectual probity, Peterson would only be described as a "public intellectual" if his scholarship was up to scratch. And in this respect, I fear, Peterson does not compare to Canada's best and brightest. Nevertheless, Peterson's public appearances, YouTube lectures, and rants (on and offline) have had a massive impact on the public's view of contemporary university life, and on universities themselves, especially in the Liberal Arts. Peterson is a forceful advocate for de-funding Liberal Arts programs because of their Left-wing biases and is positioning himself as a radical reformer who would purge our universities of noxious political influences (e.g., "cultural Marxism," "political correctness."), replacing them, presumably, with his own traditionalist platitudes—and perhaps, indeed, his own online university. (God help us if he succeeds!)

Chapter 8 was inspired by ongoing debates in the United States, Canada, and Britain on psychiatry and "anti-psychiatry." My interest in this subject dates back to the 1970s, when I attended talks by R.D. Laing and David Cooper in Toronto, and to the 1980s, when I was an activist in the mental health field there. Having studied the history of psychiatry and anti-psychiatry for several decades since, I've grown tired of the fuzzy thinking and partisan polemics that confound the issues on both sides. When it came into common usage in the late 1960s, the term "anti-psychiatry" referred to a movement of people committed to the complete abolition of the psychiatric profession and, as often as not, to the abolition of the nuclear family and capitalism as well, a usage which, ironically enough, actually *excluded* many of the movement's leading theorists, including R.D. Laing, Thomas Szasz, and Michel Foucault. Moreover, though they all saw the psychiatric profession as an instrument of social control, these three men had extremely different political attitudes and orientations. With rare exceptions (e.g., Farber 2012), people who embrace the "anti-psychiatry" label nowadays—or its derivative offshoots, such as "Mad Liberation" or "Mad Pride"—are seldom aware of the term's history and implications. Meanwhile, psychiatry has turned "anti-psychiatry" into a term of dismissal or abuse, one that its practitioners and surrogates hurl indiscriminately at many of psychiatry's most cogent and incisive critics, whose real objective is to reform and improve the profession, not to abolish it. Will psychiatry reform itself any time soon? Not bloody likely. But partisan polemics that generate contentious exchanges based on partial or erroneous understandings won't advance the debate in a productive fashion, either. Meanwhile, it is high time psychiatry started heeding its well-intentioned critics and stopped hiding from its shameful record of human rights abuses and collusion with Big Pharma.

Pittsburgh, PA, USA Daniel Burston
November 1, 2019

Notes

1. For a much fuller account of my relationship with Paul Roazen, see Burston, D. 2006, "In Memoriam: Paul Roazen," *American Imago*, 63, 1, pp. 109–118.
2. Glen Kessler, Salvador Rizzo, and Meg Kelly paint a damning picture of the President's mind-boggling lack of truthfulness, which is completely unprecedented in the history of the American presidency. While it may not trouble his base, it is worrisome and disgraceful to many, if not most Americans, and creates endless problems for America's allies abroad. See Kessler, G., Rizzo, S. & Kelly. M. 2019. "President Trump Has Made More than 10,000 False or Misleading Claims," *The Washington Post*, April 9.

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- Burston D. 2017.“It can’t happen here”: Trump, authoritarianism and American politics. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*. 2017; e1399. https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1399
- Burston D. 2017 Pharisees, Freudians and the fetishism of the text: Catholic triumphalism in Jacques Lacan. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*. 2017; e1400. https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1400
- Burston D. It’s hip to be square! The myths of Jordan Peterson. *P Psychotherapy and Politics International*. 2018; e1475. https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1475
- Burston D. Psychiatry, anti-psychiatry, and anti-anti-psychiatry: Rhetoric and reality. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*. 2018; 16:e1439. https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1439

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- Burston, D. Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry: Myth, Rhetoric and Reality, *Eidos: A Journal for Philosophy and Culture*. Vol. 2, 2 (4), 2018.
- Burston, D. Authority, Tradition and the Postmodern University. *Eidos: A Journal for the Philosophy of Culture,* Vol. 2, 3(5), 2018.
- Burston, D., "Freud, Stern and McGilchrist: Developmental and Cultural Implications of Their Work". *Eidos: A Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, Vol. 3, 2 (8), 2019.

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Praise for *Psychoanalysis, Politics, and the Postmodern University*

"Building on the rich history of psychoanalysis, Burston invites his readers to explore the meaning of a truth-loving disposition and its relevance for contemporary debates in the social sciences and humanities. This important book shines a critical lens on currently fashionable critiques of academia and demonstrates the relevance and depth of humanistic thinking for the pressing psychological and political issues we face today."

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"Daniel Burston is one of those rare intellectually gifted polymaths whose scholarly contributions to psychoanalysis, political critical theory, and the history of the social sciences remain unparalleled. In this recent book he perspicaciously critiques the politics of psychoanalysis, authoritarianism, the pre-linguistic unconscious, the anti-psychiatry and pharmacology movements, the ideology of group identification, post-enlightenment sensibility, and the crisis of postmodernism in the humanities. Before we slip into fascism and irrevocable ecological destruction, his timely call for critical self-reflection and conscientious social activism is incumbent upon us all."

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—Andrew Samuels, *Former Professor of Analytical Psychology, University of Essex, UK*

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CHAPTER 1

Critical Theory and the Problem of Authority

TYPES OF AUTHORITY AND THE LIMITS OF TRUST

Over the course of human history, human societies have evolved several different types of authority. Religious (or spiritual) authority, secular (or governmental) authority, and scientific authority are the three main types, because they claim our allegiance and shape our daily lives more than any others do. Of these three, scientific authority is the most recent, of course. Secular and spiritual authority were present at the dawn of human society in the form of tribal councils and chiefs, on the one hand, and shamans, on the other. Scientists arrived on the scene much later. Granted, we see faint glimmerings of scientific authority among priests who studied the heavens, the seasons, mathematics, and architecture in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, and Mesoamerica. But their scientific knowledge, such as it was, was deeply co-mingled with religious lore, and not really independent or free standing. Scientific authority was on somewhat steadier ground in the Greek, Roman, and Arab civilizations, but still of little consequence, being mostly confined to their elites. Scientific authority only comes into its own as a major social force in the modern era, with Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Galileo (1564–1642), and René Descartes (1596–1650) leading the charge.

While their domains of expertise differ widely, we generally like to suppose that religious, secular, and scientific authority are all exercised in the public interest. That being so, in optimal circumstances, one might expect

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them to co-exist harmoniously. However, religious, secular, and scientific authority clash frequently, especially in times of rapid social and political change. But much as they clash on a variety of fronts, religious and scientific authority have one crucial thing in common. As Freud's friend, the Reverend Oskar Pfister (1873–1956) observed, religion and science converge impressively in their conviction that "the truth shall make you free" (Pfister 1928). Indeed, historically speaking, religious and scientific authority are both predicated (to a large extent) on their ability to discern and disseminate the truth. Contrast this state of affairs with the role of secular authority, which is wielded by (and embodied in) all branches of government, law enforcement, the judiciary, and the military. Rather than discerning and disseminating the truth, the primary function of secular authority is to enable the population to thrive, to maintain civic order, and to defend society against (internal or external) threats and enemies—preferably with the consent of the governed, of course.

However, much as science and religion share a belief in the emancipatory power of truth, they clash often because their concepts of truth differ greatly, and because they have developed different criteria and methods for ascertaining it. Religious and secular authority also clash frequently, sometimes with unexpected results. Consider Pope John Paul II's successful campaign to end communist rule in Poland or the Reverend Martin Luther King's campaign to end segregation and racial inequality in the United States. And if, as sometimes happens, secular authorities declare a "war on science," as the Bush administration and now the Trump administration have done in the United States, erstwhile adversaries may reappear as unexpected allies. Witness the papal encyclical *Laudato si'* (May, 2015), which affirmed the reality of climate change, despite the Trump administration's bizarre and hollow disclaimers.

Even when they clash, however, these three types of authority always have one thing in common. They invariably entail differences in status and power that grant a person of higher status the right to evaluate, address, and if need be, punish transgressive behavior. As a result of this fact, perhaps, theories of authority are usually rooted in a mood of skepticism, suspicion, or outright mistrust. So, for example, some theories of authority stress the necessity of religious and secular authorities to constrain, punish, and perhaps pardon our sinful natures, or our allegedly instinctive tendencies to selfishness, lust, and violence (e.g., Plato, Augustine, Hobbes, Freud). These theories are rooted in a deep mistrust of human nature. By contrast, theories that stress the arbitrary, irrational, repressive, and powerseeking aspects of authority (e.g., among utopian, libertarian, and anarchist thinkers) are rooted in mistrust of authority itself. Enlightenment critiques of religious authority were rooted in mistrust of tradition and "revealed truth." Postmodern critiques of scientific authority—like Nietzsche's—are rooted in mistrust of scientific "objectivity," and so on.

Nevertheless, we are apt to forget that until very recently, it was quite common for people to trust at least one type of authority while mistrusting others. (I refer to people's trust in institutions, not the individuals who compose them.) Even during the first half of the twentieth century, the type of authority you trusted—or trusted most, at any rate—was often deeply aligned with your sense of personal identity. You might consider yourself to be a man of God or a man of science. Or you might be a civil servant, a lawyer, a soldier, or a law enforcement officer. Sometimes, if you were extremely fortunate, you might combine these disparate identities to varying degrees, for example, by being a "man of science" *and* a "man of faith." And one benefit conferred by these identity coordinates, and the institutions that spawned them, was that they provided people with shared templates for discerning meaning in their personal lives, and participating in communities with a shared frame of reference and a larger sense of purpose.

While authority was typically depicted as a "masculine" attribute in the West, the twentieth century produced a historic shift when it opened up most of these vocations—and the authority that comes with them—to women. But on reflection, opportunities for women only arose as trust in these institutions began to wane. Trust in organized religion has been declining steadily since the eighteenth century, and female ordination is only a twentieth century phenomenon, and still not accepted in some religions and denominations. Trust in secular authority—government, the judiciary, and the police—has never been particularly robust in most parts of the world, and has been eroding steadily since the "Reagan revolution" in the United States, where we have yet to elect a female President, and where the number of anti-government organizations (including armed militias!) sky-rocketed in the Obama years. Meanwhile, trust in scientific authority has been crumbling in many quarters due to the abject failure of public education, the sleazy corporate takeover of science and medicine, and last but not least, the advent of postmodernism.

So, what happens when people lose all trust in authority? For that seems to be our present, postmodern predicament. One consequence of our culture's growing distrust of authority is that shared ways of making meaning of personal experience become more tenuous and polarized. The