

**Truth-Telling in the Era of Post-Truth:
Two Cases of Parrhesia for Democracy**

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“Parrhesia” in Ancient Greece, which refers to a specific ethico-political behaviour in which one tells what one considers to be right in an open and brave manner associated with, and more importantly, generated from the loving for the truth at the expense of one’s own life, ought to be ‘revaluated’ especially in the political conjuncture of post-truth era. Declared by the Oxford Dictionaries and Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache as the word of 2016, post-truth/postfaktisch marks the situation and a way of politics in which public opinion is more open to emotional statements and ‘beliefs’ rather than solid facts and truth. However, after the cases of WikiLeaks and Snowden’s Disclosures, transparency and reliability of information (particularly circulating on the internet) has started being questioned and the importance of the ‘truth’ for the state and public affairs has come to the fore. Julian Assange and Edward Snowden could be seen as the leading figures who are forced to assume parrhesiastic roles, as their dissent voices and practices which fall outside the mainstream (or post-truth) politics are not regarded as a use of one of the human rights (freedom of speech) but as ‘a last resort’ to the ethico-political manner in question; thus, ‘trying to use’ a fundamental right turns out to be the reason for a violation of their other basic rights, such as the right to travel /freedom of movement. There is no doubt that “Human Rights” as universally accepted values lie at the heart of ever-globalizing world, and justice is as indispensable as ‘blood’ to the survival of democracy. Therefore, any/every breach of human rights, no matter global or national, has its detrimental impact on democracy. This paper aims to problematize and probe parrhesia, which seems somewhat ‘anachronic’ but still valid in the modern world, in comparison with freedom of speech and tries to relate it to the future of democracy.

Key Words: *Fearless Speech (Parrhesia), Freedom of Speech, Democracy*

Introduction

The relationship between the rulers and the ruled is by nature an asymmetrical one. According to Zygmunt Bauman, the relationship between the state and its subjects has an asymmetrical character as well, just like the relationship between a doctor and his/her patient: A doctor wishes to know all about his/her patient to come up with a diagnosis and treatment just as the state gathers, stores and processes detailed information about its subjects/citizens for the implementation of its policies. However, citizens' access to the data about the state's actions is restricted, for some of them are classified as official secrets. Due to this 'denied access' and/or the state's freedom to collect information, the mutual relations of the state and its citizens are asymmetrical (Bauman & May, 2001, p. 138). It could be assumed that WikiLeaks and Snowden Disclosures can be understood within the context of this asymmetrical relation in question. In other words, these two incidents and figures raise the question of governmental transparency as well as freedom of speech and opinion (which are *sine qua non* for democracy) with the help of new communication technologies.

In the first part of the paper, the political context of the problem, namely post-truth politics, is reviewed: Despite the fact that the term or concept seemed to make its debut in 2016 (the year in which Trump assumed the US Presidency after a controversial election process and the UK decided to leave the European Union with the Brexit Referendum), Ralph Keyes, a bestseller American author, named one his books after the term in 2004. Besides, as a way/manner of politics, it could be assumed the aftermath of 9/11 attacks marks the beginning of post-truth politics, followed by the wars (on terror and for 'democracy'). Particularly, the US military intervention in Iraq with no solid proof related to the cause of war and the political discourse of G. W. Bush can be seen as the reference point of post-truth politics which is now used 'effectively' by D. Trump. Along with the prominent political figures and discourses, the origins, features and structural/objective circumstances that has paved the way for post-truth politics with regard to similar concepts (like populism) is discussed in this part. In the second part of the paper, the act of truth-telling, which used to be called as "*parrhesia*" in Ancient Greece, is put under a conceptual investigation. Although "fearless speech" (*parrhesia*) and "freedom of speech" in modern reception appears to be the same in the first instance, there is a significant difference between these two concepts in that whereof freedom of speech is valid, thereof fearless speech is unnecessary or invalid. A mutually exclusive relationship between these terms forms one of the main ideas of this paper: If *parrhesia*, which is originated from the ancient world, has become a last resort for dissent voices or truth-tellers in today's world, freedom of speech is said to have lost its substantial meaning and essential function. In the last part, this assumption is tried to be argued through the cases of WikiLeaks and Snowden Disclosures with their prominent figures, respectively Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. Together with these figures' role in *parrhesiastic* game, it is also pointed out that acts and actors of this ethico-political activity lead to contemporary debate of human rights as well as the future of [liberal] democracy.

The relationship between human rights (as a whole, as the right to have rights) and democracy (in terms of formal and substantial requirements) is of a symbiotic character. Human rights are inconceivable without democracy or vice versa. That is why the developments in the WikiLeaks and Snowden cases are related to global well being of the democracy along with liberal democratic regimes and human rights for today's world.

Beyond Truth, No Truth: Post-Truth Politics as a New Way of Populism

Truth is more of a philosophical concept rather than a political one, implying an ontological and epistemological nature of knowledge. However, when it is used in politics, it can be understood as a rhetorical discourse of which voters could approve or not. This is not to say that truth in politics is totally free from the facts, but it is to say that facts could be shaped and framed in order for a political claim/speech/discourse to be more appealing. In other words, facts could be coloured or presented in a different way than they truly are in the form of a political discourse without being totally dishonest. For example; according to Keyes, who names one of his books after the term “post-truth”, post-truthfulness is quite different from dishonesty. A liar has to admit that s/he lies with the burden of hesitation, anxiety and shame whereas post-truthfulness provides an ethical twilight zone where people can tell lies without considering themselves to be dishonest. This is also possible by the approach called “*alt.ethics*”, coming out of the said zone (Keyes, 2004, p. 20).

In the realm of politics, the same situation applies to politicians. Keyes points out that Americans are so accustomed to being deceived by their presidents, from Eisenhower (with the case of U-2 Spy plane) through Clinton (with Monica Lewinsky case) and to Bush Jr. (with the pretext of Iraq War in 2003). It could be assumed that the last case of Bush Jr. is related to the Bush Sr.: What Keyes also points out is that “*The emergence of post-truthfulness is linked inextricably with the rise of television.*” (Keyes, 2004, p. 149). In 1990s, with this rise in question, a new way of TV reporting/broadcasting news also rose throughout the Gulf War in 1991. French philosopher J. Baudrillard referred to this new broadcasting later known as “*CNN Effect*” that meant the war was waged and won not in the real world but in the manipulative world of TV broadcasting (Baudrillard, 1995). TV audience saw on their televisions what the mainstream broadcasting companies ‘prepared’ for them. After a decade, Bush Jr. declared war on terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 Attacks with the help of a contested term “pre-emptive war”. What he tried to do was transport democracy to Iraq, where, he claimed, chemical and mass weapons of destruction were stored. Years later in 2016, Colin Powell, former US Secretary of State, admitted that they were wrong.

What happened in Afghanistan and later in Iraq formed the initial documents that WikiLeaks started leaking in 2010: More than 76.900 documents under the name of “Afghan War Diary” and almost 400.000 documents under the name of “Iraq War Logs” were leaked (Karhula, 2011). One of these documents, known as “Collateral Murder”, shocked the global civil society after its initial ‘release’. The document in question was a video footage (showing over a dozen people being slain without discrimination) that had been requested from the US by Reuters according to the Freedom of Information Act before it was eventually leaked by WikiLeaks (Dijkman, 2012, p. 59).

Hiding the truth is nothing new, but going beyond the truth (post-truth) is relatively a new phenomenon. As it is mentioned above, post-truthfulness had its momentum with the rise of television and Bush Sr. used it effectively. What Bush Jr. did further was creating claims about imminent threats and benefiting from post-truthfulness. However, what distinguishes Donald Trump from Bush Administrations lies in the fact that he makes use of post-truthfulness for his election campaign and particularly for internal matters of the US, not only for international conflicts. That is why post-truth politics have drawn attraction; for, after its employment for mobilizing the voters, it can be linked with populism.

Before dealing with the champion of post-truth politics, it is better to define what post-politics is: “*Post-truth politics:*” writes Fish, “*a form of politics where there is a willingness to issue warnings regardless of whether there is any real sense of the events being likely to come about, or make promises that there is no real commitment to keeping, or make claims that there is no real reason to believe are true, all for the purpose of gaining an electoral*

advantage –and, as the Brexit case and the Trump campaign both demonstrate, this has significant consequences for international as well as national politics.” (Fish, 2016, p. 211). This definition could be complemented with the most famous definition by the Oxford Dictionaries, going as an adjective “*relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appealing to emotion and personal belief.*” When this way of politics and the adjective meets with populism in the era of mass communication, there appears post-truth politics in full sense, the era of post-truth: creating a false view of the world with the intent to maximise the public support against the so-called ‘elites’ at home and the ‘enemies’ abroad. Social media, on the other hand, facilitates post-truth populism/politics as it allows fear and rumour/feeling and emotions to circulate ‘faster’ than facts and evidence. Even announcing new policies via Twitter, Donald Trump, the US President, can be taken as the embodiment of post-truth politics as a populist politician (Speed and Mannion, 2017, p. 250).

Despite the ‘fact’ that 76% of 77 statements made by Trump was false –according to PolitiFact, a fact-checking website– before he came to power (Fish, 2016, p. 211), the form of his politics matters more than the content. In other words, methods of persuasion –as they were put nearly 2500 ago by Aristotle– needs special attention when it comes to authoritarian populism by the means of post-truth politics.

Rhetoric as a means of persuasion can be broken down into three main points, according to Aristotle: *logos, ethos and pathos* are the components of rhetoric which are bound up respectively with the appeal to argument and evidence, the appeal based on the character and qualities of the speaker, and the appeal to emotion (Montgomery, 2017, p. 6).

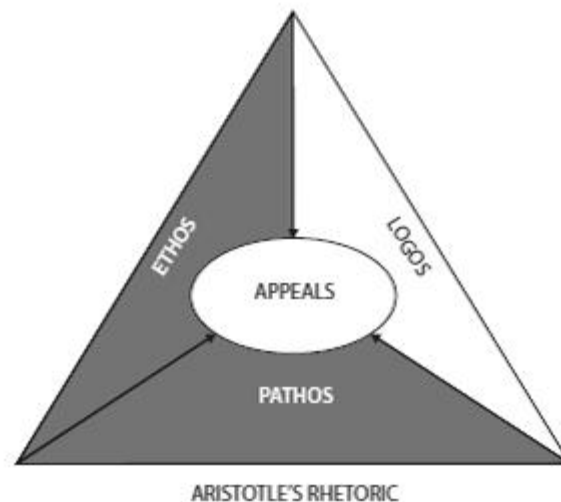


Figure 1: The Bias of Trump’s Rhetorical Appeal

Source: Montgomery (2017, p. 15)

As it can be seen in the figure above, post-truth politics (embodied and represented by Trump’s way of running election campaign and administration) is dependent upon a strong emphasis on ethos and pathos, while logos that implies the argument and the evidence in the rhetoric is ignored. For example; Trumps puts an emphasis on his character (*ethos*) and addressing his audience/voters’ emotions by saying “*Nobody respects women than I do.*” or “*Nobody knows the system better than me, which is why I alone can fix it.*” However, his statement, “*81% of murdered whites are killed by blacks.*” can be taken as the lack of *logos*, as it is rebutted by the fact that 82% of murdered whites killed by whites according to the FBI record. In other words, while pathos and ethos are the strong components of Trump’s post-

truth politics, logos is invisible and his political discourse has a weak relationship with verifiable fact (Montgomery, 2017, p. 5-7 & 14-15).

Populist politics has a long history, but populist politics backed by post-truth politics/rhetoric to the extent that even climate change (as not only a verifiable but also a sensible fact) can be denied by Trump could be taken as something new to political competition and affairs. However, it should be pointed out that the term “post-truth” may be novel, but the contempt for truthfulness can be said to have persisted since the rise of neoliberalism, a very useful term to describe the political developments after 1980s. Though the term neoliberalism is somewhat ‘over-used’ by the scholars, it is yet an important concept to understand the objective/structural limits of administrations. It could also be assumed that populism backed by post-truth politics is an apparatus for overcoming these objective or factual limits/obstacles such as environmental problems, inequalities in economic life etc. caused by neoliberal policies (Lockie, 2017, p. 2). To put another way, politicians of populist movements and parties through their leaders’ ethos and pathos have been avoiding from logos which show the problems as well as well the limits of neoliberalism. For example, post-truth politics lead by Trump in the US, could be understood as a ‘belated reaction’ or answer to the 2008 Financial Crisis.

Accordingly, truth or facts are not ‘appropriate’ for populist post-politics, since “*Facts are negative. Facts are pessimistic. Facts are unpatriotic.*” (as cited in Young, 2016), opposing to what Trump puts forward in his exaggerated concern about immigration, anxiety about the US declining power and sovereignty and distrust of elites and experts (Montgomery, 2017, p. 4-5). Post-truth has nothing to do with reality (or totality of facts), for behind truth is there reality/facts. Hence, it may be well assumed that there is no truth beyond the truth, post-truth. The dialectical antidote of post-truth is, then, the ‘raw’ truth itself, which is what WikiLeaks is willing to do as it leaks documents without any filter or retouching them. The following part of the paper is intended to conceptualise the disclosure efforts before handling the cases and figures of parrhesia and their relation to democracy.

Parrhesia (Fearless Speech) and Freedom of Speech: A Mutual Exclusivity

Could D. Trump considered to be parrhesiastic actor? According to Foucault who tried to conceptualised parrhesia in his last classes, the answer is “yes”, for parrhesia has got a double meaning. Just as parrhesia is telling the truth for the sake of the truth with a strong ethical drive and courage, parrhesia also means semantically telling everything no matter it is true or not, no matter the drive is ethical or not. To put it another way, according to Foucault, parrhesia could be conceptualized in two ways as positive and negative parrhesia. Trump is, then, seen as an example of “negative parrhesia” as he says everything without the burden of ‘hesitation’, anxiety and shame mentioned above (post-truthfulness). However, when parrhesia or “fearless speech” is considered with a specific regard to post-truth politics, the positive meaning of parrhesia appears to be the opposition as well as ‘antidote’ to populist post-truth politics.

Apart from this strict sense, parrhesia in general is bound up with the existential position of human beings: Only humans can make history, pushing the limits forward that the nature imposes upon them. In other words, only humans can engage in a conscious and creative activity to change and shape the world and have this unique ability/potential to do so. Ioanna Kucuradi prefers to describe this potential as “dignity”. Humans are all born equal in terms of dignity, in Kucuradi’s words, “*human dignity is the subjective reflection of/equivalent to humans’ objective merit.*” (Kucuradi, 2011, p. 72).

It is clear that “Human Rights” are responsible for protecting our “potential/dignity” to change the world in a “positive” way, to keep us contributing to the civilization. They are the

rights which do not make us live more comfortably, but the rights that make us human. The right to “Freedom of Opinion and Expression”¹, one of the most important of these rights, occupies a special position as it is closely related to self-reflexivity and the discursive potential/capacity for provocative and transformative actions. Any breach and violation of human rights, therefore, could be taken as a symptom that human dignity is ignored, and as a historical point which signifies a return to the previous ages of 20th Century. In terms of freedom of speech, it can be contended that the name of this ‘retrospective’ symptom is *parrhesia*, and the historical point dates back to Ancient Greek.

Parrhesia, as the specific term for an ethico-political behaviour in ancient times, needs to be problematized in today’s world as freedom of speech is incessantly violated at global as well as national levels. The concept parrhesia is generated from the Greek word “*Parrhesiazesthai*” which is the juxtaposition of the words “*pan*” (everything) and “*rhema*” (to say/express). Accordingly, parrhesia means saying/expressing everything in an open and decisive manner. In pursuit of its genealogy, Foucault states that parrhesia dates back to the V. Century BC and makes it to the 5th Century AD. The very first text in which parrhesia appears is Euripides’s tragedy called “Ion”, and according to Foucault, the term is bound up with “*isegoria*” (equality of speech) and “*isonomia*” (equal participation in the exercise of power) under the Athenian Democracy². Through this free and equal state of speech, “*parrhesiastes*” (people who resort to parrhesia) engage in a multiple and interconnected relationship with the truth (or what he considers to be the truth), his own life, other people and ethical/moral rules (Foucault, 2001, p. 22 & Walzer, 2013, p.4). In Foucault’s words, “[P]arrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (...) and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty.” (Foucault, 2001, p.19). As it can be derived from this definition, the attributes of fearless speech; frankness/sincerity, truth, risk of death, criticism and duty. It could be assumed that without adding to new attributes, if the risk of death is stretched a bit (like the violation of other fundamental rights), the term or concept fearless speech could cover many cases (Sauter & Kendall, 2011, p. 6).

Thus, it can be contended that freedom of speech has the risk of turning into fearless speech when the unity of human rights gets ‘breakable’: The very first right of humans is to live which is meaningful with the right of integrity in both physical and mental senses that is completed by the right to privacy. As a species like other species, humans can be discerned by the efforts to give a meaning and reason to their lives that is about the freedom of thought, conscious and religion. However, if this meaning and reasoning is not allowed to speak up, the freedom in question lose its ‘essence’. Freedom of speech here protects this right individually, while the right to protest and freedom of association does so collectively. The legal basis of protection of these rights is the right for a fair trial (Sirin, 2016, p. 52–53). These fundamental rights are so bounded each other that human rights as a plural name could be called “human right” (Cangizbay, 2006, p.11). The ‘bound’ or interconnectedness can only be lost if one of these rights is isolated or ‘alienated’ from this entirety. For example; if freedom of speech is conceived as a political right instead of a fundamental right, the chain of the rights could be assumed ‘broken’ (Jack, 2004, p.123). As in the table below, parrhesia as an ethico-political behaviour remains anachronic but valid as long as freedom of speech is isolated and breakable which is, at the same time, open to any violation.

Parrhesia	Freedom of Speech
An Ethico-Political Manner	A Fundamental Right
Related to Freedom of Expression	Having the risk of turning into Parrhesia
Anachronic yet valid	Isolated and Breakable

Parrhesia as truth-telling on moral duty with a care for others and in relation to truthfulness has never been more important than ever in this era of “post-truth” which could be taken as going beyond lies rather than going beyond the truth. However, as politics goes beyond the truth, freedom of speech faces the danger of turning into parrhesia, for becoming dissent comes with possible violation of other basic rights. That is why parrhesia (though the essence of it ‘speaking up’) drives out freedom of speech, which has the most transformative and creative potential among other fundamental rights.

In other words, what can be derived from above is that human rights are only meaningful in its entirety. An integrated conception of fundamental rights could be embraced as “the rights which make humans human” and the guarantee for the proper democratic regimes as well as a more democratic ‘atmosphere’ for inter/trans-national politics. Any breach in this entirety could lead to going back-ward and facing ‘ancient’ concepts and situations which are not acceptable today’s world. As Jürgen Habermas rightly emphasizes that politics is still trying to catch up with economics in terms of globalization (Habermas, 2001, p. 49). It is also true for global issues about justice, falling short of globalization, since the international rules and legal institutions operate at the discretion of nation-states (many of them call themselves as democracies) and at the institutions built by them, let alone an enormous lack of binding legal principals at global level. For this reason, human rights are getting more and more important for global justice and even its ‘anomalies’ like parrhesia and parrhesiastic cases are worth to be examined and analyzed for the sake of human rights and global democracy. In what follows, this comparison and conceptualisation are employed for a better and critical understanding and explanation for the parrhesiastic acts and actors.

Truth-Telling in the Era of Post-Truth: Two Cases and Figures

If freedom of opinion and expression or freedom of speech is not understood as an integral part of the other human rights, the right in question is always on the edge of becoming parrhesia or fearless speech where the speaker is exposed to violation of his/her basic freedoms and rights. This is apparently unacceptable when the level that today’s world has reached in terms of human rights is considered. From this perspective, Assange and Snowden may well be seen as *parrhesiastes* who have played an important role in forming alternative discourses for the sake of democracy or the transparency of a government in a democratic regime.

However, accessing to any data or information sometimes could be assumed to require going beyond the limits of freedom of speech which is defined by national states and international institutions. In addition; though balancing the said asymmetry between the state and citizens, leaking information/documents or facts do not automatically lead us to democracy. As Lockie puts it, “*Democratizing knowledge is not a kind of alchemy for turning opinions into facts.*” (Lockie, 2017, p. 4) For example, Jullian Assange who is one of the figures that this paper focuses on, as the face of WikiLeaks, “*is neither a messiah nor the message, but he is courageous enough to be the messenger.*”, having been doing much more than simply leaking, as Nayar points out. This role comes with his arrest, the rape charges, the threats of extradition and even a possible assassination. It could be assumed that Assange tries

to testify the truth with his body and freedom. WikiLeaks as a counter-archive –the invisible becomes visible– could be seen as the effort to create alternative discourses rather than the claim to reveal the only/single truth. WikiLeaks emerged as a direct representation of the Iraqi War that was campaigned under the pretext of democracy. WikiLeaks and the parrhesiastic role of Assange can be seen as a moral/ethical position on free speech and can be read as the beginning of the digital parrhesia (Nayar, 2010, p. 27–29). Digital parrhesia can be understood as the process of constructing a global civil space or an ‘electronic agora’ through which a collective afford to produce and dissemination of knowledge could be realized. Hence agora is the place; parrhesia is the activity for democracy. Nevertheless, parrhesia is different from whistle-blowing, which means being the dissent voice rather than staying silent, in that it is not protected by law while whistle-blowing is (Nayar, 2010, p.30). According to the criteria or conceptualisation mentioned above, Assange could be considered to have played a parrhesiastic role, but when it comes to Snowden the case gets clear.

Edward Snowden may as well be seen as an ethical truth-telling subject or an actor who has assumed a parrhesiastic role, despite of the fact that his country promotes freedom of speech in its constitution and considers it at the core of democracy. It could be said that Snowden’s parrhesia underscored the capacity of personal ethics to facilitate a more robust democratisation of the liberal state regime. That is why Edward Snowden, a 29 year old computer analyst for the NSA, publically disclosed highly confidential information from one of the most powerful agencies in the world, can be seen clearly a parrhesiastic case:

It began on 5th of June 2013 when the Guardian published a series of articles online that had many sensitive data about the extent to which secret service agencies can monitor the communication between persons and institutions. These articles disturbed not only the global civil society but also the Americans who thought that the NSA worked for themselves: Firstly, American people were given a guarantee that they were not exposed to mass surveillance by the security measures taken after 9/11. Secondly, after the articles it was understood that the American surveillance programme comprised the whole world, and then the reaction was international. Thirdly, it was also understood that the leaked information came from someone who occupied one of the highest levels of the US security bureaucracy. In this sense, the leaks were also shocking for the US officials. Four days after the Guardian articles, on 9th of June, Snowden appeared and stated that he leaked the information and had an interview Gleen Greenwald and Laura Poitras in Hong Kong. Fourteen days after the interview, Snowden lost his US passport and was charged according to the Espionage Act of 1917 that was mainly about the theft of government documents. At that moment, Snowden gave up on his life in Hawaii, a six-figure salary, a loving girlfriend, all family ties. In sum, in nearly a fortnight he became a man without a country and a man without a body as truth-telling or fearless speech put his life in danger. Though the roots of the scandal dated back to the Bush Jr. Administration, it also shook Obama’s vow to have the most transparent administration in history. (Mills 2015, p. 3–8) [Shutting down the Guantanamo Prison was also one of the striking vows by Obama, but he did not close the prison either.]

What is true for the Assange case is also valid for Snowden; he is an exception to Whistle-blowing Act in the US, although President Obama extended narrowly the comprehension of the act. In other words, what Snowden has done is not accepted by “the digital reason of the state” in the era of post-truth where the security agencies operate all over the world in corporation and sometimes one against another. (Like the other sectors of state affairs in the international fora, it can be said that cooperation goes hand in hand with conflict.) This is reflected by the global security programs such as PRISM, Xkeyscore, Upstream, Quantuminsert as well as the involvement of services in other states such as the UK-GCHQ and its Tempora with as well as its Optic Nerve (Bauman et al, 2014, p. 122 & 124).

Snowden's counter-conduct is then assumed as a direct act of parrhesia; "*as courageous truth-telling about the immorality of a governmental regime.*" –a scratch on the 'baby-face of liberal regime' (Mills, 2015, p.26). When these cases are compared, it could be said that Wikileaks and Assange is familiar with (h)activist journalism on the internet (where meaning is bound up with movement/circulation) through which 'unauthorized circulation of official information' can be possible (Castronovo, 2013, p. 427). However, Snowden case can also be thought of as a promotion of whistle-blowing which contributes to investigative journalism. For Garrido, the meaning of Snowden case is greater than that: "*Snowden's truth-telling practice (parrhesia) constitute a kind of parrhesiastic sousveillance as a technologically-enabled modality of resistance.*" (Wood and Wright, 2015, p. 137). Another 'magnifying' remark is Brunton's: "*WikiLeaks is the application of computational thinking to politics*" which assures transparency for organizations and privacy for individuals plus/through free circulation of knowledge (Brunton, 2011, p. 9).

While WikiLeaks is blamed for being a 'Single Person Organization' (SPO), what roles can NGOs possibly play for the promotion of democracy? It could be assumed that, as Pieterse points out, the use of cyber-technology could be now a new front for free speech which also nurtures democracy (Pieterse, 2012, p. 1917). In Pieterse words, "*WikiLeaks represents the shift from hacking to leaking or facilitating insiders from large organizations to copy sensitive, confidential data and pass it on the public domain while remaining anonymous.*" (Pieterse, 2012, p. 1919). Truth cannot be 'hack-able' but 'leak-able' while journalism is disrupted by the social media – main channel for leaks (Suiter, 2016, p.27). However, it may be well contented that responsibility is still an ethical question for both cases. 1-) All actors (no matter officials or civilians) should be "*responsible because of 2-) his/her actions by which 3-) persons concerned are affected and because of 4-) the consequences the action has. Responsibility judged by an 5-) authority and weighed against the background of certain 6-) norms and values*" points out Thomaß, also saying WikiLeaks comes out of the impetus behind informational asymmetry between state and individuals (Thomaß, 2011, p. 18 & 21). Neither Assange nor Snowden is free from ethics and responsibility in their acts of fearless speech. This is surprisingly the point made by both supporters and opponents of Assange and Snowden: For the latter, their acts are illegal and irresponsible while supporters claim that it is ethics and responsibility that should be protected by law within the comprehension of these cases.

All in all, it could be said that Assange and Snowden comes with a new dimension of getting and having information. What they have done is still arguable with regard to state secrets. However, it could also be said that the owner of the information matters when it comes to this ethical discussion because of the fact that the leaked information comes mainly from the US that has been dominating the intelligence to the disadvantage of other security institutions and has been acting in international unilaterally which has produced serious complications for international order and peace. In other words, these cases are also important in assessing the asymmetry between/among states. Using or assuming to use their basic rights these two figures have lost their rights to travel free, as Assange serving at Ecuador Embassy and Snowden spend his days in asylum in Russia. Their impact is twofold: Positive side of it, their revelations can be used as an instrument against post-truthfulness and post-truth politics. Negative side of it, as leaks have become popular, the information has become more sensitive for states. However, these cases has paved the way for rearguing the quality of information and data, more importantly, the quality of the truth by trying to tell what they think is truth. Their cases make it possible to reassess freedom of speech in comparison to fearless speech which leads us to rethink about democracy and current situation of human rights.

Conclusion

The world of 21st Century is discerned from the previous centuries by technological breakthroughs especially in communication. The immediate results of this development can be seen in producing, disseminating and using information/data on which social relations/interactions, economic transactions, political decisions/actions and cultural activities are increasingly based. Under these circumstances, the problem of who owns the data/information gains a special importance. It may be well assumed that states naturally have an advantage in the face of individuals to get access to information by the help of their institutional design with power and authority, on the one side. On the other side, individuals as voters need information to play their roles as citizens. This asymmetry (State – Citizen Asymmetry) mentioned at the beginning of the paper is considered to constitute the core of the discussion: In liberal democracies, citizens are assumed to speak up for their rights individually or with the help of political parties and/or non-governmental organizations. To do so, freedom of speech and freedom of association play key roles. However, when there are obstacles to these rights, the said asymmetry appears as an abyss. The new information technologies empower states so much that they have unprecedented capabilities of controlling their subjects/citizens as ever and the balancing of this situation is only possible with the active use of human rights.

Getting and having the right information/data is also sore point with the current political conjuncture or in the era of post-truth, as politicians tend to use their ‘fact-free’ political discourses and the voters tend to make decisions ‘beyond reason’. Despite of seeming very straight, these social and political ramifications have their roots or structural causes in neoliberalism, since neoliberal policies has reached their limits and the consequences of it have proved to be ‘unbearable’. That is why post-politics embodied by Trump’s presidency could be taken as a belated reaction to the 2008 Financial Crash, though manipulating facts are nothing new. As people and politicians both avoid from facts which are “negative, pessimistic and unpatriotic”, post-truth politics can be assumed to be both the weapon for election campaigns and the shield for the policies run by political leaders. That is also why post-truth politics could be seen as a kind of populism backed by new information technologies. These technologies also have paved the way for a reaction to post-truth and alternative social and political discourses. Within this context, cases and figures of Assange and Snowden are reviewed. Before handling the cases, however, the conceptual framework of truth-telling are tried to be discussed. Parrhesia, as the ethico-politico behaviour in Ancient Greece is problematized in comparison to freedom of speech. As one of the fundamental rights, freedom of speech is under legal protection, but parrhesia as it is related to truth-telling against the power is not. Even whistle-blowing is protected in the US by the law, but when it comes to parrhesia, there is a legal ‘black hole’. It could be inferred that parrhesia and freedom of speech could be thought to be mutually exclusive. However the core of these actions seems to be the same, they are different in methods and consequences.

As Assange has leaked the documents and Snowden has revealed the international activities of the NSA, they are said to have played parrhesiastic roles because of the fact that they have faced the violation of other rights by trying their right to speak up. In other words, for truth-telling they were forced to use fearless speech instead of freedom of speech. While what they have done is right or wrong is another discussion, the consequences of their actions helped to form alternative discourses. This is actually the very point of their acts that, at the expense of going out of the defined area of freedom of speech, they add to alternative discourses to the current post-truth populist ones. In addition, these two cases of parrhesia revealed the hegemony of the NSA over the other national intelligence services and of course NSA’s unacceptable control of information/data against the established rules of international relations (State – State Asymmetry). After Assange and Snowden, not only individuals but

also other states have become more ‘sensitive’ to new communication technologies and the information derived from them. Besides, it could also be said that ‘liberal looks’ of the US has been scratched by these two acts of parrhesia. A dissent light has been shed upon the dark side of ‘champion’ of democracy. Furthermore, a need for a kind of ‘parrhesiastic surgery’ for the liberal looks has been brought up by these acts and actors.

The bottom line is that post-truth politics necessitates parrhesia while democracy entails freedom of speech. In other words, there is a two way choice between a populist authoritarian regime with parrhesia and a democracy with freedom of speech. This dilemma, it can be contented, would lead us to thinking more about democracy and extending the scope of the current freedoms and devising the new rights both for national and international levels.

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Notes

1. “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” – Article 19th, Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. No doubt, the number of the free men in Athens was very limited, and the most famous “fearless speaker” Socrates was sentenced to death by the democratic regime. However, it should not be forgotten that slavery was survived until the late 19th Century in the USA as an ‘exemplary’ state of democracy and most of the democratic states gave women their rights to vote after the Second World War (Castoriadis, 1997:275).

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