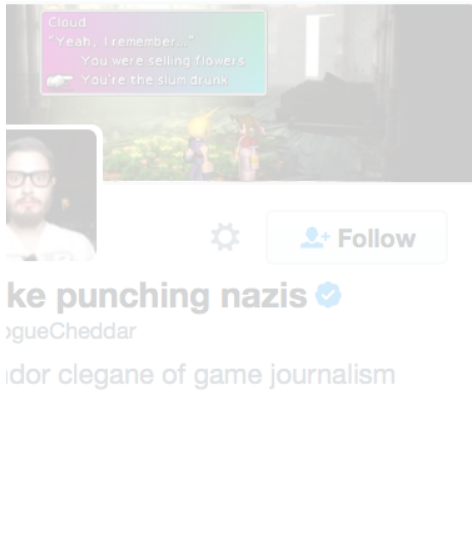


#PunchingNazis

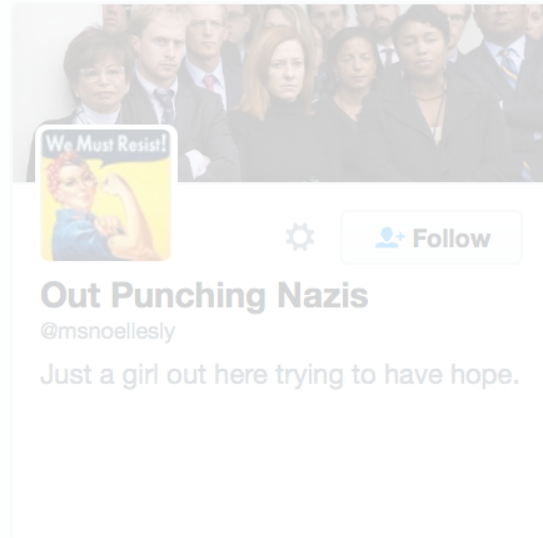
Supposed fascism
in an internet world.

By Rosanne Jonkhout (May 2017)



Cloud
"Yeah, I remember..."
You were selling flowers.
You're the slum drunk.

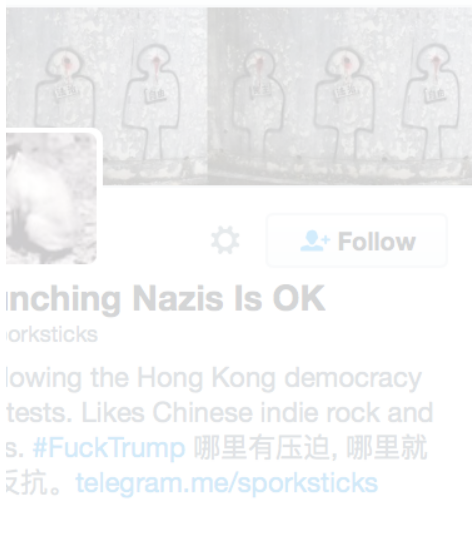
ke punching nazis ✓
@oguecheddar
idior clegane of game journalism



Out Punching Nazis
@msnoellesly
Just a girl out here trying to have hope.



CarryOnPunchingNazis
@carolwhop
Ready to punch Nazis, Islamophobes, homophobes, transphobes, racists. Fuck hate. Hate fucks.



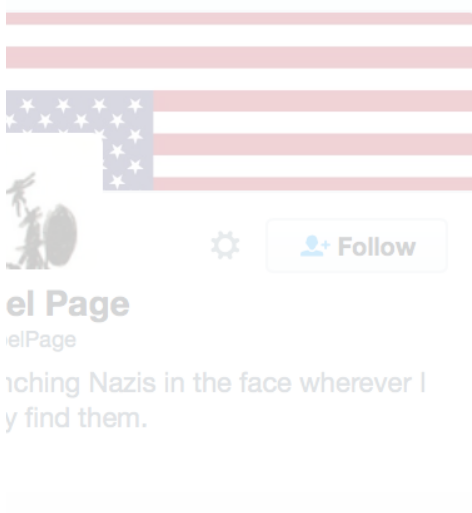
Punching Nazis Is OK
@orksticks
Following the Hong Kong democracy tests. Likes Chinese indie rock and s. #FuckTrump 哪里有压迫, 哪里就反抗. [telegram.me/sporksticks](https://t.me/sporksticks)



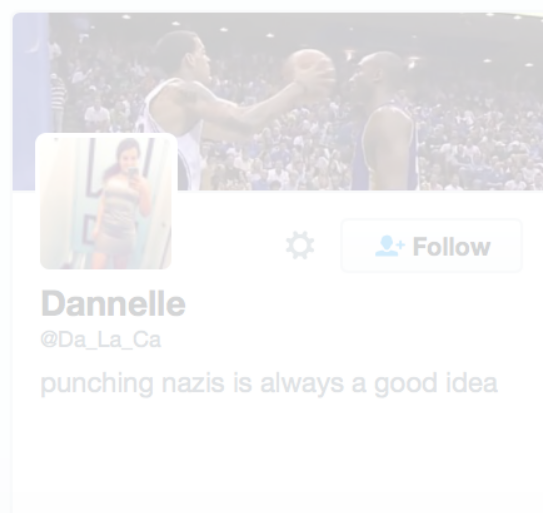
Punching Nazis 🇺🇸
@mythosopher
Indignant/resentful. Existentially angsty, anxious, & depressed. lawyer broke/underemployed.




el Page
@elPage
Punching Nazis in the face wherever I y find them.



Dannelle
@Da_La_Ca
Punching nazis is always a good idea



Still Not Kyle
@kylejhartwick
Editor at @lmblog1 and @lakerspuls I'm a member of many different Twitters. Sorry if I tweet about other things. I support punching Nazis.



Punching Nazis
@mythosopher
Indignant/resentful. Existentially angsty, anxious, & depressed. lawyer broke/underemployed.

Introduction

We are all witnessing the steady increase of populism in western democracies; political figures taking to social media to promote xenophobia and spreading fake news seem to be order of the day.¹ Many claim we have entered a post-truth era, where facts are subordinate to the fabrication of news but targeting personal fears and wants instead.² This spreading of fake facts and violent statement consequently normalises xenophobic behaviour, and the number of hate crimes is increasing with each passing day.³ The hashtag #PunchingNazis that was trending on Twitter this February seems to imply an account of fascism. Coming across such an extraordinary loaded hashtag on Twitter peaked my interest. The main question this paper will aim to answer is to what extent Twitter, including its countermovement #PunchingNazis, has agency in the radicalization of fascist ideologies, and how we can anticipate in the future. Can we even talk of fascism in contemporary society or is this a case of ‘crying wolf’? Is the political agency of technology the dark matter of government, and how might we take measures? This essay will function as a complete contextualisation of supposed fascism on Twitter. The reason this essay will discuss fascism even though the hashtag #PunchingNazis implies Nazism, is because Nazism refers to a certain time and place. The word ‘nazi’ in the hashtag is in this case used as a profanity in attempt to offend but might be interpreted to indicate a latent fascist movement.

To tackle such a big subject, I will use a case study of the hashtag #PunchingNazis. To avoid both generalisation and abstraction I will keep referring in specific to Richard Spencer because of his tight association to the hashtag. When talking about surrounding political situations I will limit myself and my sources to the USA.

The method of this paper will be a combination of discourse analysis and pragmatist philosophy with the methodology of continental philosophy. Given the subject of Twitter, social media, post-truth and popular media culture, I will use new media sources which are unconventional for academia. It seems important here to contrast Twitter as a social media platform created by a network of humans, and Twitter as autonomous non-human entity. When I talk of Twitter, I mean the technology of Twitter detached from humans. When referring to the humans behind Twitter (from programmer to CEO), I will use the term ‘spokespersons’ as borrowed from Bruno Latour.⁴ Another important distinction to be made is between ‘politics’ and ‘political’. I will use ‘politics’ to refer to the conventional meaning of the term: the activities associated with the government and the state. With ‘political’ I refer to the political quality of a natural or social phenomenon. For example, the political charge of #PunchingNazis. In order to answer this paper’s central question, it is crucial to provide a definition of fascism and ask if the expanding extreme right today is to be categorised as such. In the next chapter I will then introduce Twitter into the conversation by discussing the hashtag and its implications. In the third chapter I will discuss the place of a government in this. I will hypothesise that the existence of #PunchingNazis indeed indicates a problem with Twitter and that there is need for a government to deal with this issue.

¹ Speed, Ewen & Mannion, Russel. “The rise of post-truth populism in pluralist liberal democracies: challenges for health policy”. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* 6:5 (Feb 2017): 249–251. p.250

² Speed, Ewen & Mannion, Russel. “The rise of post-truth populism in pluralist liberal democracies: challenges for health policy”. p.249

³ Bruch, Audra D.S.. “Spread of Hate Crimes Has Lawmakers Seeking Harsher Penalties”. *The New York Times* (Apr 2017), nytimes.com (accessed June 15, 2017).

⁴ Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. p.28-9

Fascism

Fascism is an umbrella term which includes nazism, but can take many other forms as well. One runs into some murky waters trying to decipher the *one* exact definition of 'fascism'. Almost everyone seems to have an archetypal idea, most easily related to the Second World War, but concrete demarcations of the term remain elusive, vague and depended on the definition one uses.

Fascism has been described from different viewpoints; it's been associated with nazism, conservatism, totalitarianism, nationalism, et al. All these social constructions share ideas with fascism and differ on varying aspects. The distinctions that set apart fascism from other social constructions are ones that even fascists within the movement itself have disagreed, and continue to disagree about.⁵ Some attribute capitalism at the centre of fascism, some claim it is anti-modernism, ultranationalism, or totalitarianism, the list goes on. In *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction* Kevin Passmore attempts to work his way through all of these aspects and concludes that these demarcations are all as correct in describing fascism as they are at the same time inadequate.⁶ The confusion may be caused due to the fact that fascism is fundamentally an ideology of dualisms:

'[...] how can we make sense of an ideology that appeals to skinheads and intellectuals; denounces the bourgeoisie while forming alliances with conservatives; adopts a macho style yet attracts many women; calls for a return to tradition and is fascinated by technology; idealizes the people and is contemptuous of mass society; and preaches violence in the name of order? Fascism, as Ortega y Gasset says, is always 'A and not A''
– Kevin Passmore⁷

No doubt also because of this illusiveness Passmore claims fascism has become '*an all-purpose term of abuse*'.⁸ To attempt to describe an all-encompassing definition of what fascism is and how we might recognise it, Passmore boiled down all different definitions into one. I will use Passmore's definition of fascism for its more detailed, yet broader understanding. It is comprised under two key terms:

- Ultranationalism.
Placing the nation defined in exclusive biologically, culturally and/or historically terms above all else. Create a mobilized national community. The nation is placed about all else: religion, university, civil service, family, property, and so/or (parts of) the self are placed second or sacrificed completely. Anti-socialist, -capitalist (although even anti-capitalist fascists still accommodate capitalism), -feminist etc., because it stands in the way of prioritizing the nation. Non-conservative ideologies are (partially) permitted and/or defended as long as they are nationally, politically and/or racially accepted, and take place within the nation-oriented fascist party and/or fascist corporations.
- *Extreme* right
Fascists feel neglected by both right and left and try to bring to power a new elite of people

⁵ Passmore, Kevin. *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. p.30

⁶ Passmore, Kevin. *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*. p.14

⁷ Passmore, Kevin. *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*. p.11

⁸ Passmore, Kevin. *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*. p.11

(and can therefore never be democratic) and a mass militarized party, with at the head a man that embodies the ideal of the nation and that acts on behalf of the people.⁹

Additionally, in *Fascism as Action through Time* (2017) now-retired academic researcher Jean Rosenfeld includes Robert Paxton's famed five stages of fascism. Paxton analysed these five chronological stages based on the similarities of how past regimes emerged:

1. The initial creation of fascist movements;
2. their rooting as parties in a political system;
3. the acquisition of power;
4. the exercise of power;
5. radicalization or entropy.¹⁰

Passmore and Paxton supply us with enough context to answer the question of whether we can speak of fascism today, and the similarities are chilling. Richard Spencer, president of the white nationalist think-tank *National Policy Institute* and *Washington Summit Publishers* openly condemns Jewish people, is often quoting Nazi propaganda and even, on multiple occasions refused to denounce Adolf Hitler.^{11, 12} Even though he claims not to identify with neo-nazism or fascism he is a conservative nationalist who believes in the superiority of the 'white race'; even asking for a '*peaceful ethnic cleansing*'.¹³ Spencer identifies as 'alt-right', 'alt' being short for 'alternative', a phrase he coined himself.¹⁴ That Spencer and his extreme alt-right feel the need to distinct themselves implies that they feel unrepresented by the left and right and means they now adhere to both of Passmore's warning signs; the fact that they exist in the first place is Paxton's stage one. Once Donald Trump was elected president we moved to stage two; Trump's campaign motto 'America first' is about as nationalist as two words could ever become, and he steadily keeps employing more extreme/alt right people into the administration, such as the controversial Steve Bannon. Rosenfeld recognizes that with the Trump presidency we got another key ingredient of Passmore's recipe for fascism. Although there were always small groups of self-identifying neo-nazis and radical right throughout America it seems '*[t]he larger case of fascism breaking into mainstream politics also became likelier over time. What was lacking until the election of 2016 was a charismatic national leader of a major political party who could win the presidency*'.¹⁵

There are dozens academic authors I could cite here that attest there are certainly strong similarities with the past that suggest fascism is present. I will instead opt for the two papers that were most influential for this paper; science writer Michael Gross too, talks about a 'clear and

⁹ Passmore, Kevin. *Fascism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. p.31

¹⁰ Rosenfeld, Jean E. "Fascism as Action through Time (Or How It Can Happen Here)". *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29:3 (Apr 2017): 394-410. p.395

¹¹ Goldstein, Joseph. "Alt-Right Gathering Exults in Trump Election With Nazi-Era Salute". *The New York Times* (Nov 2016), nytimes.com (accessed March 20, 2017).

¹² Kulinski, Kyle. "WATCH: Richard Spencer Won't Denounce Hitler & The KKK". *The Kyle Kulinski Show* (Jan 2017), youtube.com (accessed 10 June 2017).

¹³ Lombroso, Daniel & Appelbaum, Yoni. "'Hail Trump!': White Nationalists Salute the President-Elect". *The Atlantic* (Nov 2016), theatlantic.com (accessed June 16, 2017).

¹⁴ Haag, Matthew. "Trump's Far-Right Supporters Turn on Him Over Syria Strike". *The New York Times* (Apr 2017), nytimes.com (accessed February 27, 2017).

¹⁵ Rosenfeld, Jean E. "Fascism as Action through Time (Or How It Can Happen Here)". *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29:3 (Apr 2017): 394-410. p.402

present danger'.¹⁶ As Social Policy professors Ewen Speed and Russell Mannion write: *'There are clear parallels with the events in Europe in the 1930s, with populist claims of putting the people first, while promoting division and turning people against one another'*.¹⁷

Many renowned media giants do not shy away from the comparison either, they are comfortable stamping Spencer and/or the alt-right movement with the label 'nazi' or 'fascist'. But whether we will reach Paxton's stage three, only time will tell.¹⁸ Rosenfeld too is aware of this: *'There are numerous media sources that indicate that the current administration is proceeding in a fascist direction [but if] fascism takes root in the United States, it will also take its own form.'*¹⁹ We can only really ever speak of fascism unless all of Paxton's five stages have been completed. The problem with this is that this means one can only speak of fascism in hindsight: in which case it will be too late to sound the alarm. Maybe we should open up the definition of 'fascism', or maybe find another word for it being in the process. We conclude with the knowledge that, even though we are heading in that direction, we can't speak of full-fledged fascism (yet). For this reason, I will hereafter refrain from referring to the current situation as 'fascism' but instead use the term 'radical right' or 'radicalisation'.

In order to legitimize their ideology, radical right will often plea 'freedom of speech'. Why is radical right a problem and not just a mere 'difference of opinion'? This line should be drawn at oppression, because when people are being 'othered' and oppressed their lives start to be in danger. Hate crimes follow when Mexicans are being called rapists, transgenders called child molesters, refugees being called illegals, Muslims being called terrorists, etc., etc. These accusations dehumanize entire groups into perpetrators, enemies and criminals which increases fear of 'the other'. This polarization, led by political figures, normalizes violence and individuals are emboldened to take part, thus putting human lives at risk. Gross seems agree: *'Considering both the announcements and the cabinet nominations of the incoming president, the US and the world are facing the very real risk that the new administration will act against well-established scientific knowledge and thereby endanger human lives and the environment.'*²⁰

In conclusion of this chapter, there is no fascism in the present day. Not because it's not there but because the general definition of 'fascism' is flawed in recognising it while it is in process. Whether someone chooses to speak of fascism in its current form depends on the definition of fascism one chooses, I would claim there is a case to be made for both. To bring it back to the issue at hand: that people speak of fascism and nazis in need of a punching, while there is no explicit fascism or nazism going on does not mean it is any less fascist in nature or that there is not a very real danger lurking behind a veil of technicalities. If the previous chapter proves anything, it is this. Therefore, I will build the rest of the paper onto this notion. Social media platforms like Twitter can be, and are used as tools for propaganda. It is to be expected that the radical right is no different; but does Twitter categorise itself as radical right? We will explore this notion in the following chapter.

¹⁶ Gross, Michael. "The dangers of a post-truth world". *Current Biology* 27:1 (Jan 2017): R1–R4. p.R3

¹⁷ Speed, Ewen & Mannion, Russel. "The rise of post-truth populism in pluralist liberal democracies: challenges for health policy." *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*. 6:5 (2017): 249–251. p.251

¹⁸ Stack, Liam, "Attack on Alt-Right Leader Has Internet Asking: Is It O.K. to Punch a Nazi?". *The New York Times* (Jan 2017), nytimes.com (accessed February 20, 2017).

¹⁹ Rosenfeld, Jean E. "Fascism as Action through Time (Or How It Can Happen Here)". *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29:3 (Apr 2017): 394-410. p.407

²⁰ Gross, Michael. "The dangers of a post-truth world". *Current Biology* 27:1 (Jan 2017): R1–R4. p.R3

#PunchingNazis

Twitter is a website which functions as a social media platform for ‘microblogging’. The Twitter user, or ‘Twitterer’, can send messages of up to 140 characters called ‘Tweets’. These Tweets can be seen in the ‘feed’ by people that ‘follow’ the Twitterer’s account. Unless their account is set to private, their Tweets can be accessed by anyone via targeted search. What sets apart Twitter from other social media giants such as Facebook, is that it is more oriented towards shared interest as opposed to personal relationships. It therefore quickly evolved from a platform of just microblogging to include jokes, advertisement and news media. The use of hashtags makes it even easier to link what one has in common with other Twitters, again increasing the shareability of content. Twitterers that Tweet using a hashtag can click the automated link and at once access a pool of all users that have used the same hashtag, making it easy to form global communities. The ability to ‘Retweet’ a Tweet easily give the possibility for Tweets to spread rapidly among strangers and therefore gives Twitter the highest probability for virality out of the social media giants.²¹

Being an active Twitterer since 2011, Spencer went viral after getting punched in the face twice in one day at a president Trump’s Inauguration Day protest.²² The image of Spencer with a fist in his face became the mascot of the alt-right counterpart operating under the hashtag #PunchingNazis. #PunchingNazis instantly became ‘trending topic’ on Twitter and the incident with Spencer was shared all over the world across social media platforms in video-form, GIFs, memes, even sprouting the deadpan website: isitokaytopunchanazi.com. Although Spencer has neither confirmed or denied accusations of being a neo-nazi, articles like ‘*Is it okay to punch a Nazi?*’ sprouted up with Spencer’s face as figurehead.²³ The trend propelled chants such as ‘Every country, every race, punch a nazi in the face’ at Black Lives Matter rallies and women’s marches, and local newspapers around the world reported accounts of violence against alt-right individuals.^{24, 25} It is therefore safe to state the hashtag #PunchingNazis is furthering inspirations of assault.

The existence of #PunchingNazis has become a heated debate of ethics and morality; ‘Is it okay to punch a nazi?’ is the moral dilemma of the ‘If you had the chance would you kill Hitler?’ question all over again. Some claim that resorting to violence is exactly what extreme right is trying to coax out, and instead of falling into their trap, one should take a very didactic approach and the worse punishment there is; ignore them until they show better behaviour.²⁶ The countermovement fights fire with fire; saying violence is the only language fascists understand. Ignoring the problem is not enough for #PunchingNazis supporters; it allows for radical right to grow larger in the shadows. The lack of action pushed #PunchingNazis supporters to form its own courtroom. When something

²¹ Hansen, Lars Kai & Arvidsson Adam & Nielsen, Finn Årup & Colleoni, Elanor & Etter, Michael. “Good Friends, Bad News - Affect and Virality in Twitter”. *Future Information Technology. Communications in Computer and Information Science*: 185. (June 2011): 34-43. p.41

²² Stack, Liam, “Attack on Alt-Right Leader Has Internet Asking: Is It O.K. to Punch a Nazi?”. *The New York Times* (Jan 2017), nytimes.com (accessed February 20, 2017).

²³ Stack, Liam, “Attack on Alt-Right Leader Has Internet Asking: Is It O.K. to Punch a Nazi?”.

²⁴ Stewy, Leigh, “BLM "EVERY NATION, EVERY RACE, PUNCH A NAZI IN THE FACE””. YouTube (Feb 2017) youtube.com (accessed February 21, 2017).

²⁵ Silverstein, Jason, “Man handing out neo-Nazi fliers at California college gets punched in the face”, *New York Daily News* (Feb 2017), (accessed February 21, 2017)

²⁶ Brooks, David, “When You Punch A Nazi In The Face, You Punch Me In The Face” *Gawken* (Jan 2107), (accessed February 21, 2017)

threatens the lives and safety a large number of people does that not legitimize violence as response?²⁷

A nonhuman (like a hashtag) becoming political by the meaning it bears is one thing. But there is another aspect that is overlooked. The popular discussion remains two-dimensional in pointing fingers back and forth, or rather, from left to right. What is being left out of the discussion is the third party.

Before March 2016 one's Twitter feed generally consisted of every Tweet from every person one followed in chronological order. After March 2016 Twitter followed in the footsteps of Facebook and Google and introduced the 'algorithmic timeline' in order to boost their user metrics. This meant the Twitter feed would order Tweets according to what a software program deemed likely one would find the most interesting. One now sees Tweets from Twitterers with whom one has had the most interaction at the top of their feed. Twitter also personalises ads for Twitterers to see, consisting of Twitter accounts of businesses and other Twitterers they might like, based off of statistics of their account. This phenomenon is also referred to as 'filter bubble'.²⁸

Even though Twitter's filter bubbles make it easier for people who have things in common to connect, it hereby simultaneously shields them from criticism. Specific words one uses affects the content and becomes an accumulation of information that only adheres to ones ideologies. For example, 'illegals' vs 'immigrants', 'Islam extremist' vs 'terrorist'. Twitterers link easily by words they use, which might have a criminalizing, Islamophobic, racist (et al) connotation and therefore a political meaning. When a group of people are shielded from critical reflection this gives opportunity to radicalize. Filter bubble algorithms have been much contested after the part fake-news played in polarization and influence on voters during the US election of 2016:

'The election and the tsunami of false information that preceded it has been embarrassing for technology companies like Facebook and Google, as it has always been their declared ambition to make the world a better place by connecting people and facilitating the flow of information between them. At the moment, it is looking like this world improvement project has collapsed spectacularly, as information technology with its unprecedented global connectivity has helped to divide society, spread misinformation, and thereby create serious risks to our environment and the survival of our civilisation.'

- Michael Gross²⁹

In summary, radicalization does not just happen *on* Twitter but *in* Twitter and most importantly also *because* of Twitter. In writing the code of Twitter, a niche was created in which Twitter had an unforeseen freedom to actively aid in moving towards a fascist America: Twitter has a political agency that is unaccounted for. In the following chapter we explore ways how to deal with this.

²⁷ Bell, Duncan in Tully, James. *On Global Citizenship: James Tully in Dialogue*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014. p.204

²⁸ Oremus, Will. "Twitter's New Order". *The Slate* (Mar 2017), slate.com (accessed March 15, 2017).

²⁹ Gross, Michael. "The dangers of a post-truth world". *Current Biology* 27:1 (Jan 2017): R1–R4. p.R3

Accountability from politics

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the agency of Twitter in terms of radicalisation of both left and right is a serious problem, and Twitter's continuous lack of action has long been a source of frustration of its users.³⁰ One of the major contributing factors as to why Twitter can afford not to act is because of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) of 1996; also known as Title V of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This Act was initiated for the regulation of pornographic material on the internet, later a section was introduced in the CDA that was not part of senate legislation but added in conference with the house. Section 230 of the CDA states: '*No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider*'.³¹ This, in other words, shields spokespersons from liability made by posts from third-parties. This is an issue that causes frustration from time to time.³² Shielding spokespersons from liability implies that this technology itself is something that is innocent, neutral, a 'tool' in service of humans; there is after all no branch of government that deals with misconduct of technology itself.

However, as explained in the previous chapter, Twitter does certainly possess political agency and is not at all 'neutral'. Still, Twitter is given criminal and civil immunity. Twitter is not just guilty of facilitating unmoderated radical ideologies on its website by its users; the 'filter bubble' is also a demonstration of how Twitter is actively participating in the radicalisation itself. To understand how this happened and what a possible solution may be I will now consult several philosophers that have contributed to the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS).

In *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977) Martin Heidegger describes that to see technology as a mere 'means to an end' or a 'human activity' is indeed a correct, but incomplete view.³³ By regarding technology as a tool to be mastered, we run the risk of being blind to unexpected consequences, for we remain bound to our own 'instrumental' understanding of what technology is.³⁴ The part Twitter's filter bubble played in radicalizing the far right and the violent countermovement #PunchingNazis attests to this: the intentions of the providers were the exact opposite; to improve social interaction and flow of information. According to Martin Heidegger we are misunderstanding technology and this leads to destruction and self-destruction. Because technology has become inseparable from us, the only way out is to adopt a reorientation where we see ourselves and our relation to the world as something that is also on its way to a 'revealing'. This includes a responsibility and care towards the rest of the world.³⁵

Latour and Heidegger correspond on multiple levels. Latour also argues that Twitter has an agency that we wouldn't expect it to have; one that has very real political consequences. In the first chapter of *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) Latour uses the analogy of a newspaper where all different things come together. Twitter is like that; people from all walks of life with everyday experiences and opinions, news articles, services, opinions of political figures, products, Twitterbots; they all come together. All of them are neither purely social nor purely natural, and even though we

³⁰ Tiffany, Kaitlyn. "Twitter criticized for suspending popular LGBTQ academic @meakooa". The Verge (Jun 2017). theverge.com (accessed June 13, 2017).

³¹ Telecommunications Act, U.S. Code 47 (1996), § 230, title V; Communications Decency Act.

³² Michael B. Farrell. "After 'Facebook killing,' social media confronts its dark side". Christian Science Monitor (Apr, 2017). Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed June 14, 2017).

³³ Heidegger, Martin. *The question concerning technology and other essays*. New York: Harper, 1977. p.5

³⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *The question concerning technology and other essays*. p.5

³⁵ Heidegger, Martin. *The question concerning technology and other essays*. p.17

are used to having these different sources of information come together on a daily basis, upon analysing it we suddenly keep to our strict academically or disciplinary boundaries and categories, a process Latour calls 'purification'. Latour stresses there is an area, in between, and overlapping these boundaries that goes unchecked while Twitter doesn't keep to these boundaries.³⁶

In *We Have Never Been Modern* Latour describes the year 1989 as a symbolic year that consequently lead to rapid change as result of awareness of global crises. One example Latour gives is global warming, but a more expressive example relating to the radical right is the Syrian war. Crises like these are mixtures of the social and the natural world, 'hybrids' as Latour calls them, but the conventional boundaries of disciplines prevents us to analyse them fully. Though we have thoroughly analysed the natural (unsafety and displacement of large numbers of people) and social (politics of war) aspects of the Syrian war separately, the inability³⁷ to understand them together renders us unable to provide a working solution to the problem. Without the ability to act we are left with panic; fear warps refugees into 'swarms of people' here to destroy the economy. Violence that leaves the warzone and invades the west is easily lumped together; all refugees become possible terrorists in disguise thus leading to islamophobia and racism. Latour argues that as long as we keep 'purifying' the ultimate result is we start to doubt modern liberalism, and behold; the radical right advocates for a complete overhaul of government. Does this mean that in order to account for hybrids, we need to give non-humans the same political agency as humans?

In an essay on Latour and Heidegger, Riis Søren describes that while Heidegger fears that if we keep underestimating technology humans are at risk of becoming tools in service of it, Latour rejects this and argues that it always is, and will remain some form of mediation.³⁸ To avoid this blind spot between the human and nonhuman Latour introduces Actor Network Theory (ANT) and states we could take a leaf out of the book of anthropology: a division between the scientist and politician is useful but they need to be studied together as well in order to build onto a more complete understanding.³⁹ In *Politics of Nature* (2004) Latour then argues not for Twitter to be treated as a human, but as something completely new; another government to include non-humans; a 'parliament of things'. This parliament must consist of 'sciences, natures and politics *in the plural*' (emphasis added).⁴⁰ What this parliament looks like will change with the required, constantly renewed propositions. All facets of a network of spokespersons of both human and non-humans should be taken seriously with a healthy dose of scepticism; building on each other in a constant re-invention.⁴¹ This might mean a new branch of government that deals with the technology of Twitter as to prevent the part it plays in radicalisation of ideologies, both *on* and *in* Twitter, including amongst others the radical right and #PunchingNazis supporters. Until this happens (if it does) Twitter spokespersons might also take Latour's theory and apply it on a smaller level; inviting political science philosophers, politicians and computer scientists to start their own 'parliament of things'.

Not everyone agrees with Latour. Mark Brown contests that the problem with ANT is that it makes everything political. It elevates non-humans to the same political relevance as humans, and

³⁶ Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. p.6

³⁷ It seems important to stress inability here; not disability

³⁸ Riis, Søren. "The Symmetry between Bruno Latour and Martin Heidegger: The Technique of Turning a Police Officer into a Speed Bump". *Social Studies of Science* 38:2 (Apr, 2008): 285-301. 286

³⁹ Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993. p.24

⁴⁰ Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. p.3

⁴¹ Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature*. p.80-2

reduces human agency only to external effects, while intentions and aims go unaccounted for. Still, Brown claims that ANT's research could be valuable. However, *'efforts to understand and shape the politics of science may benefit from more careful attention to alternative conceptions of politics'*.⁴²

In his paper *What is Political in Sub-politics?* (2007) Gerard de Vries seems to run in to the same issue with certain aspects getting lost in Latour's theory; by putting everything that is social about the natural, and everything that is natural about the social on the same level, and asking their representatives to work on the same task, Latour neglects to see that the role of the science and politics are completely different. The role of science is to allow propositions to be formed and articulated; the role of politicians is to properly represent these propositions and decide whether or not they should be assigned to the collective. De Vries argues that ANT lacks criticality towards our conception of democracy and for the way STS-style analyses may contribute to democracy. The distinction makes sense, but leaves us with the question: are de Vries' scientists and politicians capable of representing the extent of the problem of radical Twitter? Since the issue is a hybrid in nature, Latour would say no, and I am inclined to agree. The disciplinary gap remains intact.

Latour wrote an essay specifically in response to de Vries' criticism, where he reminds us that the problem in the first place was that these propositions de Vries speaks of, will not go through the government well-represented. Latour points out that de Vries does not account for this problem: *'what went wrong was [...] the vacuous claim that the normal routines of governmental action could have dealt with a new and unattended entanglement'*.⁴³ Every proposition is 'entangled' differently and therefore requires and deserves a custom approach.

This is where John Dewey comes with a solution.

'The state' has a formal status, Dewey states: it supposedly is not self-serving.⁴⁴ The concept of the state is static, which is why reform usually only happens from revolution, this is *'too rigid'* to his taste.⁴⁵ Dewey pleads for a more flexible state as generations and persons are always changing. *'In no two ages or places is there the same public'*, it therefore makes sense for the state to also change over time.⁴⁶ Dewey determines that *'the state must always be rediscovered'*.⁴⁷ This means that any individual/private motivations do not have the longevity to take root; a solid way to prevent fascism.⁴⁸ A public already *comes* into being by common interests, and representatives or spokespersons organize different aspects of the public (legislators, judges, etc.). *'Then and in so far, association adds to itself political organization, and something which may be government comes into being. It is not the business of political philosophy and science to determine what the state in general should or must be. What they may do is to aid in creation of methods such that experimentation may go on less blindly, less at the mercy of accident, more intelligently, so that men may learn from their*

⁴² Brown, Mark B. "Politicizing science: Conceptions of politics in science and technology studies". *Social Studies of Science*, 45:1 (2015): 3–30. p.23

⁴³ Latour, Bruno. "Turning Around Politics. A Note on Gerard de Vries' Paper". *Social Studies of Science* 37:5 (Oct 2007), 811 – 820. p.818-9

⁴⁴ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2012. p.42

⁴⁵ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. p.44

⁴⁶ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. p.33

⁴⁷ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. p.56-7

⁴⁸ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. p.5. '[...] cannot be got rid of by any methodology' implies that a total rebuild is needed; Dewey emphasises this need throughout the chapter.

errors and profit by their successes. [...].⁴⁹ Dewey's approach then accounts for both de Vries' concern while simultaneously accommodating Latour.

Andrew Barry has yet another take on the role of technology and politics. Like Latour he advocates a relationship where science and politics are not meant to be separate, and have in fact always been interconnected.⁵⁰ Barry implies there is no 'blind spot' in the same way that Latour views it. Government is in and of itself already technological; accounting for hybrids might require a specific type of government but this does not necessarily demand an entirely new one. Barry introduces the 'technological zone' alongside political zones:

Consider, for example, smokeless zones, time zones, erogenous zones, danger zones, temperate zones, and demilitarized zones.

- Andrew Barry⁵¹

These technological zones evolve; they grow, are restricted, cross borders or disappear altogether. Barry views technological and political zones as overlapping; not just spatially but mapping them out is already a political action. There is no reason boundaries of political zones can't be permeable as well.⁵² Demonstration, such as the commotion surrounding Twitter's radicalization is a reason to readjust the boundaries of politics.⁵³

Chantal Mouffe also wishes to embrace demonstration as a part of democracy, instead of opting for a new government.⁵⁴ Quite different from Dewey, Mouffe thinks that *'liberal democracy is not the enemy to be destroyed [...] it is clear that the problem with our societies is not their proclaimed ideals but the fact that those ideals are not put into practice. So the task for the left is not to reject them [...] but to fight for their effective implementation'*.⁵⁵ A complete and total rejection of the liberal-democratic framework is not needed, the solution to radical Twitter according to Mouffe is rather; more democracy.⁵⁶

Conclusion

This essay serves as a contribution to clarifying these complex subjects and understand them more fully. I have attempted to approach this issue as a hybrid as extensively as possible in the allowed parameters; in a network of the different facets that are connected to the hashtag #PunchingNazi. We can only really ever speak of fascism in a fully-developed form; in hindsight. However, the situation today clearly lends itself to a definite 'fascism in progress'. Hopefully the situation will atrophy before it will earn its definite title. Nevertheless, the scare alone stands testament of the agency that technology has. Politics need to revoke technology's get-out-of-jail-free card and integrate it in order to be held accountable in one way or another. Having nature and object enter into the realm of politics something we are now starting to see. One example is the Whanganui River

⁴⁹ Dewey, John. *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*. p.58

⁵⁰ Barry, Andrew. *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. New York: Athlone, 2001. p.171

⁵¹ Barry, Andrew. *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. p.41

⁵² Barry, Andrew. *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. p.42

⁵³ Barry, Andrew. *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. p.196, 177

⁵⁴ Mouffe, Chantal. *On The Political: Thinking In Action*. London: Routledge, 2005. p.30-1

⁵⁵ Mouffe, Chantal. *On The Political: Thinking In Action*. p.32

⁵⁶ Mouffe, Chantal. *On The Political: Thinking In Action*. p.33

and its adjoining land in New Zealand which has been given legal personhood.⁵⁷ Giving technology the same rights as a human will also mean subjecting them to the judiciary of a state. This is one example, but there are many ways in which this could take form. How exactly it will take form I will leave to a network of spokespersons fit to properly represent such a proposition; maybe one day I will be a part of one. One thing is for sure: in a world where our lives are increasingly enwoven with technologies the urgency for such a government reaches ever higher levels.

⁵⁷ Calderwood, Kathleen. "Why New Zealand is granting a river the same rights as a citizen". ABC (6 September 2016). abc.net.au (accessed: 15 Jun 2017)

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