SOFiA

IS SOCIAL MEDIA TO BLAME FOR ACADEMIC RUIN?

A Document to be Read by Academics: A Message from the Wider Communities

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Is Social Media to Blame for Academic Ruin?

with The Philosophy Café, Brisbane Meetup,

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Contents

 Conversations on social media are infamous in tripping up on common definitions, meaning that discussion become at cross-purposes, with individual participants speaks passing each other, in common language but not understand: the semantics are not made clear.

So, lets agree to common definitions, which may be debated at nuanced levels, but the statements can be basically agreed upon. Wikipedia does that reasonably well, irrespective of academic prejudices. So, lets read carefully on these Wikipedia definitions and basically agree to the semantics as stated in the discussion:[1]

Social media: are interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. The Wikipedia article then lists a number of common features for a definition of social media, being Web 2.0 Internet-based applications, user-generated content, service-specific profiles, and online social networks. For the discussion, the first sentence is only important for agreement.

Is [copula]: In linguistics, a copula (plural: copulas or *copulae*; abbreviated cop) is a word or phrase that links the subject of a sentence to a subject complement, such as the word is in the sentence "The sky is blue" or the phrase was not being in the sentence "It was not being co-operative." The word copula derives from the Latin noun for a "link" or "tie" that connects two different things. The English copular verb, **be**, has eight forms (more than any other English verb): be, am, **is**, are, being, was, were, been. Additional archaic forms include art,

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[1] Wikipedia definitions are articulated across the paper, and, for citations, search for each Wikipedia entry.

wast, wert, and occasionally beest (as a subjunctive). For more details see English verbs. For the etymology of the various forms, see Indo-European copula.

Blame [worthy]: is the act of censuring, holding responsible, or making negative statements about an individual or group that their actions or inaction are socially or morally irresponsible, the opposite of praise. When someone is morally responsible for doing something wrong, their action is blameworthy. By contrast, when someone is morally responsible for doing something right, it may be said that his or her action is praiseworthy. There are other senses of praise and blame that are not ethically relevant. One may praise someone's good dress sense, and blame their own sense of style for their own dress sense.

For [Preposition and postposition]: Prepositions and postpositions, together called adpositions (or broadly, in traditional grammar, simply prepositions), are a class of words used to express spatial or temporal relations (in, under, towards, before) or mark various semantic roles (of, *for*).

Academic [personnel]: are vague terms that describe teachers or research staff of a school, college, university or research institute. In British and Australian/New Zealand English "faculty" usually refers to a sub-division of a university (usually a group of departments), not to the employees, as it can also do in North America. Universities, community colleges and even some secondary and primary schools use the terms faculty and professor. Other institutions (e.g., teaching hospitals or not-for-profit research institutes) may likewise use the term faculty.

Ruin [theory]: uses mathematical models to describe an insurer's vulnerability to insolvency/ruin. In such models key quantities of interest are the probability of ruin, distribution of surplus immediately prior to ruin and deficit at time of ruin. Obviously, this Wikipedia definition is technical but there is no basic definition in Wikipedia, just for 'ruin'. Nevertheless, the 'vulnerability to insolvency/ruin' speaks to what is meant by academic personnel fears, expressed in the semantics of 'academic ruin'.

What it can be said of the last 30 years or so of social media, is that the global and Australian ethos has **not** been kind for moderating variants of academic thought, with the legacy of John Howard's culture-history war, Donald Trump's war on the American system of democracy, Boris Johnson's politics of buffoonery, and the continued rise of commercialism, dumbing-down education, the erosion of higher education, the loss of teachers and researchers in private and public markets, and the arrogance of public relations and entertainment industries. Social media did not invent all of that, it was there in the last century; social media has only intensified ugly and very bad forms of thinking. A prime example is cynical global skepticism which fallaciously prevents the other converser to have any foothold in the dialogue; a very un-Socratic tactic. Yes, social Media is to blame for academic ruin. But only in particular types of thinkers are blameworthy.

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From the Direction of Social Media

1.0 Social Media

The concept of Social Media is not understood well, and has to have a fuller semantics from the histories.

1.0.0 Social Theory.

Social Theory is an analytical framework, or paradigm, that are used to study and interpret social phenomena. It is simply a cognitive tool. This is the failure to interpret social phenomena of social media with any substantive accuracy. Jamed Reveley (2013) stated, for example:

> Scholars who argue that social media users are exploited in the classical Marxian sense are making a fundamental category error. A case in point is work by Christian Fuchs and Paul Rey, two leading proponents who press Marxian categories into service to depict social media as inherently exploitative. Hastily applying "exploitation" to social media usage, their catachrestical mistake has negative implications for value theory and for emancipatory politics. Following a neglected lead in Dallas Smythe's writings, Marxist analysis should instead begin with social media's capacity to influence the value of labor-power. When assessed from this starting point it is evident that any increase in exploitation, due to wage-earners' private use of social media, occurs only indirectly as a second-order effect. Moreover, social media's organization- enhancing potential can help labor shift the balance of class forces back in its favor, thereby limiting rises in the rate of exploitation. (2013: 512)

What Reveley is pointing out is that the condition of social media is 1) no different to the web/internet, and 2) no different to the social conditions which exist across space. The technology does have a qualitive and quantitative effect, but the social conditions are the same.

Mark Carrigan and Lambros Fatsis (2021) argue that academics were "ill-equipped to deal with the pitfalls of platforms which effectively seek to manipulate their users…We may think we are countering falsehoods or introducing seriousness into the debate, but if we do so in a scattergun, disorganised fashion, we are just adding to the cacophony of platforms [such as Twitter]." From these types of analysis, there is a view that what is required is to put 'social' [theory] back into social media (Reisz, 2021).

1.0.0.1 Tagging.

A tag is a keyword or term assigned to a piece of information (such as an Internet bookmark, multimedia, database record, or computer file). This kind of metadata helps describe an item and allows it to be found again by browsing or searching. The exercise is called 'tagging'.

Tagging is part of the technological problem. Platforms like LinkedIn use the tagging instrument of "#" extensively, and LinkedIn is designed as a professional business platform. Tagging appears on across social media platforms, and has invisibly been an important part of the web world for purposes of searching under terms. The issue is that terms used for tagging are often unnecessarily provocative, merely for the purpose of attention and rankings; e.g., #ToxicMaleBooks (Gutkin, 2022). Cass R. Sunstein (2018) wrote *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Sunstein puts a compelling case to see social media as set of behaviours, and network labels were significant in gaining traction in the market (2018: 22-23, 65). The behaviour was positive attentions to particular symbols – tags and labels.

1.0.0.2 Twitter.

Twitter is a microblogging and social networking service owned by American company Twitter, Inc., on which users post and interact with messages known as "tweets". Registered users can post, like, and retweet tweets, while unregistered users only have a limited ability to read public tweets. Tweets are the positive capacity for both a firm's market value and shareholder activism (Dinh, 2017). The question of whether "Twitter [was] Making Academe Stupid and Mean" was raised in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in July this year (Wong, 2022). The story, as should be expected, was nuanced and complex. Jaron Lanier (2022) in *The Atlantic* believe that twitter—and all of social media—could be fix through compatibilist reasoning. Lanier stated:

> Those debating the future of Twitter and other social-media platforms have largely fallen into two opposing camps. One supports individuals' absolute freedom of speech; the other holds that speech must be modulated through content moderation, and by tweaking the ways in which information spreads.

> It sounds like an old-fashioned confrontation between the idealists and the realists, but in this case both sides are peddling an equally dismal vision… My purpose here is to point out a logical third option, one that can and should be tested out on a platform such as Twitter. In this approach, a platform would require users to form groups

through free association, and then to post only through those groups, with the group's imprimatur. (2022, online).

Too often there are technology protocols which quickly resolves the issues, and the real problem is persons refusing to adhere to protocols or playing (pretend) at adhering to protocols.

1.0.0.3 Facebook.

Facebook is an online social media and social networking service owned by American company Meta Platforms. As of July 2022, Facebook claimed 2.93 billion monthly active users, and ranked third worldwide among the most visited websites as of July 2022. It was the most downloaded mobile app of the decade of the 2010s.

Facebook has been a particular target in the social media world for the problem of unreliable journalist sources (e.g., Hong Vu 2020). It is a legitimate issue, but largely depends upon whether Facebook as primary source research or as means to rely upon as verification. The latter is the wrong strategy.

1.0.1 Blame and Risk.

So, in social theory, what are the identifiable problems? There are a few issues, but first lets considered the concept of responsibility in relation to social media. This is usually a particular type of ethical responsibility. The claims are that social media is blameworthy. But what is social media blameworthy of? If we affirm the concept of agency into the ideal of responsibility, then what blameworthiness comes down to is the risk that is imposed by the owners of social media for social harm.

It is common to read divided views on the subject of the blameworthiness of social media (e.g., Readers' Discussion, 2022, *The Atlantic*, June 21). However, there is a good consensus that social media produces a mixture of ethical evaluations, compatibly all true at once (Custer,2018; Sethi 2022). The real issues are evaluations on risk and exposure (Brake, 2014) and the investment of time on social media (Gill, 2018).

1.0.2 Undermining Democracy.

The problems of ruin that is claimed against social media are, one, political, two, political but also epistemic, and three, epistemic but more broadly social. The first goes to the ideal of democracy. The claim is that social media undermines, or ruins, democracy. The claim, when

laid out widely and deeply, is a form of scapegoating. Persons ruin or undermine democracy because democracy is the behaviour of the people.

Popularly, Jonathan Haidt leads the attack upon the social media world, most notably in his *The Atlantic* article, "Yes, Social Media Really Is Undermining Democracy" (2022, July 28). Jonathan Haidt is a social psychologist at the New York University Stern School of Business, and his books sell well, and, ironically, has many social media supporters in Australia. In discussions, online and offline, and as a philosopher, I have been troubled by Haidt's use of legitimate concerns and providing too-simplistic answers, not evidenced outside of Haidt's fields of expertise. No doubt, Haidt is an excelling social psychologist, but his arguments 'go-over-the-top' and do not align with a broader understanding of sociology. Other political commentators, and social scientists, philosophers, and sociologists have made the same link between the undermining of democracy and social media, but the conclusions are nuanced, and the explanations are not simplistic as Haidt has it. Haidt stated:

> We begin by assuming the null hypothesis (in this case, that social media is not harmful), and we require researchers to show strong, statistically significant evidence in order to publish their findings. This takes time—a couple of years, typically, to conduct and publish a study; five or more years before review papers and meta-analyses come out; sometimes decades before scholars reach agreement...

> So even if social media really did begin to undermine democracy (and institutional trust and teen mental health) in the early 2010s, we should not expect social science to "settle" the matter until the 2030s. By then, the effects of social media will be radically different, and the harms done in earlier decades may be irreversible.

> …

> There was also an essay in The New Yorker by Gideon Lewis-Kraus, who interviewed me and other scholars who study politics and social media. He argued that social media might well be harmful to democracies, but the research literature is too muddy and contradictory to support firm conclusions.

> So was my diagnosis correct, or are concerns about social media overblown? It's a crucial question for the future of our society. As I argued in my essay, critics make us smarter. I'm grateful, therefore, to Meta and the researchers interviewed by Lewis-Kraus for helping me sharpen and extend my argument in three ways.

Actually, the essay had four questions as extending the argument:

1. Are Democracies Becoming More Polarized and Less Healthy?
2. Has Social Media Created Harmful Echo Chambers?
3. Is Social Media the Primary Villain in This Story?
4. What Can We Do to Make Things Better?

All questions were answered in the affirmative, and generally-speaking there is agreement, a consensus of views. What is surprising from a social psychologist is that he says nothing about personality in the argument, and that he would use the rhetoric of 'the Primary Villain'. In asking whether persons can make things better, there is the better social psychology.

Haidt proposed three imperatives: (1) harden democratic institutions so that they can withstand chronic anger and mistrust, (2) reform social media so that it becomes less socially corrosive, and (3) better prepare the next generation for democratic citizenship in this new age. Who would disagree? however, Haidt does not, and cannot provide the sociological details for the forementioned imperatives.

Haidt is himself a social media celebrity and plagiarises the works of others in his social media shows (mostly YouTube). Those who have much better answers, actual details for the social imperatives are political philosophers like Martha Nussbaum (2018) and sociologists like David Graeber (2018). And these examples cross the spectrum of politics with good reasoning. The philosophy, and even sociology, does well in highlighting the issues of personality in social media, and this is what is strangely missing in the popular and light social psychology of Haidt. To understand why we need to go to the concept of mob thinking, a central concept in social psychology.

1.0.2.1 Mob Thinking.

The scapegoating goes to mob thinking. Generally speaking, a crowd is defined as a group of people that have gathered for a common purpose or intent such as at a demonstration, a sports event, or during looting (this is known as an acting crowd), or may simply be made up of many people going about their business in a busy area. The term "the crowd" may sometimes refer to the lower orders of people in general. The difference between the 'innocent crowd' and 'insane mob' appears to be a matter of rhetoric and semantics. However, years ago, Eric Hoffer in *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (1951) provided one of the best sociological analyses of mob thinking. The factors are much more that Haidt gives allowance for. In empirical work, David Campbell and his team (2014) are much more positive that the moral panic of Haidt's online performances. What they have found is that persons turn to social media, looking for Friends, Fans, and Followers, as do the celebrities, and if the right protocols are adhered to, social media use in public and

nonprofit human services can be positive, and they conclude that, "Social media has the potential to change a wide variety of management practices in nonprofit and public organizations." (2014: 655).

1.0.2.2 Blocking.

There are a few other ways social media potentially undermines or ruins social epistemology, and being technology, in these cases social media is more likely blameworthy. In computing, a 'blocking' process is an instance of a computer program that is being executed. A process always exists in exactly one process state. A process that is blocked is one that is waiting for some event, such as a resource becoming available or the completion of an I/O operation. This is different but related to blacklisting. In computing, a blacklist, disallowlist, blocklist, or denylist is a basic access control mechanism that allows through all elements (email addresses, users, passwords, URLs, IP addresses, domain names, file hashes, etc.), except those explicitly mentioned. Those items on the list are denied access. The opposite is a whitelist, allowlist, or passlist, in which only items on the list are let through whatever gate is being used. A greylist contains items that are temporarily blocked (or temporarily allowed) until an additional step is performed. Here the technology is ambivalent in relation to being blameworthy. The technology, in one perspective encourages blameworthy behaviour of the agent, but in another perspective, it is also a tool that minimises risk. What gets blocked is ultimately a decision of a person or persons, as in when, at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics social media teams were banned from showing athletes 'taking the knee' (Ingle, 2021).

1.0.2.3 Disinformation.

More deliberate in the use of the technology, is disinformation. Disinformation is false information deliberately spread to deceive people. It is sometimes confused with misinformation, which is false information but is not deliberate. What is curious about disinformation in social media is 1) how easy it spreads, and 2) yet how easy it is to pick it up with the right tools of both technology and scholarship (Cray, 2022). Reasonably good journalists, such as Valerie Strauss (2020) can understand that, in describing how kids can be taught to spot misinformation on social media.

1.0.2.4 Violence.

The critical question of blameworthiness is whether social media incites violence through the forementioned strategies. Violence is more usually defined as the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy. A few scholars refer to verbal violence, and while that would appear to be a legitimate claim in a limited scoping of cases, the use of physical force provides a clearer understanding. 'Verbal violence' is ethically wrong for other reasons involving harm. In the last near-decade of Trumpism, the examples of social media usage in both inciting violence and harmful verballing are clear to see. Militias flocked to Gettysburg

to foil a supposed antifa flag burning, an apparent hoax created on social media (Shawn and Boburg, 2020). School threats and social media hoaxes are forcing closures, and time-consuming investigations (Natanson, 2021).

1.0.3 Higher Education.

The primary claim we are considering here is that social media ruins 'academia'. There are two perspectives involved in the claim. The first is the concept of higher education, and secondly, 'the Academics' Views of the University'. Higher education is tertiary education leading to award of an academic degree.

For university executives to claim that social media ruins academia is hypocrisy. An example of one of The Times Higher Education rankings is "The top 10 UK higher education social media superstars of 2017" (Parr, 2017). Universities use social media to compete.

1.0.3.1 Academics' Views of the University.

The chief problem of academics' charges against social media as a bloc, is the poor understanding that academics have the concept of the university and its modern practice. A university (from Latin *universitas* 'a whole') is an institution of higher (or tertiary) education and research which awards academic degrees in several academic disciplines. Universities typically offer both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. A university is the main vehicle of higher education. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Wyatt Myskow (2022, July 21), tells the story of academics who are about to quit their university career turning to social media, to exact a type of 'revenge'. It one ethical perspective it could be said to be a legitimate act of 'revenge', as the only act of accountability available made upon university governance, when university management has compromised itself very evident bad decisions of neo-liberal economic theory. Either professors in governance are ignorant of the shifting intellectual tide against such managerial policies and practices, or they are protecting their self-interests. If it is the latter, social media is a convenient scapegoat.

1.1 Technology Tools

Social Media is commonly seen in the filter of the technology tools.

1.1.0 Online World.

There is another issue, a misunderstanding of what I refer to as the "Online World" (a non-technical term referring to the Internet). Technically, the definition is of a virtual world (also

called a virtual space), which is a computer-simulated environment which may be populated by many users who can create a personal avatar, and simultaneously and independently explore the virtual world, participate in its activities and communicate with others. These avatars can be textual, graphical representations, or live video avatars with auditory and touch sensations. Virtual worlds are closely related to mirror worlds. A personal avatar, in many cases, can just be a textual online profile with a fairly ordinary biographical image. A mirror world is a representation of the real world in digital form. It attempts to map real-world structures in a geographically accurate way. Mirror worlds offer a utilitarian software model of real human environments and their workings. The sophistication in the gaming world is only a matter of technological development from the starting point of a basic website. It is important to understand the concepts here rather than bedazzled by the technological agendas. An online game is a video game that is either partially or primarily played through the Internet or any other computer network available. Gaming the system (also rigging, abusing, cheating, milking, playing, working, or breaking the system, or gaming or bending the rules) can be defined as using the rules and procedures meant to protect a system, instead, it manipulates the system for a desired-but-illegitimate outcome from an academic perspective. There two important reasons to protect the system. The first is academic cheating, commonly seen in contracted cheating websites (Ross, 2022). That often, though, comes down to technological practice. The other reason is that we have a older generation of excelling academics who see everything online cringeworthy (Madison 2020). In many cases the criticisms are warranted, but not always. Often comes down to the personal views of influential academics, a prejudicial position.

1.1.1 Twitter.

Thus, the question that needs to be asked, is how does the technological tools ruin academia. Twitter is a tool of gossiping. Gossip is idle talk or rumour, especially about the personal or private affairs of others; the act is also known as dishing or tattling. Twitter is a great digital application for gossiping, academic gossiping. There is evidence that it has negatively influenced research (Grove, 2022). Twitter has always been a problem for academics in communicating studies to students and the public. A snappy header in *The American Archivist* is "The War of 1812 in 140 Characters or Less: 'SuperCool or Super Un-tweet Worthy?'" (Lalonde, 2014). With Twitter as a weapon in the culture-history war (e.g., Harwell, 2022) academics do not feel safe. Then there are the murky occasions of banning of controversial right-wing commentators, both from campus and social media, such as when Katie Hopkins was permanently removed from Twitter (Slawson, 2020).

The article of Rory and et al (2013) connects the concerns on personal learning and social media for academics:

Recent developments in the use of social media for learning have posed serious challenges for learners. The information overload that these online social tools create has changed the way learners learn and from whom they learn. An investigation of learners' goals, motivations and expected outcomes when using a personal learning network is essential since there have been few empirical studies in the domain. Previous research focused on the factors that influence learning in virtual environments, but these studies were mainly conducted in an era in which online social media were not yet used for personal learning networks. The current paper reports findings of a study that examined factors impacting professional learning through networks. A personal learning network identification session and a brainstorm via Twitter (Tweetstorm) regarding goals, motivational factors and outcomes of learning through networks were conducted. The article concludes that seven factors play a pivotal role in professional learning through networks: sharing, motivation, perceived value of the network, feedback, personal learning, trust and support, peer characteristics and peer value. Also, different perspectives, motivation, social media and collaboration, reciprocity, intrinsic motivation, innovation, status and reputation and networking strategies play an important role in motivation. Future work should focus on investigating the interplay between factors that influence networked learning identified in this article.

Such complex analyses make it clear that it is never a simple story of social media ruining academia.

1.1.2 Facebook.

Facebook works differently to Twitter. There may be gossiping on Facebook, but the central issue is how Facebook ruins academic reputation. The reputation of a social entity (a person, a social group, an organization, or a place) is an opinion about that entity typically as a result of social evaluation on a set of criteria, such as behaviour or performance. How Facebook could, and, no doubt has, ruin academia, is those strategies forementioned, by incitement of violence, disinformation, and blocking academic or reliable scholarly data. However, what has to be noted that such cases involve the voluntary use of the technology; particular persons have made decisions in the usages. Ruining a reputation is a personal decision.

Nevertheless, there are different roles for Facebook, as there different personal motivations to use the tool. Among them are self-interested and valued roles for academics. For examples, many scholars are concerned for the archival utility (Hager, 2015).

1.1.3 Instagram and TikTok.

The issues become more clouded in the more image-driven social technology, such as Instagram and TikTok. The minimising of textual content creates greater misunderstandings, and the usage can be both deliberate and conveyed as pure image. Even so there are examples of Instagram and TikTok as positive usage for academic ends, such as when college students push the science behind covid vaccines in the midst of the American culture-history war (Svrluga, 2021).

1.1.4 Wikipedia.

Wikipedia is a multilingual free online encyclopedia written and maintained by a community of volunteers through open collaboration and a wiki-based editing system. Its editors are known as Wikipedians. Wikipedia is the largest and most-read reference work in history. It is consistently one of the 10 most popular websites ranked by the Similarweb and formerly Alexa; as of 2022, Wikipedia was ranked the 7th most popular site. It is hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation, an American non-profit organization funded mainly through donations. Several decades ago, most academics attack the Wikipedia platform as being unreliable. Attitudes have shift with the clarification that Wikipedia is a reference tool, and a starting point for clarification in definitions. Any reference tool is not a substantive tool. Other sources have to be used for substantive scholarly work. In other words, it is fine to use online reference tools, but true scholarship goes much further. Again, as with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, Wikipedia can be the best source for data collection (Xu, 2013). Analysis requires other tools with critical thinking.

1.2 Propaganda

Technology, as a general principle, is the instrument of propaganda.

1.2.1 Lying.

Reference tools are theoretically not instruments of propaganda. Propaganda is communication that is primarily used to influence or persuade an audience to further an agenda, which may not be objective and may be selectively presenting facts to encourage a particular synthesis or perception, or using loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to the information that is being presented. Propaganda involves some lying. A lie is an assertion that is believed to be false, typically used with the purpose of deceiving someone.

Falseness, lying, in social media are identified as 'fake news' or 'fake events' (Shawn and Boburg, 2020). Here, though, is a matter of complication when known masters of manipulation, such as former President Donald Trump, make the unmasking of 'fake news' or 'fake events' their own actual fakes. Uneducated followers then decide it is only a matter of conflicting testimony, one person's word against another, and then decided for a fallacious strategy of 'just picking a side', as would a sports fan. It is not an academic strategy and not a generally good scholarly approach. Nevertheless, academics and journalists can also make basic mistakes in identifying fake news (e.g., Engber, 2022).

The technology of bots does not create the lie, they only intensify the lie through wider and quicker dissemination. An Internet bot, web robot, robot or simply bot, is a software application that runs automated tasks (scripts) over the Internet, usually with the intent to imitate human activity on the Internet, such as messaging, on a large scale. An Internet bot plays the client role in a client–server model whereas the server role is usually played by web servers. Internet bots are able to perform tasks, that are simple and repetitive, much faster than a person could ever do. The most extensive use of bots is for web crawling, in which an automated script fetches, analyses and files information from web servers. More than half of all web traffic is generated by bots.

This is, certainly, a space for concern, but there is some evidence that platform owners are cracking down on disinformation through work on the bot technology (Bannister, 2022). The success cannot be purely technological.

1.2.2 Disinformation.

More often, though, propaganda involves disinformation. The modern cynic plays heavy on the current capacity for disinformation. Journalists also play up the problem (Friedersdorf, 2022; Goldberg, 2022). The cynic is correct in 'the conditional' of the argument – 'if' there is no way to unmask disinformation satisfactory, then there is no meaning for what anyone believes to be correct information. The cynic, however, is misinformed in the belief that there is no satisfying strategy for getting to correct information. This is why critical thinking strategies are so cognitively satisfying. They are the answers to cognitive dissonance, the perception of contradictory information, and the mental toll of it. The capacity is there to be smarter about disinformation (Kang, 2022) and to understand the nature of digital marketing in the Disinformation Age (Guilbeault 2018).

1.3 Culture-History War

Social Media is not to blame for academia's ruin. In the next section I will explain a significant cause of academic ruin. Here I will explain another significant cause of academic ruin, the culture-history wars.

1.3.0 History.

The history wars are a term used in Australia to describe the public debate about the interpretation of the history of the European colonisation of Australia and the development of contemporary Australian society, particularly with regard to their impact on Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The term "history wars" emerged in the late 1990s during the term of the Howard government, and the debate is ongoing. This Wikipedia definition is too narrow as the history wars exists globally, and is exemplified in the culture of the United States. Colonialism is a central theme, but not the only historical theme debated, and includes debates about the nation state and the concept of culture.

At the time and since the Australian Historical Association has been overwhelmed with the issue of casualisation (Thomas, 2020). The two issues of the history wars and academic casualisation were, and are, related. If politicians can erode confidence in the academic humanities and social sciences, then fewer emerging students are attracted to enrol in such courses, and even few go onto postgraduate studies. This then creates an economic spiral with less jobs or working hours for the peak of higher degree graduates in the early 1990s, with less 'permanent' appointed academics taking on larger undergraduate classes with the lost of many niche courses. In the new century the faculties have level out with smaller numbers of paid senior staff and the surplice labour of causal teachers and fewer researchers. Three decades ago, academics were predicting the trend would have to break when the system overloaded with hyper-mass classes rooms. However, the new modern university continued to function, thanks to the tools of social media. Classrooms went virtual, and now there are reports of university teachers streaming online in empty lecture theatres.

The neo-liberal economic warriors won, but at the high cost of the culture-history war. The loss of confidence in the humanities and social sciences is a direct result of the neo-conservative and neo-liberal forces joining to undo the liberal, mass, and modern university. Neo-liberals wanted, and got, a lean and mean university. The neo-conservatives wanted, and got, a conventionally-thinking university where the dissenting forces were crushed.

There are signs however, that no one is really happy with the current state of the University. Private universities are in the same difficulties as public universities. Conservatives, liberals,

and radicals are all surveying the damage. Conservatives are unhappy because large European survey courses have been lost. Liberals are unhappy because academics have less freedoms than they once had, or thought they had. Radicals are finding that they have much less space on campus to dissent. It is no wonder that dissent has moved online.

1.3.1 Strategy.

As with any war, there are strategies. A strategy (from Greek στρατηγία stratēgia, "art of troop leader; office of general, command, generalship") is a general plan to achieve one or more long-term or overall goals under conditions of uncertainty. The forementioned strategies are examples in the culture-history wars. There have been more recently other significant strategies. Once the economic theories weighed the decisions for Neo-Liberal economics, but that is coming into serious challenges, as is also its paralleled ideological partisan game playing. The culture war strategy of a Tony Abbott or a Scot Morrison is less convincing (Atkins, 2022).

1.3.2 Cancel Culture.

Cancel culture or call-out culture is a phrase contemporary to the late 2010s and early 2020s used to refer to a form of ostracism in which someone is thrust out of social or professional circles – whether it be online, on social media, or in person. Those subject to this ostracism is said to have been "cancelled". The expression 'cancel culture' has mostly negative connotations and is used in debates on free speech and censorship. Technically, it goes to what has previously said about 'blocking'.

The rhetoric of 'cancel culture' are more of a distraction away from the failure of the rhetoric of the culture wars, and it is not very convincing (Ellison 2020; Zimmerman, 2022). It has got the same hallmarks of another forgettable trend, the "politics of contempt." It is as fashionable stupid as the new 'woke' crazy (Buch, 2022). At least when John Ralston Saul talked about a culture of contempt, he contextualised the phenomenon. Saul's Massey Lectures, published as *The Unconscious Civilization* (2014) portrayed a view of:

> Our society, John Ralston Saul argues in his 1995 CBC Massey Lectures, is only superficially based on the individual and democracy. Increasingly it is conformist and corporatist, a society in which legitimacy lies with specialist or interest groups and decisions are made through constant negotiations between these groups. The paradox of our situation is that knowledge has not made us conscious. Instead, we have sought refuge in a world of illusion where language is cut off from reality. Reconnecting language to reality, clarifying what we mean by individualism and democracy, making these realities central to the citizen's life, identifying ideologies in

order to control them, these are among the first elements of equilibrium which Saul proposes in these lectures. (from John Ralston Saul [website]).

The language of 'contempt', 'cancel culture', 'woke', and of the culture-history wars generally, are cases where language is cut off from reality.

1.3.3 Factchecking.

Fact-checking is a process that seeks to verify factual information, in order to promote the veracity and correctness of reporting. Fact-checking can be conducted before (*ante hoc*) or after (*post hoc*) the text is published or otherwise disseminated.

Fact-checking is by far the best solution to the language of the culture-history war; however, it is not without its challenges. Fact-checking only works if there is trust with the fact-checkers. It is like satire which can backfire if the semantics is not clear enough (e.g., Zhou, 2020).

1.3.4 Peace.

Peace can be both a solution to counter the warfare strategies or it can also, disingenuously, be another warfare strategy. Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. Throughout history, leaders have used peacemaking and diplomacy to establish a type of behavioural restraint that has resulted in the establishment of regional peace or economic growth through various forms of agreements or peace treaties. Such behavioural restraint has often resulted in the reduced conflict, greater economic interactivity, and consequently substantial prosperity. I have already written in detail about finding peace in the culture-history war (Buch, 2019).

1.4 Political or Social Corruption

How culture-history war leads to academic ruin is through political or social corruption in the communication.

1.4.1 Trolling.

There are the technological agendas and there are the warfare strategies. However, the problem of ruining academia comes down to the personality of those involved. It is their (or our) behaviour that is blameworthy. There are three types of behaviour. Trolling is a foremost problem of behaviour presented. In Internet slang, a troll is a person who posts inflammatory, insincere, digressive, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), a newsgroup, forum, chat room, online video game, or blog), with the intent of provoking readers into displaying emotional responses, or manipulating others' perception. This is typically for the troll's amusement, or to achieve a specific result such as disrupting a rival's online activities or manipulating a political process. Even so, Internet trolling can also be defined as purposefully causing confusion or harm to other users online, for no reason at all.

Trolling has been a issue for some years (Linskey, 2020), but it still a global and a local matter (Beikoff, 2022). There are some movements on proposed anti-troll laws, but there is little agreement on the detail (Bannister, 2022). Part of the problem is a perception that trolls are other persons, and does not apply to oneself (Brooks, 2022). While some trolling behaviour is obvious, other defined patterns are not.

1.4.2 Blocking.

Blocking has been discussed, but it should be added that it goes to a personality type. In my description it would be a 'cold personality', but technically it maybe several medical conditions. Avoidant Personality Disorder (AvPD), which is a Cluster C personality disorder characterized by excessive social anxiety and inhibition, fear of intimacy (despite an intense desire for it), severe feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, and an overreliance on avoidance of feared stimuli (e.g., self-imposed social isolation) as a maladaptive coping method. Those affected typically display a pattern of extreme sensitivity to negative evaluation and rejection, a belief that one is socially inept or personally unappealing to others, and avoidance of social interaction despite a strong desire for it. There is a withdrawal from the other which may be interpreted as 'blocking'. There is a spectrum of empathy-altruism.

Empathy quotient (EQ) is a psychological self-report measure of empathy developed by Simon Baron-Cohen and Sally Wheelwright at the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge. EQ is based on a definition of empathy that includes cognition and affect. The autism spectrum is a range of neurodevelopmental conditions generally characterized by difficulties in social interactions and communication, repetitive behaviours, intense interests, and unusual responses to sensory stimuli. It is commonly referred to as autism or, in the context of a professional diagnosis, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but the latter term remains controversial among neurodiversity advocates, neurodiversity researchers, and many autistic people, due to the use of the word disorder, and due to questions about its

utility outside of diagnostic contexts. Asperger syndrome (AS), also known as Asperger's, was the name of a neurodevelopmental disorder no longer recognised as a diagnosis in itself, having been merged into autism spectrum disorder (ASD). It was characterized by significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests. It was said to differ from other diagnoses that were merged into ASD by relatively unimpaired language and intelligence. Being medical conditions, there is ambiguity as to blameworthiness.

There are several layers, therefore, that get entangled. There are the medical conditions, there are also the ideology, which is again different to the politics (Graff, 2022), and then there is the entertainment of social media services, like TikTok, and streaming services, like Netflix, which get caught up in media wars (*InQueensland* article, 2022).

1.4.3 Manipulation.

Manipulation in psychology is a behaviour designed to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage, and maybe another personality type involved in the alleged ruin of academia. This involves several more disorders: antisocial personality disorder, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder, histrionic personality disorder, and narcissistic personality disorder. Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD or infrequently APD) is a personality disorder characterized by a long-term pattern of disregard of, or violation of, the rights of others as well as a difficulty sustaining long-term relationships. Borderline personality disorder (BPD), also known as emotionally unstable personality disorder (EUPD), is a personality disorder characterized by a long-term pattern of unstable interpersonal relationships, distorted sense of self, and strong emotional reactions. Those affected often engage in self-harm and other dangerous behaviours, often due to their difficulty with returning their emotional level to a healthy or normal baseline.

Conduct disorder (CD) is a mental disorder diagnosed in childhood or adolescence that presents itself through a repetitive and persistent pattern of behaviour that includes theft, lies, physical violence that may lead to destruction, and reckless breaking of rules, in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate norms are violated. Histrionic personality disorder (HPD) is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as a personality disorder characterized by a pattern of excessive attention-seeking behaviours, usually beginning in early childhood, including inappropriate seduction and an excessive desire for approval. People diagnosed with the disorder are said to be lively, dramatic, vivacious, enthusiastic, extroverted and flirtatious. Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is a mental disorder characterized by a life-long pattern of exaggerated feelings of self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, a diminished ability to empathize with others' feelings, and (often) psychologically abusive behaviour. Narcissistic personality disorder is one of the sub-types of the broader category known as personality disorders. It is often comorbid with other mental

disorders and associated with significant functional impairment and psychosocial disability. The challenge to these medical critiques is that the sociological observation that the descriptions are normative, and the definition as a medical condition, and not a social condition, comes down the measurement on common behaviour. Thus, manipulation in social media can both normative and abnormal. In the media it seems as if manipulation is normative political behaviour (e.g., Cillizza, 2020; Smith, 2020; Ressa, 2022; Turnbull, 2022).

1.5 Entertainment

There is another personable and ethical aspect to this explanation. People like to get high on conflict. It becomes entertaining watching or participating in drama and conflict for some personalities.

1.5.1 Propaganda.

The connection between personality types and social media is the connection between the indulging of the technology and the entertainment value that one gains from the use of technology (Brownell, 2022). Entertainment is a form of activity that holds the attention and interest of an audience or gives pleasure and delight. It can be an idea or a task, but is more likely to be one of the activities or events that have developed over thousands of years specifically for the purpose of keeping an audience's attention. The ruin of academia comes from an entertainment value of harming, harming the learning of self and/or others.

1.5.2 Entertainment from Social Media.

Propaganda is the entertainment harm. It harms learning, in that what is learnt in propaganda is not truth. More is said on this further on. The punch-up at the Oscars this year and its reporting raises questions about social media, Hollywood, and the perception of violence (InQueensland article, 2022).

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From the Direction of the University

2.0 University

The concept of the University has had difficulty relationship with the concept of Social Media. Historically, there is both tensions and overlap. If we wish to understand academia ruin, we need to understand the university.

2.0.0 Concept of the University.

There are different truths, but Truth is a universal concept. The University was setup to describe and explain that universality. On the Forgan Smith building at the University of Queensland, is chisel "Great is truth and mighty above all things", an inscription from 2 Esdras. In the last decade the literature on the University has greatly increased. The former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Glyn Davis wrote the book of *The Australian Idea of a University* (2017). Davis, as Vice-Chancellor, was concerned that the 1990s model of the American private online university challenged the role of the public university, and argued that the public university had to adapt, not to a new role as social media, but tightening the concept of a University Education and finding new ways to fund a multi-disciplinary approach to higher education. This became the Melbourne Model, with its faults and benefits. The approach was to recognise that persons will continue to pursue traditional career pathways, against the bullshit claims of neo-liberal politicians and economists. These are careers in medicine, basic science, sociology and social work, and "cultural production" as history and the arts. These are academic-based careers, whether it is inside the university or not. David Willetts (2017) *A University Education*, sums up the vision by saying, "The modern university in Britain and around the world is providing more such opportunities for more people from a wider range of backgrounds than ever before and most of them leave university imbued with some of these values of pursuing truth through reason and evidence" (2017: 372). That is the hope against the cynicism.

2.0.0.1 The Modern University.

The Modern University unfortunately thought differently. Truth is fragmented into disciplines, which are then fragmented into sub-fields. Truth is no longer above all things, but have become the instruments of the disciplines and the fields, and often as rules; a view rejected by *dissent* academics and scholars. Postmodernism was 'the grave-digger' but modernity is also to blame when the disciplines and the fields attempted to colonialize what was perceived and ranked as weaker disciplines and the fields. Medicine sought to be a great coloniser. Rather than hold to a perspectivism, these academic approaches were based on a view that 'Truth' was the discipline or the field, and theirs's were the evangelical call to take all others prisoners.

In Hannah Forsyth's (2014) *A History of the Modern Australian University* is the call for compatible reason between the over-optimists and the cynics:

> For the past 20 years, books about universities worldwide have been gloomy affairs, sometimes for good reason. Catalogues of everything that is wrong with the universities are reflected in titles like *The Fall of the Faculty* or *Education's End*. American historian Anthony Grafton called these works 'jeremaids', a collectively pronouncing the end of the scholarly world. Australia's Richard Hil's evocatively titled *Whackademic* falls into the same category. I choose, for reasons that I hope becomes obvious throughout this book, not to follow their path. This is not to ignore higher education's considerable problems. Indeed, an academic apocalypse can clearly not be averted by blind optimism – if it could, Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis's otherwise well-researched Boyer lectures in 2010 on *The Republic of Learning* would have fixed all our problems. Nevertheless, in adopting some of the spirit of both the Jeremiahs and the optimists, *A History of the Modern Australian University*, is a history that has implications for the present. It shows how the things that are wonderful about collecting clever people together to study, research, think and teach and the dreadful, corrupted, ridiculous and wasteful aspects of higher education are both wrought by history (2014: 5).

The argument of this philosophic history-sociological paper is the same compatibilist conclusion on the roles of academia and social media.

2.0.0.2 University as Marketing.

The opposite approach of the reductive higher education, into one side or another, is the multi-discipline faculty or university. Universality works better with an approach that is inclusive and aware how bubble thinking has a distorting effect on concept and practice of Truth.

A filter bubble or ideological frame is a state of intellectual isolation that can result from personalized searches when a website algorithm selectively guesses what information a user would like to see based on information about the user, such as location, past click-behaviour and search history. As a result, users become separated from information that disagrees with their viewpoints, effectively isolating them in their own cultural or ideological bubbles. The choices made by these algorithms are not always transparent.

The multi-discipline approach is not without its own problems, but the faults are not fatal. The multi-discipline approach will also be bias. An outlook can be fuller and rounded but it will **not** be perfect in scoping, and it centre will still be one perspective among others. The compatibility will always be fallible and incomplete, and some tensions remains, however, that is the heart of the definition in consensus. Everyone does not have agree completely, opening up for the cynic's fallacy. In the definition of consensus, is the focus on establishing agreement of at least the majority or the supermajority and avoiding unproductive opinion differentiates consensus from unanimity, which requires all participants to support a decision. This is where marketing the modern university fails. University marketing pays too little attention to the scholarship of universality, preferring instead to market to targeted audiences for the best profit margin. Silke-Maria Weineck (2022) shows how 'University Marketing' suppresses *diverse* 'Academic Freedom' in the preferential-type thinking.

2.0.0.3 The Tension Between Meritocracy and Mediocrity.

It is probably too easy to blame the corporate university, in the fashion of scapegoating. Although corporatism shares a large slice of the blame, postmodernism has been correct in bringing forth an understanding of the tension between Meritocracy and Mediocrity. Mediocrity usually has a negative connation in academia. Mediocre (a term defined as "having no peculiar or outstanding features") and mediocrity (the condition of being mediocre) is more commonly used as an attack term in modern culture. However, this is not always the case. The mediocrity principle is the philosophical notion that "if an item is drawn at random from one of several sets or categories, it's more likely to come from the most numerous categories than from any one of the less numerous categories". The idea is to assume mediocrity, rather than starting with the assumption that a phenomenon is special, privileged, exceptional, or even superior. Meritocracy (merit, from Latin mereō, and -cracy, from Ancient Greek κράτος kratos 'strength, power') is the notion of a political system in which economic goods and/or political power are vested in individual people based on talent, effort, and achievement, rather than wealth or social class. Advancement in such a system is based on performance, as measured through examination or demonstrated achievement. Mediocrity has popularly seen as common good, but in recent decades it has been critiqued for higher education and the public square. Peter Mandler (2020) in *The Crisis of the Meritocracy: Britain's Transition to Mass Education since the Second World War* has well explored these themes.

2.0.1 Academics' Views of the University.

The Academics' Views of the University tends to spin around the forementioned Ideals: the historical concept of the University, Truth as Universality, Modernity, Postmodernism, Corporatism, Marketing, and both Meritocracy and Mediocrity. The semantics in the views, unfortunately get entangled in the outlook.

Claire & Simon Ville Wright (2018) in an article called, 'The university tea room: informal public spaces as ideas incubators', sees informal academic dialogue as the counterpoint to the formal, silo-like structures of the modern organisation, encouraging social bonds and discussion across departmental lines. This is no doubt a combination of meritocracy and mediocrity when academics too often speak far beyond their expertise and readings. Indeed, this is the academic prejudicial blind-spot when university positioned scholars, in very nasty and cynical fashion, infer those scholars who have been sidelined in careers outside the university often speak far beyond their expertise and readings. These are scholars where collegial behaviour is due, both ways, inside and outside the university. Collegialism has unfortunately been breaking down, and some think that the Ideal was always phony. Collegiality is the relationship between colleagues. A colleague is a fellow member of the same profession.

Colleagues are those explicitly united in a common purpose and respecting each other's abilities to work toward that purpose. A colleague is an associate in a profession or in a civil or ecclesiastical office. In a narrower sense, members of the faculty of a university or college are each other's colleagues. Sociologists of organizations use the word 'collegiality' in a technical sense, to create a contrast with the concept of bureaucracy. Classical authors such as Max Weber consider collegiality as an organizational device used by autocrats to prevent experts and professionals from challenging monocratic and sometimes arbitrary powers. More recently, authors such as Eliot Freidson (USA), Malcolm Waters (Australia) and Emmanuel Lazega (France) have said that collegiality can now be understood as a full-fledged organizational form. Nevertheless, when the university bureaucracy dominates in the academic agenda, Collegiality (the practice) and Collegialism (the ideal) breaksdown.

2.1 Truth and Epistemology

The concept of the University is founded in a view of Truth; that is, there are truths capable of universality.

2.1.0 Truth.

Untangling the threads of the Academics' outlook, in the attacks on social media, goes back to a fallibilist view in the Ideal of Truth. Academics, of all people, get too easily confused on what an Ideal is, and misconstrues various versions of realism. Ideals can be used as social reality. An ideal is a principle or value that one actively pursues as a goal, usually in the context of ethics, and one's prioritization of ideals can serve to indicate the extent of one's dedication to each. The attack on the Ideal comes from the cynic.

Cynicism was once the Ancient Greek, *κυνισμός*, a school of thought of ancient Greek philosophy as practiced by the Cynics (*Κυνικοί*; Latin: *Cynici*). For the Cynics, the purpose of life is to live in virtue, in agreement with nature. As reasoning creatures, people can gain happiness by rigorous training and by living in a way which is natural for themselves, rejecting all conventional desires for wealth, power, and fame, and even flouting conventions openly and derisively in public. Instead, they were to lead a simple life free from all possessions. Today, cynicism has become an attitude characterized by a general distrust of the motives of "others". A modern cynic may have a general lack of faith or hope in people motivated by ambition, desire, greed, gratification, materialism, goals, and opinions that a cynic perceives as vain, unobtainable, or ultimately meaningless and therefore deserving of ridicule or admonishment. Modern cynics do not even share the ancient semantics of non-conformity towards convention. Modern cynics come across as very happy with the way conventions defend their ethical egoism, and the abuse of 'Truth' by academics is well understood in wider educative communities (Amna and Khalid 2022).

2.1.0.1 Post-Truth.

This outlook of cynics-egoists is well demonstrated in Trumpism and it doctrine of "Post-Truth". What is attacked in those post-truth claims are the conventions of modern democracy. It is a global problem, not only in the United States. Post-Truth Politics was seen in the UK's Brexit Referendum (Marshall 2018).

2.1.1 Semantics.

The public intellectuals who support these attacks get away with such claims through logic which ignores semantic distinctions, important in the theories of truth and critical thinking. There are many logical fallacies employed, but the most common is the strawman argument, which is why political rhetoric has become reduced to attacking an opponent. There is a connection between 'Semantic Power' and the Ideal of 'Cancelled Narratives' (Madison 2020).

2.2 Higher Education

The concept of the University is related to the concept of higher education, and thus also the concept of education.

2.2.0 The Concept of Education.

Education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills and character traits. These aims may include the development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Various researchers emphasize the role of critical thinking in order to distinguish education from indoctrination. The growth of the

anti-intellectualism among the cynics-egoists, and the growth of higher education, have come together to create the multifaceted problem. Education is both the solution and the original problem. In the 'Education in the Age of Outrage', Kelly Oliver (2017) believes that, when pain and suffering are equated with moral authority, the mission of higher education becomes an impossible one.

2.2.0.1 The Concept of Growth in Higher Education.

In modernity, the growth of higher education is known as mass education. Historically, there is the trend of mass education being introduced in the aftermath of civil wars. According to a 2022 study, nondemocracies frequently introduced mass education to teach obedience and respect for authority. The effect, though, does not match the motives of the State. Since World War II, developed and many developing countries have increased the participation of the age group who mostly studies higher education from the elite rate, of up to 15 per cent, to the mass rate of 16 to 50 per cent. In many developed countries, participation in higher education has continued to increase towards universal or open access, where over half of the relevant age group participate in higher education.

Higher education is important to national economies, both as an industry, in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy. College or basic undergraduate degree educated workers have commanded a measurable wage premium and are much less likely to become unemployed than less educated workers. The issue here is that, generally-speaking, states have only been concerned about the instrumental value of higher education, specifically job-ready or skilled workers to booster the economy. The masses, as individuals as the aggregate statistic might be, are concerned for enjoyable careers and a life worth living, generally-speaking. Their desires and hopes are being undermined or ruined by Higher Education's 'Cult of Growth' (Daniel 2022).

Higher Education is both the solution and the original problem.

2.2.1 Marketing and Competition.

What happens is that the State and the University sets up those individuals in Marketing and Competition. The choices too often are to the benefit of the State or the University, and not to the student who is facing a very limited number of courses. The choice is very limited because of course reduction in the last three decades, and higher course prices (which is often translated into debt). Again, there are no secrets of the universities' failure here, as wider educated communities are increasing skeptical to the incredulous university's 'Gimmicky Sales Tactics' (Nassirian 2022) and other tactics of Hypercompetition (Reuben, 2022).

2.2.2 Higher Education and Civil Society.

What this says is that modern education has not served civil society well. Civil society can be understood as the 'third sector' of society, distinct from government and business, and including the family and the private sphere. For some scholars, civil society is used in the sense of 1) the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or 2) individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government. One of the important works in this regard is William G. Tienery's *Higher Education for Democracy: The Role of the University in Civil Society* (2021).

2.3 Humanities and Social Science

The key problem in social media is undereducation. The humanities and social science are attacked in the culture-history wars, but they are the pathways to peace.

2.3.0 Concept of the Education.

If we look back to the semantics of education, there is very little development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty in the modern system. These were, though, the features of adult education communities that once existed in the histories but were overturned by the technological agenda and power politics in both governance and social interest groups. There still, however, some hope that, today, we can return to the "Adult Student's Hard Lessons" (Lee, 2022) and revive the benefits of past historical models.

2.3.0.1 The Humanities.

Strangely, the reason why this might be so, is that mass education and it discontents has led to the attacks on the humanities and social sciences, whereas these categories of the disciplines go to the features of humanity -- understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Humanities are academic disciplines that study aspects of human society and culture. Resisting the attacks, may be forging a new path forward (a renewed 'back-to-the-future'). In the Renaissance, the term, 'Humanities' contrasted with divinity and referred to what is now called classics, the main area of secular study in universities at the time. Today, the humanities are more frequently defined as any fields of study outside of professional training, mathematics, and the natural and social sciences. They use methods that are primarily critical, or speculative, and have a significant historical element—as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural sciences; yet, unlike the sciences, the humanities have no general history, in a singular sense; science is a narrower thread defined variously within the humanities, that is, the philosophy and history of science. Although the humanities has no history in a singular sense, Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon well demonstrates a complex modern histories in *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age* (2021). Their

argument, as in this paper, is that the complexity has to be with the tensions between the modern state and the academy. It is a kind of permanent crisis; however, the crisis narratives can be untangled for fallible solutions.

2.3.0.2 The Social Sciences.

Social science is one of the branches of science, devoted to the study of societies and the relationships among individuals within those societies. The term was formerly used to refer to the field of sociology, the original "science of society", established in the 19th century. In addition to sociology, it now encompasses a wide array of academic disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, economics, human geography, linguistics, management science, communication science, political science and psychology. It is social science which demonstrate the reasons why scientists ought not claim false certainty in the process of informing the public (Sanders, 2022).

2.3.1 The State and Public Education.

The histories of the humanities and social science is one with the history of the state and public education. The modern state usually employs the strategy of 'divide-and-rule' within the other social sectors, to stay in power under the partisan governance. Governments will set the agendas of the business classes against one-another, when uncertain what to do with the economy. The culture-history war is used by government to unsettle community opposition to the state, portraying themselves (elected political leaders) as the defenders of civil society against uncivil behaviour within the community. Nevertheless, on these questions it is Non-Governmental Organizations which are "mostly a force for good" (Kaloudis, 2017). Currently there are 'Social Movement Organization' which are able to transform social media for good (e.g., Selander, 2016). The well-respect Australian social historian, the late Stuart Macintyre (2006), understood this importance in how public organisations connect and quality of the communication.

2.3.1.1 Careerism.

If the state/governance was so concerned for civil society, the question has to be asked why governments pay so little concern to the legitimate career ambitions, everyone, that is, except for careers in politics. How an individual interprets the term "career" can distinguish between extreme careerists and those who can leave their career at the door when they come home at night. There is both a negative and positive to the Wikipedia definition. Careerism is the propensity to pursue career advancement, power, and prestige outside of work performance. Is that a good thing or bad outcome? There is no clear answer, however, careers are essential to a flourishing life. Careers do involve marketing and competition in a forward movement, however, too often, for most, it is the marketing and competition which erode the career opportunities (e.g., Myskow, 2022).

2.3.1.2 Distance in Learning.

The failures in the education systems have greatly contributed to the failures in careers. There is what I call, "distance in learning" coming from the postmodern process of fragmentation. A healthy outlook on civil society depends upon worldviews which are empathetic and inclusive. Urban studies are important in this regard. Urban development and the growth of cities creates distances between persons, and there is the 'Ethics of Social Distance' (Lobo, 2021). Isolation is a great killer in education.

2.3.1.3 Exceptionalist Theses.

The fragmentation has only strengthen historic and national exceptionalist theses. Exceptionalism is the perception or belief that a species, country, society, institution, movement, individual, or time period is "exceptional" (i.e., unusual or extraordinary). The term carries the implication, whether or not specified, that the referent is superior in some way (Zac 2020).

2.4 Academic Worldview

The undereducation, so described in this paper, in that most persons are ignorant of the basic topics and themes, effects everyone, including academics. The academic worldview, as a general framework, is entangled in misunderstanding. Academics speak too often far from their expertise, and are unfairly critical of generalist experts who attempt fuller and rounded scoping.

2.4.0 The Concept of the Education.

The purpose of public education is not exceptionalism. It can only work from an open view to understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. It is clear within the wider educated communities that academics unnecessarily offend their students, to the detriment of learning (Landecker, 2022). Educational theories have become too much a fashionable academics without understanding both benefits and the criticisms. Even student-centred education has an unkind underside (Powell, 2022).

2.4.0.1 Academics' Views of the University.

The concerns that academics have in relation to the ruin of academia by social media goes to legitimate fears of their own careers. The problem here is that university academics, with very little experience of community use of social media, still thinking in terms of the ivory tower,

albeit the denial of such claims. This is evidence by the outlook by larger voice of few university academics against the outlook of the scholars who graduated from the university, many now with higher degrees, who are the community leaders in social media. Academia.edu is a for-profit open repository of academic articles free to read by visitors. Uploading and downloading is restricted to registered users. Some additional features are accessible only as a paid subscription. The participants are both those still inside the university and large number outside the institution. Academia.edu is a popular social media platform because it is among the very few places non-university scholars can be published when university academics are themselves are struggling to be published by unscrupulous publishing companies.

Meetup is a social media platform for hosting and organizing in-person and virtual activities, gatherings, and events for people and communities of similar interests, hobbies, and professions. It was founded in 2002 by Scott Heiferman and four others. The company was acquired by WeWork in 2017 and remains headquartered in New York City. Many of the Meet-Ups are gatherings of hobbyists but there are a large number of scholarly community groupings, mostly philosophy or book clubs. The platforms and technology tools have greatly expanded, into enterprises like the Free Thinker Institute, New York. The critical question has to be asked these days is what is the value of the traditional university when such institutions price themselves to highly. Furthermore, there is recent debate from the business world on the value of higher education qualifications. This is, though, is nothing new since the privatisation of higher education, in the last half century, is designed to take capacity for qualifications and its accreditation out of the higher education sector and be controlled by the corporate sector.

There are many stories of academics leaving their university careers behind (e.g., Lees, 2022). Whether there is exaggeration involved is uncertain, and probably it depends on the discipline/field. Nevertheless, there are a host of reasons to leave:

- Basic employment opportunities (Walton, 2022);
- More complex employment opportunities to do with reputation (Bartlett 2022);
- The loss of Academic Community (Lawrence, 2022);
- The disillusionment with pointless academic questions, far removed from the grand public debates (Kristof, 2014);
- The social fears of academics and the hostility of the non-university worlds (Lake, 2022);
- The cold and empty campus environment (Mounk, 2022);
- The erosion of the University from government policies (Jones 2022); and interestingly for this paper…
- The loss of intellectual humility (Persaud, 2022).

2.4.0.1.1 Undermining Democracy.

Hence, from academic views of the University and Social Media are legitimate concerns about academic careers. There are, though, other great concerns about undermining democracy with the corporate takeover of higher education. These concerns parallel the arguments for anti-trust laws in the United States during the Glided Age, and goes to the issue of increased higher education pricing. These laws were argued on the basis of competition, but the irony is that the big business sector works in anti-competitive practices for greater profit margins, for the elite of shareholders. Inflating the price for select university courses has nothing to do with competition between the institutions; it is about the prejudicial decisions, among politicians and university governors, to advantage the career selection in one discipline/field over another. This policy erodes civil society because it erodes individual's legitimate career choices.

Recently, Francis Fukuyama has restated how academia shares blame for demise of liberalism (Reisz, 2022). The complexity is something that even Fukuyama has **not** captured, and the criticism of the modern academy comes from all ideological directions: conservative, liberal, and various forms of radicalism.

Both scopings of the University policies and the immediate work of academics has to be considered.

2.4.0.1.1.1 Technology. Emailing.

There are also concerns about the effects of the technological agenda. One of the biggest complaints in academic work, is the heavy load of emailing, the voluminous inboxes to attend to, and mass communication to send out (LoSchiavo 2022).

2.4.0.1.1.2 Technology. Trolling.

University cybersecurity tends to do a good job at preventing trolling, but with the recent Optus failure, there are still legitimate concerns about trolling and hacking (e.g., Maloney, 2022; Pritchard, 2022), and the university systems have known to fail in these regards.

2.4.0.1.1.3 Technology. Twitter.

University academics generally fear Twitter and the damage that it causes (Eichhorn 2022). Many non-university scholars, however, have an active Twitter account. Furthermore, the Twitter accounts of scholarly organisations are active with very little concerns.

2.4.0.1.2 Marketing and Competition.

Significantly, though, the University has already succumbed to the active use of social media accounts. Sometimes to minimize the risk they create their own social media platforms, such as UQ Changemakers.

2.4.1.0 Academic Moralism.

To conclude, the chief problem in blaming social media for academic ruin is that the claim is academic moralism (Gutkin, 2022). The forementioned strategies and fallacious thinking comes down to a commitment to a moralism which is academic. It creates the self-referential virtue of the academy, when historically academics have laid their own critical thinking out against the academy. The charge of academics being beholden to an ivory tower are changes made by academics. Like creating a university social media platform, and then blaming social media for academic ruin, it is all hypocrisy.

2.4.1.1 Mob Thinking.

Nevertheless, higher education, the university, the academy does have virtue. It is a solution to mob thinking, if only it did not succumb to the mobs of the markets. There is now a realisation that there are legitimate limits of academic freedom, not imposed from upon high, but the self-imposed limits of an evolving society (Snyder, 2022). This is a society that has evolved beyond "a collective ethical consumption tactic" (Nassauer, 2018). This means growing out the academic herd mentality (e.g., Gutkin, 2022; Jackson 2022) or the groupthink (Dumitrescu, 2022).

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The only way to end this paper is to ask if any key-placed decision-makers can hear, listen and acknowledge the call to change the academy and stop blaming social media. The solutions are all laid out in this paper. Will you act?

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