

**Reflections on phronetic social science: a dialogue between Stewart Clegg, Bent Flyvbjerg and Mark Haugaard<sup>1</sup>.**

**Abstract:** Clegg, Flyvbjerg and Haugaard debate the relative strengths and weaknesses of a critique of power developed from Foucault (and Nietzsche) compared to a more Enlightenment liberal tradition, exemplified by Lukes and Habermas. Flyvbjerg and Clegg argue the Enlightenment pursuit of universal liberal normative principles and truth as reason without power, leads to forms of utopian thinking, tied to domination. Drawing on the Aristotelian tradition of *phronesis*, by contrast, they propose a radically contextualist form of critique that situates itself in analysis of local language games to render domination transparent. While Haugaard accepts there cannot be a universal view that transcends the particularities of context, he argues that the phronetic approach is crypto-normative/verificationist because its normative purchase implicitly presupposes unacknowledged liberal normative premises; moreover, any use of ‘truth’ as a criterion follows Enlightenment principles of verification.

Key words: *phronesis*, power, truth, domination, critique.

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**Mark Haugaard:** By way of beginning to this exchange it might be useful to situate Bent’s *phronetic* approach relative to the wider context of the power debates. In particular, the opposition between Lukesian and Foucauldian approaches, which I will use as ideal type representations of the contrast between modern and post-modern methods. This will be followed by an analysis of the concept of tension points, which are key to *phronesis*.

As observed by Stewart (Clegg and Pitsis 2012), when Lukes wrote *Power: a radical view* he wanted to highlight the way in which the dominated appear to acquiesce in their own domination, which is also a phenomenon that fascinates Foucault. Lukes theorized this acquiescence as the third dimension of power, where actors are not simply dominated through overt decision-making and nondecision-making (the first and second dimensions of power) but through the determination of their thoughts, wants and desires. (Lukes 1974: 23). Unfortunately, Lukes theorized this with reference to the Marxist conceptualization of ‘false consciousness’ and ‘real interests’, which carries significant controversial baggage. These terms suggests that the observing social scientist possesses true consciousness and knows social actors’ interests better than they do themselves. As later acknowledged by Lukes (2005: 144-6), this implied an unacceptable privileging of the knowledge of the social scientist, with elitist and even totalitarian implications – in fact, Leninist dogma. However, more profoundly, and methodologically bracket these concerns, Lukes was essentially arguing that power and truth exist in an inverse relationship, whereby domination is reproduced through the obscuring of truth. This constitutes a classic enlightenment claim to the effect that domination comes from, often self-incurred, tutelage to dogmatic authority. A position in line with Kant’s famous injunction in the opening of his short essay, ‘What is Enlightenment’:

Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in the lack of reason but in the lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction of another. *Sapere aude!* ‘Have courage to use your reason!’ – that is the motto of the enlightenment. Kant ([1784] 2007).

In Lukes, the person subject to the third dimension of power does not know their real interests or wants, not because of failure of courage, as in Kant, but because they have been prevented from the correct use of reason through relations of domination. They do not see the truth of their situation as a consequence of power. Hence, truth and reason become a potential banner that can be raised against domination.

From the 80s onwards (a few years after the 1974 (first edition) publication of *Power: a radical view*) the Anglophone academic world of power research became hugely influenced by Foucault's accounts of the mutually constitutive relationship between power and knowledge, (*Power/Knowledge* (1980)). Foucault's analysis renders the Lukesian 'false consciousness' account of domination particularly problematic as the implicitly postulated position of the social scientist as dispenser of true knowledge and real interests appears to be premised upon the very foundations of the strategies of domination identified by Foucault as constitutive of the relations of domination created through the power/knowledge nexus.

To simplify, in arguing that power and truth are mutually constitutive, Foucault was essentially pointing out that the use of truth constitutes way to deconventionalize, thus reify, social knowledge, so that it is no longer contested and becomes part of the natural order of things (Haugaard 2012). Thus, once the social knowledge that sustains particular relations of domination becomes processed through the mill of truth production by experts, consensus can be created between dominated and subaltern. Hence, when confronted with expert knowledge, which includes social science, the dominated will consent to their domination. However, various acts of resistance by the subaltern remain symptomatic of the fact that the apparent consensus masks underlying relations of domination.

Lukes' account of the third dimension of power is implicitly premised upon the taken-for-granted view of the social sciences as yet another *science*. That is to say, the natural sciences constitute a repertoire of truth in the way of natural science. However, as emphasized by you, Bent (Flyvbjerg 2001: 1-8), when measured by the same criteria as the natural sciences, the social sciences constitute a poorly performing relative – a third cousin, twice removed. This suggests that while truth may facilitate technological progress, with regard to the social sciences the dream of liberation from tutelage through truth is illusory. In fact, as demonstrated in Foucault's histories, truth appears to be on the side of domination, silencing potentially resisting minorities into acquiescence.

The above suggests siding with Foucault against Lukes. However, reversing the task of the enlightenment, unmasking truth as domination, entails a significant cost. As a number of notable political philosophers observed when the Foucault effect hit the Anglophone world (including Charles Taylor 1984, Nancy Fraser 1985 and Michael Walzer 1985), Foucault's critique of truth makes it difficult to see how it is possible to move beyond social critique, to the affirmation of something normatively desirable. Any such move would invariably fall foul of the premises of Foucauldian critique itself, as any such affirmation entails its own truth claims. Those claims cannot be exempted from the premises of critique. Hence, they must be interpreted as yet another, even subtler, will to domination.

As I interpret it, in some respects the phronetic method attempts to steer a middle course between Lukes (represented here, for the purposes of argument, as archetypal of conventional social science) and Foucault. In another respects it sidesteps the issue of the relationship between power and truth by focusing upon results

measured by effects upon the social world. With regard to the latter, the validation of *phronesis* is measured relative to public reaction and the consequent capacity to change the world of political decision-making.

In accomplishing this task the conceptual tool of ‘tension points’ is key. You, Bent, use the analogy of splitting a rock with a carefully aimed moderate blow that hits a point of fracture, thus splits the rock with minimum of effort (Flyvbjerg 2012 p.100). In explaining tension points you quote Foucault, as follows: tension points are ‘lines of fragility in the present.... Which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, that is of possible transformation’ (Foucault 1998: 449-50, quoted Flyvbjerg 2012: 100)

These lines of fragility take place through the problematization of points of discourse in a manner that brings about a state of affairs whereby taken-for-granted reality becomes problematized, so that it can no longer be taken-for-granted as the natural order of things. The objective of problematizing tension points is ‘precisely to bring it about that practitioners no longer know what to do, so that the acts, gestures, discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous (Michel Foucault quoted in Miller 1993: 235).’ (Flyvbjerg 2012: 290)

As is correctly observed by you Stewart (Clegg and Pitsis 2012), this is theoretically commensurable with my own argument (Haugaard 2003 and 1997) to the effect that what Lukes has in mind with the third dimension of power, should not be theorized in terms of true and false consciousness but using the conceptual tool of consciousness raising. Essentially, the social consciousness of social actors, used in routine reproduction of social order, is premised upon a consciousness that is largely

tacit but also potentially discursive. To borrow conceptual vocabulary from Giddens (1984), actors have a vast and complex practical consciousness knowledge (*habitus*) that is highly routinized, and constitutes the core of every-day structuration practices. Above this there is discursive knowledge which floats in a sea of practical consciousness – right now I am discursively aware of my objective of explanation and dialogue with *phronesis*, which is premised upon a vast practical consciousness knowledge of the English language, academic conventions and so on. While the two forms of consciousness are conceptually separate, there is a potential free-flow of information back and forth between practical and discursive consciousness. When knowledge of social life is purely at the level of practical consciousness knowledge, it appears unproblematic, as part of the natural order of things. However, when articulated discursively there exists the potential for social critique. In becoming discursive, the structuration practices and the knowledge that sustains them become something that can be observed, discussed and evaluated. Thus the acts, gestures, discourses that up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. In the process of consciousness raising social actors become strangers to themselves. What is natural and taken-for-granted becomes problematic and contested through becoming discursive. In this context the task of social critique becomes to create a discursive awareness of the natural order of things, so it appears strange.

In this type of critique the social scientist will only be effective if what they are stating discursively makes present a reality that accords with the already existent practical consciousness knowledge of social actors. If it does not ring true relative to their practical consciousness, the message will be ineffective. Thus truth is local. This is graphically illustrated by you, Bent, in regard to the opinion polls in which the

general public were asked which figures for cost overruns were true, yours or that of the contractors, and the public overwhelmingly sided with your figures (Flyvbjerg 2012 pp. 95-118). The media and policy success that your phronetic method has is symptomatic of the fact that what you describe accords with what the general public and politicians already know tacitly, at the level of practical consciousness.

From the above, it is obvious that I agree with the phronetic approach in many respects. However, I am not sure that your characterization of the social scientist is entirely correct and I think that in practice (as against theory) a phronetic approach must concede more to Lukes, and to conventional social science, than you acknowledge. Taking these correctives in turn.

In response to Simmons' question, which was "What is not as clear is the extent to which [*Making Social Science Matter*] is calling on social scientists to get involved and *do* politics in lieu of merely *studying* politics . . . To what extent is Flyvbjerg urging social scientists to be social and political beings, to strive to be, in Bourdieu's terms, virtuoso social actors?" (Flyvbjerg 2012: 287), your 'unequivocal answer to Simmons' question is . . . that the phronetic call to social scientists is exactly to become virtuoso social actors in their chosen field of study and to *do* politics with their research...' (Ibid). Following that you go on to critique the traditional idea of the social scientist as a distanced observer and interpreter. In some respects I agree with this answer, in the sense that the *phronetic* researcher must become familiar with the minutiae of the social practices that they study. They must understand the practical consciousness knowledge the actors use. However, in becoming knowledgeable of their subjects, they cannot become indistinguishable from their subjects, as that would compromise the social scientist's consciousness raising capacity.

To explain by way of anecdote, this reminds me of a conversation I had with the English anthropologist, Richard Jenkins, whose specialism is studying Danes (Jenkins 2011). After becoming an acknowledged expert in the local practices of Danes, he is often asked for advice by his subjects, Danes, on how to celebrate weddings, birthday parties and so on in a ‘real Danish way’. However, while Jenkins is more of an expert in the practices of being Danish than Danes themselves, he has not become a Dane. His is discursively aware of what it means to be Danish but his own practical consciousness is still recognizably Belfast, overlaid with English socialization. Consistent with this, like most traditional anthropologists, Jenkins regards it essential that anthropologists study cultures different from their own.

To confront actors with what they take for granted, to make them strangers to themselves, the social scientists *must actually be a stranger* in order to retain the capacity to make visible what appears as the natural order of things as un-natural and constructed. If the social scientist becomes just another politician or activist who internalizes the practical consciousness of those they study, they have lost the conceptual tools of social critique – making strange what previously appeared obvious. In that sense the social scientists have to be distanced from the society that they study. In response to Simmons, they should *not* simply become, yet another, local politician or local virtuoso social actor. However, while this stranger, critiquing power, is separate from society, they are not necessarily separate in the distant, unengaged way of the traditional perception of the social scientist, which was modeled upon the natural sciences.

To come to my second point of critique, while I agree that social scientists should not claim access to some kind of transcendental truth claims, I think you both



go too far in trying to distance yourselves from truth claims. I quote you, Stewart, agreeing with Bent: ‘... social science is non-paradigmatic: there are clearly periods when it *appears as if* there is a dominant paradigm but, we would argue, the mechanisms of its maintenance are above all political: they have to do with sponsorship, enrolment,...’ (Clegg 2012 p. 67; also Flyvbjerg 2001 pp. 30-2). In *Making social science matter*, you, Bent, describe social science in terms of ‘waves of intellectual fashion...’ (Flyvbjerg 2001 p. 30). While this is true to some extent of (bad) practice, it is a profoundly depressing picture<sup>ii</sup>, which, fortunately, constitutes an exaggeration. To use the phronetic method of identifying tension points against you, I will identify a ‘...tension between what is *said* and what is *done*...’ (Flyvbjerg et al 2012 p. 295) in your own work, which suggest you do not really hold to an entirely rejectionist view of the enlightenment perception of social science as a method of unmasking domination through truth.

In *Making social science matter*, you relate an incident in which you participated in Radio debate with the Aalborg alderman for planning and environment. The alderman pulled from his briefcase a sheet of statistics, which he waved it at you as proof that the numbers in your study were wrong. You write :

This, of course, is as bad as it gets for a scholar. We are paid to be that group in society which is best equipped to produce data, knowledge, and interpretations of the highest validity and reliability. This is the main basis of our credibility and existence. Consequently, if someone questions that credibility our existence is at issue. (Flyvbjerg 2001: 157)

This response is entirely consistent with the truth claims of conventional social science. In response to the alderman you ‘crossed your fingers for luck under the

table...' and answered that you were not responsible for any errors, unless they derived from faulty data from elsewhere. Then you made an important strategic move: you went to your office

'... and prepared a large package for the alderman containing raw computer printouts of my data and other details of my analysis plus a cover letter asking the alderman please to identify the errors he said I had made. Three weeks later the material was returned to me with a message stating that the alderman's staff had been able to identify no errors.' (ibid).

Giving your data and methods to the opposing side, only makes sense relative to intersubjective view of truth production. As in the natural sciences, it does not matter who analyses the data, what the social context, the data stands on its own two feet. As in Habermas, you gave the reasons for your truth claims to your opponents and they conceded the veracity of what you said based upon convergence, forced upon them, through the power of truth. Truth forced your opponents to agree with something against their interests. It seems to me that, consistent with Lukes, you are raising the banner of truth against power and domination - and winning in that instance.

Similarly, in your account of the use of the media to disseminate knowledge of the complex process whereby mega-projects always over-run, you write: 'Today it is basically impossible for project promoters to postulate certain costs, benefits or risks for their projects *without taking our data into account*' (Flyvbjerg 2012 p.106). In other words, power and domination have to bow to the emancipating power of truth. Again, following Lukes (and Habermas), the banner of truth and reason is raised against power and domination.

Do not misunderstand me: if we take Lukes and Foucault as paradigmatic of two opposing theoretical positions, I am certainly not solely siding with Lukes against Foucault. In fact, as my discussion of tension points suggests, I am sympathetic to large elements of Foucault's analysis. Yet, it has to be acknowledged that, to summarize, first, the social scientist is not equivalent to the actors whom they study – they have to retain a reflective distance in order to be effective. That said, they can share some of the characteristics with politicians and activists, in trying can make a difference in the world they study. Second, social science is more than simply following fashion, where all knowledge can be reduced to power and domination. If that were not the case, it would be impossible to raise the banner of truth against power and domination, which constitutes an integral part of the critique of domination and your practice of *phronesis*.

**Bent Flyvbjerg:** I welcome this opportunity to respond to Mark's reflections on phronetic social science. I'm in general agreement with Mark's two key points that (a) social scientists need a reflective distance to the actors they study in order to be effective and (b) social science is (I would say 'can be,' for precision) more than simply following fashion. I have only minor comments on these points, which I will return to later.

My main issue is with Mark's take on the well-known critique of Foucault that Foucault's problematizations of truth make it difficult to see how we may affirm something (actions, thoughts) as normatively desirable, because such affirmation would come into conflict with the premises of Foucauldian problematization itself, or so the critique claims. Mark seems to agree with this critique and concludes that Foucauldian unmasking of truth as domination entails a significant cost in this manner.

Foucauldian problematization, or similar questioning of truth claims, is at the core of phronetic social science. Therefore, if Foucauldian problematization had the weakness regarding normative action that Mark and others argue then this would also be a weakness of phronetic social science. Fortunately this is not the case, as we will see and as further argued in Flyvbjerg (2001) and Flyvbjerg et al. (2012).

Mark and others pursuing this type of critique seem to think Foucault has a special problem regarding normative justification. But justification of actions by norms is not a problem pertinent to Foucault in particular. It is a problem for Mark, too, and for me and any philosopher and social scientist making claims about what should be done. This problem has haunted philosophy for millennia and is unresolved in the dominant tradition – running from Plato via Kant to modern rationalists – where the search for ultimate, universal norms has invariably ended up in metaphysics and other questionable leaps of faith. In a less known tradition – running from Aristotle over Machiavelli to Nietzsche and Foucault, the issue of normative justification has been elegantly solved by substituting for metaphysics a phenomenology of truth and power. In its original formulation, phronetic social science builds on the latter tradition, on phenomenology rather than on rationalism.

Foucault said explicitly about norms that he thought (a) nobody has ever demonstrated that universal norms for justifying human action exist, and we are therefore better off proceeding as if they don't if we want to get our analyses right, and (b) nevertheless, humans, including Foucault, are perfectly capable of normative action. It seems to me that on this point Steven Lukes is not the ideal counterpoint to Foucault, as Mark would have it, Jürgen Habermas is. Habermas (1987: 276) famously dismissed Foucault's studies as '*relativistic, cryptonormative* illusory science'

(emphasis in original). And the critique for relativism is correct, if by relativistic we mean unfounded in norms that can be rationally and universally grounded; which is what Habermas (1987: 294) means when he criticizes Foucault for not giving an 'account of the normative foundations' for his thinking. By this standard, however, Habermas's own work is also relativistic. As argued in Flyvbjerg (2001: 88ff.), Habermas has been unable to demonstrate that rational and universal grounding of his normative positions is possible, including communicative rationality and discourse ethics; he has only postulated such grounding. And Habermas is not alone with this problem. Despite more than two thousand years of attempts by rationalistic philosophers, no one has been able so far to live up to Plato's injunction that to avoid relativism our thinking must be rationally and universally grounded. The reason may be that Plato was wrong. Perhaps the polarity relativism/rationalism is just another artificial dualism that makes it easy to think but difficult to understand. Such dualisms simplify things conceptually but with little reference to actual phenomena. Foucault's insight is that the horns of the dualism can be avoided by *contextualism*. Thus it is wrong to criticize Foucault, or other phronetic social scientists, for being relativists if we by relativistic mean 'without norms' or 'anything goes.' 'I do not conclude,' says Foucault (1984a: 374), 'that one may say just anything within the order of theory.'

Foucault resolves the question of relativism versus rationalism by following Nietzsche (1974: 284-285) who says about historians and philosophers of morality that '[t]heir usual mistaken premise is that they affirm some consensus of the nations ... concerning certain principles of morals, and then they infer from this that these principles must be unconditionally binding also for you and me; or conversely, they see the truth that among different nations moral valuations are *necessarily* different and then infer from this that *no* morality is at all binding. Both procedures are equally

childish' (emphasis in original). It is this either/or – either moral norms are universal and apply to all or no moral norms are binding – that underlies the critique of Foucault for being a relativist. But this position is as immature and untenable today as it was when Nietzsche was writing. Employing Nietzsche's line of reasoning, Foucault therefore rejects both relativism and rationalism and replaces them by situational ethics, that is, by context; Foucault's norms are contextually grounded. Veyne (1997: 230) rightly observed about Foucault's contextualism, that anyone who equates contextualism with relativism's 'anything goes' should imagine trying to ask the Romans to abolish slavery. The present effectively limits the possible preferences; humans cannot think or do just anything at any time. With direct reference to Kant and Habermas, Foucault (1984b: 46) says that unlike these thinkers he 'is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science.'

Distancing himself from rationalism and metaphysics does not leave Foucault normless, however. His norms are explicitly expressed in a desire to challenge 'every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims' (Miller 1993: 316) and in this way 'to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom' (Foucault 1984b: 46). Foucault makes clear this type of work is based on a Nietzschean 'will to truth,' that is, a 'will not [to] deceive, even myself' – which stands at the core of Foucault's ethics (Rabinow 1997: xxx, Nietzsche 1974: 282). Foucault here is the Nietzschean democrat, for whom any form of government – pluralist or totalitarian – must be subjected to analysis and critique based on a will not to be dominated or deceived, on voicing concerns in public, and on withholding consent about anything that appears to be unacceptable. Foucault's norms are based on historical and personal context, and they are not idiosyncratic as they are shared with many people around the world. The norms cannot be given a universal grounding

independent of those people and that context, according to Foucault. Nor would such grounding be desirable, since it would entail an ethical uniformity with the kind of utopian–totalitarian implications that Foucault would warn against in any context, be it that of Marx, Rousseau, or Habermas: ‘The search for a form of morality acceptable by everyone in the sense that everyone would have to submit to it, seems catastrophic to me,’ says Foucault (1984c: 37). In a Foucauldian interpretation, such a morality would endanger democracy, not empower it. Instead, Foucault focuses on the analysis of evils and shows restraint in matters of commitment to ideas and systems of thought about what is good for humans, given the historical insight that few things have produced more suffering among humans than strong commitments to implementing utopian visions of the good.

In place of universals, Foucault finds that our history endows us with the possibility to become aware of those social arrangements which create problems – oppressive relations of power, for instance – and those which create satisfaction, e.g., strong democracy. It follows that we have the possibility either to oppose or to promote these arrangements. This, and not global moral norms, is Foucault’s point of departure for social and political change. Foucault here builds his thinking directly upon the practical question of what is good and bad for humans, which is the core question of Aristotelian *phronesis*, including in Aristotle's original formulation.

The basis for understanding and acting in the Nietzschean-Foucauldian sense is the attitude among those who understand and act, and this attitude is based neither on universals nor on idiosyncratic moral or personal preferences, but instead on a context-dependent common world view and interests among a reference group, well aware that different groups typically have different world views and different interests, and that

there exists no general principle by which all differences can be resolved and by which we would have a universal 'we' or Nagel's (1989) 'view from nowhere.' For Foucault, and for phronetic social science, the socially and historically conditioned context, and not fictive universals, constitutes the most effective bulwark against relativism and nihilism, and the best basis for action. Our sociality and history, according to Foucault, is the only foundation we have, the only solid ground under our feet. And this socio-historical foundation is fully adequate to carry out the phronetic task, which, according to Foucault, is 'to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them' (Chomsky and Foucault 1974: 171).

Mark writes that the phronetic method 'sidesteps the issue of the relationship between power and truth.' From the above it should be clear I strongly disagree with this. In my analysis the situation is the exact opposite: the phronetic method tackles head-on the issue of power and truth with help from the strongest, most detailed, and most enduring phenomenology of power and truth that exists, namely that of Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault. This phenomenology shows power and truth to be interrelated in human affairs, including in philosophy, to an extent where truth is power and power is truth. The phronetic method uncovers as unfounded, and moves beyond, the conventional obsession that power and truth *must* be separate phenomena and that truth *must* be rationally and universally grounded independently of power to count as truth, because more than two millennia of rationalist philosophy fails to show how this may be achieved.



I further disagree with Mark that the validation of *phronesis* is measured relative to public reaction and the consequent capacity to change the world of political decision-making, if Mark sees this as the only criterion for validating *phronesis*. A second criterion exists, which is just as important, namely meeting the conventional standards of validity for social science research. Mark is correct in pointing out that my response to the Aalborg alderman and to promoters of megaprojects is entirely consistent with the truth claims of conventional social science. This goes for not just these examples but for the phronetic approach as such, as argued in Flyvbjerg et al. (2012). The approach is anti-relativistic, as we saw above. The results of phronetic research may, and should, be confirmed, revised, or rejected according to the most rigorous standards of social science, and results are open for testing in relation to other interpretations. This does not mean that one interpretation can be just as good as the next, as relativism would have it, for each interpretation must be based on certain validity requirements. It does mean, however, that phronetic studies must be as prepared to defend such requirements as any other study. Mark says this is consistent with Lukes. I would add it is also in agreement with Foucault, who called himself a ‘happy positivist’ and emphasized ‘methods drawn from the classical repertoire’ to ensure validity of his studies (Miller 1993: 211). However, Mark goes too far when he says that raising the banner of truth and reason against power and domination is ‘following Lukes (and Habermas).’ In my work, and in the original formulation of phronetic social science, the leading lights on this point are Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault, who have a considerably better analytics of power – and of the practice of change and the politics of the possible – than Lukes and Habermas, perhaps because the former have much more experience in dealing with empirical power than the latter. This is why Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault are so much more effective as

guideposts for those of us who care seriously about changing relations of power in practice. This does not mean that Lukes and Habermas are of no value in fighting power and domination, as explained in Flyvbjerg (2001: 88-128), but to give them center stage in the context of phronetic social science is misleading and counterproductive, in my judgment.

I agree with Mark that Lukes' idea about true and false consciousness creates more problems than it solves. And I appreciate Mark's distinction between discursive knowledge and practical consciousness. I take this distinction to be similar to the one I make in Flyvbjerg (2001) between explicit and tacit knowledge in the account for how humans learn and how this relates to *phronesis*. However, I find Mark's concept for 'consciousness raising' insufficiently distanced from Lukes' ideas in terms of its patronizing connotations. For my taste, it is slightly too high-handed to see social scientists tasked with 'raising the social consciousness of social actors,' in Mark's words, by transforming actors' tacit knowledge to discursive knowledge. I prefer to see the work of social scientists as being simply to bring more transparency to the things they study. This has the added advantage that transparency is a key concept in the millennia long tradition of democracy and democratization. Thus the work of social scientists may be seen as fitting with and contributing to this long-standing tradition.

Mark explains that when he first read my description of social science as waves of intellectual fashion, this made him wonder if he should give up academia altogether. I've had the same concern but resolved that just because conventional social science is so unsatisfying does not justify giving up on *all* of social science. I agree with Mark that if all social science was just fashion, this would be a depressing situation. But the whole point of developing and consolidating phronetic social science has been to show

there is an alternative way to that of the social science fashionistas, a way to survive and thrive in the social science academy for those of us who are allergic to the strange mix of metaphysics and natural science emulation that characterizes much of social science today.

In sum, I agree with Mark that in order to be effective social scientists need reflective distance to the actors they study. I also agree that social science can, and ought to, be more than simply following intellectual fashions. Phronetic social science is an attempt to move beyond fashion. I disagree with Mark that Foucauldian unmasking of truth as domination entails a special cost in terms of normative justification. I hold that the Foucauldian-Nietzschean tradition elegantly solves the problem of normative justification by replacing untenable relativism and rationalism by contextualism. I further disagree that the phronetic method sidesteps the issue of the relationship between power and truth. I maintain that the phronetic method successfully tackles this issue head-on. I also disagree that the validation of *phronesis* is measured only relative to political change. This is just one criterion of two; the other is meeting the conventional standards of validity for social science research. Academic impact and policy impact are both crucial to phronetic social science. Finally, while Mark's 'consciousness raising' as the main task for social scientists might be an improvement on Lukes, I still find it slightly too patronizing. I prefer to see the task of social scientists as simply bringing more transparency to what they study and to trigger action through transparency. This has the added advantage of solidly aligning phronetic social science with the millennia-long and highly successful project of democracy and democratization, giving even more leverage to an already powerful approach to social science.

**Stewart Clegg:** In terms of the power debates that all three of us have been involved in for some time I think it is evident that there are some common grounds of agreement. First, we do not accept the view that power operates through obfuscation, the basic position Lukes takes with regard to the third dimension of power. The third dimensional view of power is premised on a radical interiority: it is tied up with what people find themselves able to articulate and say, what their consciousness, defined in terms of normal discourses and language, enables them to think and feel. In other words, what we have is a kind of negative account: rather than shaping consciousness positively, through discourse, radical theorists such as Lukes (1974/2006) see power as prohibitory, negative and restrictive. If it were really more radical it would have to be about what people are *able not only to think and to articulate but also to do in practice based on knowledge*. Foucault alerts us to the shift from consciousness per se to practice (even when, as in the case of the Panopticon, practice is based on an imputed consciousness of the possibilities of the other's surveillance.)

Second, the sole focus on the mind of the other in the radical view of power is mistaken, I think: as Gilbert Ryle (1966) wrote, if the other has a mind, all well and good, we can never know what is in it other than what they tell us, irrespective of the advances made in cognitive psychology and linguistics that have so impressed colleagues such as Castells (2009). And the owners of these minds can tell us anything: disassembling, mistaken, misleading or authentically felt, it doesn't matter. We cannot go beyond what the other says, writes or does. Where a contradiction is judged to exist between these practices of saying, writing and doing we cannot easily adjudicate other than through interpretive conventions that are contextually bound themselves.

Third, and here I side with Bent's position, no amount of implicit or explicit claims to ideal speech situations or similar devices can improve matters. It is the presence of intellectual utopias that is the problem producing very real dystopias of one kind or another, based on convictions and practices about consciousness (Pinha e Cunha, Clegg, Rego, and Lancione 2012).

Fourth, I differ from Bent in saying that it follows that power and truth do *not* exist in an inverse relationship, whereby domination is reproduced through the obscuring of truth. There is no truth that stands incontrovertible and sovereign as a metric against which all contrary claims must fail.

Fifth, more substantively, with Bent I am not so sure about Mark's position on the relation of discursively practical and theoretical consciousness, despite having seemingly subscribed to it in part (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips 2006). I accept that there is a potential dialogue that can occur between the positions that are held by individuals in their practical consciousness and attempts at reformation of this practical consciousness through an encounter with better argumentation, more persuasive data, or an expanded horizon of possibilities. However, it is not from the premises of reason alone as the social scientist would formulate them that such encounters occur. They take place in discursive spaces inscribed by passions and interests.

An example might make the previous point clearer. Rather than talk about 'class interests', the hoary old standby, I have chosen a highly contested topic to make the point, an issue about which it should be quite clear that in this context I intend to be completely agnostic. The argument is purely analytical. The topic at issue is the veil or niqab, usually worn with a burqua. In certain contexts, such as contemporary France, the state has sought to make the veil illegal, showing the contested nature of this

garment. That the state has acted thus is immaterial to the analytical point I wish to make. The analytical point is that debates about an issue that is socially contentious in certain contexts, such as the wearing of the niqab in western societies such as France, cannot be adjudicated on the basis of greater transparency or a more rational argument.

In terms of rational argument protagonists concerned with what women wear make other claims. Some claims suggest that wearing a garment such as the niqab is enslaving, keeping women in bondage, denying them their right to an individual existence (Habchi 2009). While such a claim is cogently grounded in Western norms of liberal individualism it is not an argument that will necessarily be persuasive for people whose social relations are, as a matter of fact, constituted differently. From alternative perspectives different claims can be and are made. There is a positive argument that for reasons of modesty, privacy and respect, the wearing of the garments takes on a significance that is beyond the reason of medical science. From the liberal and feminist perspective the garment is a prohibitory and negative form of power; from a radical feminist *and* Muslim perspective the veil can be seen as empowering and positive (Allison 2011: 686-88; also see Ouazzif 2009 and Aziz 2012) and legal sanction against it in western societies as a form of Horkheimer and Adorno's 'false projection' (Mancini 2012), an 'Orientalism' (Said 1978) that legitimates western forms of domination through stigmatizing the 'Other'.

The will to dialogue between the practical consciousness of a wearer of the veil with critics, who might as easily be a radical feminist asserting her right to be veiled as much as one subject to repression as some Muslim feminists argue (Habchi 2009), is complex. The practical consciousnesses in play are already too deeply embedded in their respective and different theoretical consciousness to be easily informed; hence the

power of Bent's critique of Mark's position as slightly too high-handed if it sees social scientists tasked with 'raising the social consciousness of social actors'. It is easy to see why relativism might appear attractive: it allows for scholars not to be 'Leninist', as Mark suggests, as not engaging in 'false projection' in Mancini's (2012) terms.

The meaning and power effects of the veil and the burqa are contested, not least among the wearers themselves. The meaning of the veil is constantly contested, changing, and local (Ahmed 2011) and as such it is not possible to establish its power effects unequivocally by reference to the real interests of those who (choose to) wear it, whether under conditions of their own choosing or not. In fact, the notion of choice has little purchase here: where the veil has become part of the daily routine of dressing, a drill in Foucauldian terms, choice is irrelevant. Given the complexity of the circuits of power that frame matters of dress it seems difficult to imagine a circuit breaker that could settle debate. As Allison (2011: 688) concludes 'wearing the veil is not in itself indicative of either oppression or emancipation. Rather it is the particular social, cultural, and political contexts in which the veil is worn and understood that will determine its meaning.'

There is a flow in power studies that runs from Hobbes (1951) through Dahl (1957) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962; 1963) to Lukes (1974) that has opened up many fruitful areas for debate such as non-issues, non-decision-making, and the mobilization of bias. The second dimensional view of power remains an excellent way of understanding action and inaction, how some things happen and some others do not (see van Iterson and Clegg 2008 for an empirical case in point), even if the three dimensional viewpoint seems somewhat totalizing. Against the Hobbesian position that equates power and cause Bent would favour one that flows from Machiavelli (a

position I agree with: see Clegg 1989), privileging a 'phenomenology [that] shows power and truth to be interrelated in human affairs, including in philosophy, to an extent where truth is power and power is truth' in which the task of 'social scientists as being simply to bring more transparency to the things they study.' The position is perfectly appropriate when viewed from the perspective of the disinterested social scientist as a subject position – but we need to consider the subject positions of those to whom the claim might be addressed. Implicitly we have already done this with the previous example of the veil.

Bringing transparency to power is not just an act of heroic individualism on the part of the social scientist. Of course, we can make any claims and we can ground them as best we can but that does not mean that they will be taken seriously. As Bent observes in his study of Aalborg, rationality is a tool of the weaker parties in power relations and those who are the stronger can simply ignore it. In Australia, all citizens must, by virtue of citizenship, vote or provide an account of why they did not and be fined if they are unable to do so. As a feature of election campaigns there is a considerable amount of 'fact-checking' under way. In a feature article in *The Guardian's* Australian online edition of July 16 there was an article by Bronwen Clune about fact-checking sites that have demonstrated transparently that claims being made by the two major antagonists in the election that was the underway are demonstrably false.<sup>iii</sup> Does this make any difference to the claims that are being made? It does not seem to. The election campaign in this most democratic of countries – an elected Upper Chamber, the compulsion to exercise citizenship rights by being obliged to vote – does not depend on transparency and truth. On *The Conversation* website in July political scientist Sally Young of Melbourne University quoted an internal Labor report from the 1980s that described swinging voters as "basically ignorant and



indifferent about politics. They vote on instinct for superficial, ill-informed and generally selfish reasons." As these are the people who decide the outcome of the democratic process rather than the committed supporters of the major antagonists the parties seem quite content to repeat untruths transparently revealed to be such in order to attract these less hegemonically determined votes. Rationality is not necessarily an aspect of power when untruths and simplistic slogans can be deployed and re-deployed, even when they are transparently and demonstrably false, as Bent also found in Aalborg (Flyvbjerg 1998).

The point of the excursus into Australian politics is to stress that there is more than one subject position than that of the social scientist involved in any truth claim: *there are also those at whom the claims are directed*. For power researcher these are likely to be the more powerful and interested members of the context in question rather than the less powerful and uninterested (who in this context are the subjects at whom political parties' power is oriented). Social scientists, or any other scientists for that matter, do not unilaterally determine truth claims. Truth claims, especially about the interests and actions of the powerful, will be an object of public contestation. The powerful have every interest in making them so if these truths reveal their role in affairs that they would prefer not to be public knowledge.

Democratic deliberation does not determine truth; in fact, such deliberation can produce *more* rather than *less* occlusion. No objective moral foundations for determining truth have been rationally argued to be universal and those reasonable grounds that social scientists and philosophers have formulated, such as Habermas' (1971) 'ideal speech situation', cannot be made binding. There is too much in the way of an implicit equation between democracy and rationality, perhaps not as explicit as in

Habermas (1989) but still evident in the position advanced. Being a social scientist is a social role – but so is that of being a newspaper proprietor (The Murdoch NewsCorp Press owns the vast majority of print media outlets in Australia and is hardly characterized by transparency, a love of truth, or a disdain for the distortions that power allows), a politician, or a political advisor. Hence, I am disinclined to accept the equivalence of ‘power’ and ‘truth’ that Bent proposes (on this occasion – in his 1998 book I think his argument is closer to the one that I have made). Representations of truth do not determine power; it is power relations that determine what becomes legitimated as truth.

Comparable to Mark and Bent I am equally ‘allergic to the strange mix of metaphysics and natural science emulation that characterizes much of social science today’; indeed, working in a business school as Bent and I both do, one finds the mixture particularly prevalent. Some truths and forms of producing them are far more favoured than others (Fournier and Grey 2001) both by the audiences that consume these truths and the authorities that validate them. Those that constitute their domain as ‘critical’ of received truths have ways of being construed as ‘interesting’ but ‘not relevant’, as hardly ‘useful’, as ‘impractical’ and ‘overly theoretical’.

Bent proposes ‘the Foucauldian-Nietzschean tradition elegantly solves the problem of normative justification by replacing untenable relativism and rationalism by contextualism.’ Contextualism is something that is a social science construct. As such I accept its strictures but those whom one addresses, as I have explained elsewhere (Clegg and Pitsis 2013), may very well not and their non-acceptance can have major power effects both personally and in terms of the objective of transparency. Those addressed by those who presume to speak truth to power do not necessarily

share contextualisms' norms and have many ways of ignoring them as the fact-checking examples suggest. The conventional validity standards for social science may be followed and accepted by the social science community but they are as nothing much more than social science solipsism if those to whom the analysis is addressed refuse the norms of engagement. As argued elsewhere (Carter, Clegg and Wahlin 2011) when science meets strategic realpolitik it is science that tends to suffer, the first casualty being 'truth'.

Moving the essentially contested (Gallie 1956) meaning of power (Lukes 1974) via phronesis to the meaning of context does not settle matters unequivocally, for context in politically sensitive areas is no less likely to be contested. The context depends on the contested and contesting viewpoints that constitute it, as the case of the veil makes evident. Phronesis has its limits: it is not *the* solution (as Bent sometimes portrays it) but just an attitude, one of the possible ways of doing what we do, that allows one to produce contextual knowledge that is always partial but at least is grounded. I think that phronesis can be powerful if we state the limit of what we do and then we enter the field knowing that all we are going to say is contextual (not epistemic). As Lancione (2013: 154) suggests: 'Phronesis is co-constituted by the researchers' efforts to question their own knowledge (and their knowledge production), and by the practice-based and discursive-based knowledge emerging from the studied context'. There is no necessary correspondence between these: indeed, the correspondence theory of truth fails the test of social science practice just as much as does the rival position that stresses the coherence of the models that knowledge produces, irrespective of their correspondence with states of affairs (McHugh 1971). The latter produces science fictions akin to the models of neo-classical economics; the

former hands interpretive license to whatever temporally specific opinions prevail in particular empirical settings.

The contexts in which phronesis might operate are not just constituted by the social scientist; they are already populated by many other actors, not all of whom will necessarily be well disposed to the social scientist's accounts of their actions and practices. In other words, actors always populate contexts: as ethnomethodology insists, these are already theoretical actors with their own ways of making sense. Context is more than just the space in which the social scientists do their job: contexts are always already populated. The fact that context is populated is not a limit, or a problem, of phronesis – it is just the limiting condition within which phronesis must operate. We need to frame expectations around phronesis accordingly: it can do some things; it can't do some other things. That there are limits is not too much of an issue. Phronesis is not the solution to the nature/social science debate. Science is politics pursued by other means – so it matters not if that which is studied belongs to Society or to Nature. Indeed, it will probably belong to both simultaneously, as in matters of software design, bridge design or any other form of design or analysis that can be considered in terms of being aesthetic, plausible, and replicable, the realization of which depends neither on natural law nor social construction but on the stabilization of those circuits of power that produce them, how they are configured, how effortlessly they circulate, and what resistance they meet (Clegg, 1989). The nature of things or their social construction is nothing other than whatever it is that the circuitry of their power relations embeds them as being with the outcome depending on what skilled actors – people, things and hybrids (Latour 1993) do and achieve.

Phronesis offers an attitude that enables us to assess better the fragility and

contextuality of any claims regarding states of affairs. For reflexive and phronetic conceptions of science, rationality is always situational rather than transcendent. And because it is always contextually situational it is always implicated with power. No context stands outside power. If it were the case, then it would exist nowhere, outside of understanding, outside of possibility, outside of sense. However, as a general and guiding theoretical point I suggest that:

The recognition of the 'other' is crucial: self-regarding behaviour in the absence of the recognition of the and by others is of no value in itself.

On these criteria it is not the alleged 'disinterestedness' of a position that makes it worthwhile, but the degree of reflexivity that it exhibits in relation to the conditions of its own existence. Severing the conversational elements that nurtured the theory in the first place and which link it to practice makes it harder to attain this reflexivity. Thus we argue for the grounding of theoretical claims in local and specific circumstances rather than their radical and rapid translation out of them. In [a] world that is part of the social, which is inscribed with the materiality of words, and the indeterminacy of meaning, such conversational stretch is essential. Otherwise the paradigm closes, conversational practice becomes monologue, and reflexivity declines accordingly (Clegg and Hardy, 1996: 701).

Contextualism implies that whatever regularities occur empirically will always be situational. Researchers need to understand that these are not likely to be the result of either remote laws operating behind the backs of the actors concerned nor are they likely to be the result of an idiosyncratic researcher's interpretation of the scene in

question. To the extent that the researcher has researched the situational ethics of the context at hand then they will have a sound grasp of the socially and historically conditioned context within which sense is made. With these understandings researchers can avoid the relativism that they are sometimes charged with: their understandings will be framed within deeply embedded foundations that the actors find normal and acceptable to use. In matters of interpretation there is always room for disagreement and it is no different for the researcher. One interpretation is rarely as good as another. Some will always be more plausible in terms of the contexts within which they are produced and received and, depending on the context, some will be embraced and others spurned, which tells us *nothing, necessarily*, about the truth claims being constituted, although it might tell us something about the power relations inscribed in that context. As has been argued elsewhere, truth claims are managed *contextually* through discourses, time and space as well as through *agency* in terms of identity, capital and practices, conjoined through power relations (Gustavs and Clegg 2010). In fact, the historical contexts and agency of power have been somewhat limited. That the histories we inherit have overwhelmingly been those of the dominant actors strutting their stuff in the various stages of the human comedy – the men, the whites, the colonialists, the rich, the powerful, the educated – is hardly surprising. Life on the margins, in service, bondage or slavery of one kind or another, rarely affords room, time, or tools for intense reflection. Reflexive analysis is never innocent of context but situates itself on the boundaries between the seemingly possible and the impossible with the desire to shift these boundaries. Such a position is the ideal place from which to think differently in order to act differently, as Flyvbjerg (2001: 127) put it. Phronesis helps us to do that and should inform better dialogue than would occur in

its absence. Accepting that while power is able to dictate truth one remains sceptical that truth is necessarily able to determine power.

**M.H.:** To be provocative in my response: you both use crypto-normative and crypto-truth arguments. Immanent in your approaches are certain norms and truth claims, which are absolutely central to your critique, yet these claims are denied by discursive adherence to Nietzschean radical contextualism. Like you, I hate utopian projects and one of the defining characteristics of utopian projects is the practice of self-exception. Claiming to critique domination without making explicit your own normative foundations, or claiming to make the practices of others transparent while claiming that you are not yourself making truth claims against domination, constitutes self-exception and self-deception. To show why, I wish to return to the foundation we share: power – not transcendental metaphysics!

We agree that there is no escape from power. In that sense Habermas' characterization of ideal speech is mistaken. However, maybe we also agree that power is not necessarily normatively negative (which Habermas assumes). In the literature there is a tendency to conflate power with domination, which goes back to Weber's definition of power. However, in its most general sense power constitutes simply a capacity for action, which is *power to*. Beyond that *power over* is not necessarily invidious (Haugaard 2012b). If, for instance, one party prevails over another in a free and fairly fought election the former is exercising *power over* the latter, but without dominating them. Properly reformulated ideal speech is a situation in which there is legitimate power (to and over) but not power as domination (illegitimate power).

Foucault has made a great contribution by showing how modern practices of subject creation are constitutive of relations of domination. For instance, in his analysis of the Panopticon, he describes how a social subject becomes formed through

continuous observation. The individual, as object of observation, is in a relationship that is essentially a one-way judgmental monologue. As a consequence, they come to see themselves through the eyes of other, and in so doing, shape their subject position as defined by that observing gaze. In advocating the Panopticon as a model of socialization, Bentham observes that one could use this method for pedagogical experiments. Using orphans one could 'bring up children according to different systems of thought, making certain children believe that two and two do not make four or that the moon is a cheese, then put them together when they are twenty or twenty-five.....' (Foucault 1977: 204). Thus the 'Panopticon is a privileged place for experiments on men, and for analysing and for analysing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them.' (ibid). The reader is appalled, but why? Why is it wrong? To reply that it reveals domination is evasive, as this is not self-evident.

To see the latter point better, let us for moment recall Mead's account of socialization (1967). Much like Freud, he argues that the self becomes socialized through being able to take the perspective of other: the *I* and the *me* (ego and super-ego). Whether these accounts of socialization are empirically correct is not the point, the description of self-subjectification is *not* normatively objectionable. It is not *inherently* normatively objectionable that some one learns to objectify themselves through the eyes of other. Neither is it objectionable that a child is sufficiently disciplined that they learn that two and two makes four.

The problem for Foucault is that self-subjectification is inherent to socialization in general (Lukes' critique of Foucault 2005: 97) – good and bad. Unless we are some kind naïve believers in an untainted state of nature (a state of being without power of



any kind), we have the messy task of distinguishing socialization as empowerment from domination.

How does Foucault's critique work? It works cryptonormatively, in the sense that Foucault expects his readers to supply the normative evaluation. When we read that the Panopticon can be used in experiments upon people, we are appalled because immanent in our moral judgements (even if not discursively acknowledged) is the Kantian moral principle that people should be an end in themselves, not a means to an end. Bentham's project constitutes a classic utopian project that sacrifices people for a higher end.

I am perfectly happy to admit that the Kantian principle that people are ends in themselves, and not a means to an end, is a *liberal* principle – a product of a specific civilization. It is the product of a way of being-in-the-world that bases its norms on the normative idea that the *ordinary life* counts; that the life of everyone is of equal value. This is at variance with *gemeinschaft* feudal civilizations, which esteem only the great, and hold that ordinary people should be sacrificed upon the altar of the welfare of elites or great causes. It is also at variance with some of the foundations of the great monotheistic religions, in which martyrdom is considered the highest good. Sacrificing one person for the sins of others (Jesus on the cross) is incommensurable with these liberal principles.

Accepting that it is not possible to identify domination, distinguishing it from freedom and emancipation, without normative principles that transcend context, does not imply that the principles themselves are immune from critique or that they are inherently universally valid. All these principles have to be held from a perspective of what Rawls called reflective equilibrium (1993: 8), whereby we move from the principles to their application and back again. Thus they are open to falsification.

The principle that a person is an end in themselves is based upon the other Kantian principle, that law should be universal, or generalizable. Again that is particular to modern liberal society. In the feudal system, every status position had a law particular to it. So, the law did not apply in exactly the same way to a feudal aristocrat, as it did to a serf. Justice was not universal (with a small u) inside the society as a whole. Consequently, liberal principles are not Universal (with a capital U) in the sense of applying irrespective of interpretative horizon, or culture. However, the generalizability criterion is universal (small u) within liberal democratic theory, in the sense that it is immanent in all liberal democratic theory and practice. I have yet to see a form of contemporary social critique, including contextualist, which was convincing, that did not presuppose this principle. Of course, I am open to falsification on this.

When we think of Habermas' account of ideal speech or Rawls' account of the original position, we should *not* think of them as utopias – liberal attempts to make alternative utopias to Plato's Republic or Marx's vision of communism. Rather they are ways to distil the essence of the abstract principles that are immanent in the normative evaluations that are made within the liberal democratic tradition of social critique. We have an intuition that teaching someone that two and two makes five constitutes a fundamental violation of the other but it is not self-evident why. Kant's second categorical imperative is discursive formulation of what we know at the level of practical consciousness (this is an example of what I mean by consciousness raising, not something condescending). Of course, Kant thought of his principles as some kind of fundamental Universal transcendental principles. He is mistaken in that belief but has come up with principles that are immanent in liberal democratic theorizing.

Stewart, the idea that the 'state of the exception' is normatively objectionable comes back to these Kantian principles. It is objectionable that the law is suspended for

some people, as in S-21 extermination camp, and that they should be used as a means to the end of justifying the Cambodian Khmer Rouge utopian project. These basic Kantian normative principles are immanent in your account of S-21 extermination camp (Cuhna, Clegg, Rego and Lancione, 2012). Bent states that ‘the Foucauldian-Nietzschean tradition elegantly solves the problem of normative justification by replacing untenable relativism and rationalism with contextualism.’ But you do not accept the contextuality of Khmer Rouge. If you did, you would judge them by *their* moral criteria. Rather, you judge them by *liberal* democratic criteria.

In the case of your analysis of the *niqab*, your contextualism does not entail a rejection of liberal principles either, as you seem to think. You write ‘From the liberal and feminist perspective the garment is a prohibitory and negative form of power; from a radical feminist *and* Muslim perspective *the veil can be seen as empowering and positive* (Allison 2011: 686-88; also see Ouazzif 2009 and Aziz 2012)...’ (italics added). The issue for you is: what does wearing the veil *mean*? Does the signifier *niqab* entail power as domination *or* emancipation? Liberals read it one way and radical feminists and *some* (not Ayan Hirsi Ali (2007), nor the members and supporters of Stealthy Freedoms of Iranian Women facebook page<sup>iv</sup>) Muslims read it differently. However, on behalf of all parties you assume the *liberal* principle that children *should not* be forced to wear clothes that are demeaning. This is not a deep conflict about fundamental moral principles. It is not a conflict between the normative rightness of the obedience of women to God and man versus liberal principles of autonomy. As presented by you, the point is the much more shallow conflict concerning the meaning of the signifier *niqab*. In a multicultural context, such as France, some women often *choose* (principle of autonomy) to wear the veil as sign of their difference (freedom of

expression). Therefore, we cannot assume, and should not assume on behalf of other, that wearing the *niqab* is symptomatic of domination.

Just like liberal principles, you also use truth against domination. When it comes to power and truth, Bent, you write that I go ‘too far when [I say] that raising the banner of truth and reason against power and domination is “following Lukes (and Habermas).” In my work [Flyvbjerg], and in the original formulation of phronetic social science, the leading lights on this point are Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault,...’ That is not a proper refutation – you are dodging an argument that is irrefutable as far as I can see by reference to authority (the big names of Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault). Let us put this in power terms: you, an academic, confront a powerful actor (the alderman backed by business interests) with a large packet of data and ‘Three weeks later the material was returned to me with a message stating that the alderman’s staff had been able to identify no errors.’ What exactly happens there? You have prevailed over the Alderman and his cronies, using the weapon of truth. Truth has prevailed over domination.

In this regard, your proposition, Stewart, that ‘it is power relations that determine what becomes legitimated as truth.’ is also falsified by Bent’s actions – unless you claim that Bent was the powerful one dominating the corporate business interests of Aalborg!

Furthermore, I do not know what it means to say that phronesis meets ‘the conventional standards of validity for social science research...’ unless you are willing to give up the view that truth is inextricably tied to power as domination. If we take Popper’s arguments that our principles are only true to the extent that they are not falsified (Popper 2002), as our measure of conventional science, this would hold with

Habermas' view that we should only be persuaded by nothing other than the force of the better argument (truth). It seems to me that you are conceding defeat here, but not openly so. You are deliberately vague by appealing to something amorphous – 'the conventional standards' – what conventional standards, precisely?

Both of you appeal to transparency; what does transparency mean? If we consult the dictionary (as an example of ordinary usage, not authority), it means the quality of being transparent, which in turn means 'being capable of transmitting light so that the object can be seen as if there were no intervening material' (American Heritage Dictionary: 1364 – other dictionaries say something similar). Now it may be that you use transparency in a stipulated way that does not accord with this usage – a legitimate move. However, I do not find any textual evidence for that. So, what are these intervening materials that distort in the case of social life? I cannot see how you can get away from the kind of distortions that Habermas had in mind or from phronesis as a kind of ideology critique.

In your criticism of the City Centre Group (the board responsible for planning in downtown Aalborg) you, Bent, find it normatively reprehensible that the group comprises two professional groups and one private interest group - that the Chamber of Industry was in there among the democratic power of elected representatives and the executive power of the police (2001: 147). Surely the normative force of this criticism derives from the fact that this is a deviation from fundamental liberal normative principles of neutrality? The problem is that 'the Chamber was the most important player in city politics and planning in Aalborg.' (2001:147). Why is this objectionable? It is objectionable because it violates three of the four principle of Habermas' account of what it means that the force of the better argument should win - and it violates Rawls' account of justice. It violates the principle that 'existing power differences

between participants must be neutralized such that these differences have no effect on the creation of consensus.’ (Habermas, as presented in Flyvbjerg 2001: 91). It also violates the first principle that all relevant parties should be consulted, and the second that all participants should have an equal chance to present validity claims.

Habermas’ list of criteria for ideal speech includes the principle that ‘participants must openly explain their goals and intentions and in this connection desist from strategic action (transparency).’ (Flyvbjerg 2001: 91)<sup>v</sup>. I would ask you to give me an example of *transparency*, however contextualist, that does not presuppose implicitly within it that ‘participants must openly explain their goals and intention’.

Returning the example of the *niqab*, Stewart, you argue that it constitutes a ‘false projection’ (Mancini 2012), an “Orientalism” (Said 1978), that legitimates western forms of domination through stigmatizing the “Other”. What is wrong with stigmatising the other or false projection? What are the underlying normative principles here? I would put it to you that what is wrong is that it precludes listening to the other – point three of ideal speech for Habermas: participants must be willing and able to empathize with each other’s validity claims (ideal role taking).’ (Habermas in Flyvbjerg 2001: 91). Also, note your use of the word *false* above – another use of truth against domination.

In the mega-projects book (2003) you, Bent, show that the financial estimates of mega-projects are nearly always much too low. It seems to me the rhetorical force of this only works if you presuppose, with Habermas, that social actors should ‘openly explain their goals and intentions’. I would further point out, that by showing how incorrect (untruthful) the estimates are, you are making a truth claims, against the power of vested interests.

If Habermas got it wrong in his five principles, and *phronesis* is about transparency, there must be instances of *transparency* that *do not* conform to these principles. I challenge you to give me a contextual instance of transparency that, for instance, entails participants disguising the goals and intentions. It seems to be obvious that to the extent to which actors disguise their goals and intentions the process is not transparent and is normatively reprehensible, whatever the context!

A couple of different points and parenthetically: in your critique of Habermas you, Bent, quote Machiavelli, who writes “One can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful fickle, liars and deceivers.” (Quoted Flybjerg 2001: 93). First, I find these kinds of essentialist claims totally suspect, and so should any follower of Foucault. Second, why should we care what Machiavelli (or Nietzsche) says? Because he is famous? Dead for a long time? Part of the canon of Western political theory? In the pages which follow you similarly argue from authority, most explicitly in the following: ‘Agnes Heller, Albrecht Wellmer, Herman Lubbe, and Niklas Luhman have expressed similar criticism of discourse ethics.’ (2001: 96). Imagine replacing these names with Donald Duck, would the argument hold? No! Okay, you may reply that these people are more observant than Donald Duck, but I could equally compile a long list of famous theorists who agree with Habermas, which would prove nothing.

To reiterate, I am not claiming that Habermas or Kant discovered some kind of Universal principles, described utopia, or that they are Authorities we should bow down to. What I claim is that these principles, or something close to them, underpin the critical edge and coherence of Foucault’s work and, also, your works, despite claims to contextualism. These liberal democratic principles do *not* underpin the normative foundations of feudalism, which presupposed essentialism for its justification. I have no problem in sticking my neck out by saying that liberal democratic society is

normatively more just than feudal society, when viewed from the perspective of the welfare of its weakest members. Normatively I am *not* a contextualist: I am not impressed with the Great Chain of Being, with the word of God, sacred texts or arguments from authority. These are reifications that have been (and still are) used to justify domination. However, I am a contextualist at the level of meaning, which entails that we should take account of the possibility that, due to diversity of language games, it is quite likely that the other does not attribute the same meaning to signifiers as we do – it is important to understand what the *niqab* means to those that wear it.

The point you make, Stewart, that there are many instances when truth and normative rightness are defeated by direct coercion is, of course, empirically true. Power often entails simple coercion or deceit. However, the most effective forms of power are those that the less powerful actors consent to. They either consent because of normative rightness and truth *or* because they have been *manipulated* into believing that compliance entails normative rightness or truth. Unmasking the latter entails critique of power in its third and fourth dimensions - transparency. This strategy works because these principles are deep, so deep that even vice pays tribute to them. Obviously, not every exposure is successful. We are fifty years after Martin Luther King's famous speech:

Five score years ago a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree is a great white light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But 100 years later the Negro still is not free.

King continues:



In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our Republic wrote the the magnificent words of the Constitution and the declaration of independence they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. (King 1963: 1)

King states that for 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation, and 200 from the signing of the Constitution, those arguing for the civil rights of blacks in the USA had suffered massive defeats. Yet, King's speech constituted a decisive in turning of the tide in favour of civil rights. Why? The image of *cashing a check* image is key. King was *not* introducing new normative principles contextual to black society. Rather, he was tapping into the already existent liberal democratic principles, which frame American politics. He was using the principles immanent in the political process, to expose a fundamental hypocrisy. Despite two hundred years of defeats, this was a powerful weapon of the weak, and still is.

It is true that there are still black ghettos but, when viewed over a longer historical time frame, from slavery to the election of Obama, there has been significant progress in the direction of social justice. This progress was not made confronting coercion with coercion (the Black Panthers). It was done more subtly, by constantly exposing the contradictions and discrepancies between the practice of politics and the normative liberal democratic principles that are immanent in these practices.

To sum up, like Bent, I am not that impressed with many of the philosophical underpinnings of Kant's principles. They read as overly metaphysical. Kant is not author of sacred texts – an Authority. What impresses me about the categorical imperatives is the fact that they cut through most utopian projects. Do these principles work? This means, have they been falsified and can they be used to fight domination?

Yes, I cannot think of a significant falsifying instance, where these principles are not immanent in critique and, as the example of King demonstrates, these principles are effective against domination.

I do not see how we can practice social critique without such principles. How can one distinguish domination from freedom? If we criticize society, we must be prepared to say why. The Foucauldian contextualist ruse of avoiding these normative questions is cryptonormative in the sense that the theorist is relying on well-known and internalized liberal principles without justifying them, thus making an exception of themselves.

Similarly, the critique of the *use* of truth for the purposes of domination, presupposes that it is possible to use truth against power as domination. Bent's use of statistics is one such example. Truth is frequently *used* for the purposes of reinforcing power as domination, but this *use* is strategic and deceptive. Sometimes the use of truth is also motivated by a genuine desire to empower. The former use is parasitic upon the latter. The strategic use of truth only works by making a process somehow not fully transparent. As a consequence, the less powerful actors consent to power over that they would not if they were properly informed. The practice of Foucauldian critique is part of providing such proper information, which includes a realization that the systems of meaning that we take for granted, and often reify, are conventional, thus could have been otherwise. Thus, *the practice* of Foucauldian critique, as distinct from the incoherent contextual *aspirations* derived from Nietzsche, falls within the parameters of Popperian truth claims, Frankfurt school critical theory, critique of ideology and the conventional normative liberal perspectives of justice, as exemplified by Habermas and Kant - interpreted as theorists of normative immanence, not utopia.

**SC:** Just a few points. With respect to Popperian truth claims, Frankfurt school critical theory, critique of ideology and the conventional normative liberal perspectives of justice, as exemplified by Habermas and Kant, my view is that these are essentially moral philosophies of science – they are all stipulative of how one should science according to the moral precepts of the philosopher in question, be they in thrall to physics, Marx or Kant. Stipulating how science should be done morally is no substitute for observing how it is done as a practice. Those who have closely observed the practice tend not to find much evidence of *abstract* moral philosophy in play. For clarification, it is not I but Mancini who suggest the idea of ‘false projection’ and of course, it is Said who warns of Orientalism. Clearly, both terms have shaped debate. The idea of false projection notion, derived from Adorno and Horkheimer, has to do with the projection of one set of domain assumptions on to a context in which those domain assumptions are inappropriate.

What is at issue with the example of the *niqab* or veil, as Mark rightly says, is what it means and to whom it means what it means. From the liberal perspective it is difficult to see that it cannot mean other than an instance of subjugation and domination. If women who wear the *niqab* consent because of normative rightness and truth then these norms and their associated truth are contextual; if they have been manipulated, to use Mark’s term, into believing that compliance entails normative rightness or truth it would seem most difficult to establish that domination is at work. The problem is an old one – how to distinguish between an authentic and an inauthentic consensus without making a claim of theoretical privilege to differentiate between them.

The subject, neither from the liberal perspective nor from the contextual perspective of a faith-full upbringing and its community norms, even when transposed to European urbanity, cannot be said to be manipulated without having shown resistance to the practice of the veil. Simply to wear the veil because one has worn it since puberty cannot in itself be said to be manipulative from within the context of its normative order. The conditions of choice do not apply. The subject's consumer sovereignty as one free to choose cannot be assumed. No choice is being foresworn without their being some act of resistance to the practice of veiling. Simply to be veiled is not something that Habermasian, Kantian or Republican norms can determine in terms of freedom or domination. Such conceptions do not enter into habituated choices. Should a woman choose not to wear the veil when she has previously done so and attracts faith community calumny in so doing, then the choice to do so may be seen as a form of resistance, and she makes a choice; likewise, with a decision to wear the veil as a choice made by one who previously did not.

From post-enlightenment perspectives wearing the veil is unlikely to be seen as being in the real interests of the wearer. Real interests are not always problematic: for instance, the clinician who advises that the consumption of transubstantiated fats leads to the risk of obesity or that the consumption of cigarettes leads to the risk of cancer, can easily show that these practices act against the interest of the person following these practices, using the determinations and arguments of medical science to do so. Of course, this means one accepts the reason of medical science, something that, in the short rather than the long term, may be contingent on power/knowledge relations, as Foucault (1973) realized. However, not all medical science is revocable and neither of the cases that I have mentioned seems likely to be so treated. So, in matters of medical

science, we accept the arbitration of truth claims by objective and external reference. Truth claims are not all of a piece, however.

In the case of the veil, while one might argue that it is against the interests of a woman to subjugate her identity in all enveloping garb, there is no sense in which there is a scientific arbiter that one can use as a standard. In a phrase, either you've got faith or unbelief. In such contexts where habit, norms and choice are embedded in faith, listening to the other, point three of ideal speech, is just not occurring. So we have to ask why the other does not listen to reason. Is it because they *cannot* do so because their reason, and thus their choice, is occluded by the norms and habits of what they and significant others in their circle construe as faith? If the latter, then how can one assemble the situation as one of power practices? I feel some sympathy with Steven Lukes' (2005) critique of Foucault's theory as a conflation of socialization theory.

Putting the example in context are these remarks from Salma Yaqoob when she says, "I think you should stand up for choices that you wouldn't necessarily choose for yourself, or that you even dislike. It's highly patronising and dangerous to impose your views on everyone else ... You get men sermonising away, and then also, in the name of feminism, women telling other women what to do, not aware of the irony of taking on that paternalistic and patronising saviour syndrome. That's what we fought against with patriarchy – men telling us what they think is best for us – and then you have women telling other women what they think is best for them."

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/16/veil-biggest-issue-uk-niqab-debate>). I agree: liberals may not think wearing the veil to be in the wearer's real interests but they should not want to prohibit anyone from wearing it. Truth claims hardly enter into matters of faith but faith, as a potent belief system, is clearly a major form of ideology

but one whose effects, in terms of the espousal of dogmatic and revelatory versions of the truth, precludes reason defined in Kantian, Habermasian and liberal terms. Even in what Mark calls weak contextualism characterized by multiple language games, not all of them have family resemblances. Of course, the alternative is not full-blooded acceptance of Schutz's phenomenology, grounding meaning in the subjects' own understandings as an ultimate arbiter: nonetheless, subject's meanings are important, must be understood and sometimes accounted for in terms other than those that the subject is disposed to believe.

There is a fundamental problem with trying to resolve scientific questions via a democratically discursive approach. It presumes rationality. In a world in which the ideal of scientific knowledge held true the judgments of expert knowledge would determine the facts of the matter, irrespective of community opinion. However, in many areas of the social sciences, and increasingly in natural science areas such as climate change research, we do not operate in the world of the Enlightenment. The standard model for scientific truth claims is that which Hamilton (2013) terms the "information deficit" model of classical science that says, "people act irrationally because their knowledge is deficient. Yet facts are [no match against deeply held values](#), the values embedded in personal identity." In any account of people's 'real interests' that is non-trivial, whether dealing with religiosity, the body or climate change, the specification of what these interests are and the appropriateness of the science that establishes them is not something that democratic deliberation can establish. It is not a matter of the 'choices' made by subjects that is important – to eat unhealthily, to risk cancer, to cut oneself off from the 'normal' sense of community in the external world – but of the relation between these as value based and the determination that would be made by one committed to rationality who does not

adhere to these values. Lukes' relativism of the liberal, reformer and radical does not help here because it merely specifies (some of) the variable grounds on which assessment of practices that are values based are made. It does not help one determine what the 'real' interests are. Implicitly, Lukes presumes that the radical has a closer relation to the truth of the matter than the liberal or conservative. I doubt that such determination is possible; additionally, I doubt that making such determinations and seeking to have an exchange between practical and theoretically informed consciousness counts for much because, as Hamilton suggests, "the debate ploy" may seem entirely reasonable but such an approach only works if the intended audience can effectively assess the arguments presented. Commitment to values above reason precludes this approach. Hence, to concur once more with Bent's position on the Aalborg case, rationality as a device is weak when confronted with entrenched power and values. The contextually powerful will ignore or evade reason when it suits their values to do so.

Martin Luther King was a skilled rhetorician, schooled in Baptist rhythms, a great orator. But did one speech constitute a decisive turning point in civil rights? I am not sure any speech could have such a role – the subsequent assassination of King and the riots and conflagration in the cities that followed, may well have had as much impact in putting black civil rights, as a non-issue, onto the agenda of mainstream politics as an issue. Finally, with respect to the death camps, systematic killing of people is evil, especially in the name of ideology. The extinction of life itself on the basis of categorical discrimination is unfortunately not something that liberal principles inoculate against: as Mann (2011: 38) states, "Between them the British, French and Dutch fought over 100 separate wars between 1870 and 1914, almost all in their colonies, and European children read adventure stories lauding the heroism of soldiers,

sailors and colonial administrator. War was normalized in this culture.” The culture had an integral calculus in which the other to the enlightenment tradition was disposable and outside of reason.

In conclusion, I think that conceptions of power have to steer a course between two potential dangers: on the one hand, the imputation of interests made on the basis of theoretical consciousness; on the other hand, the conflation of socialized habit to a result of power effects. Weak contextualism does seem the best way forward: with Salma Yaqoob I am insecure about the merit of proffering analysis of other people’s problems as I define them and they do not. With Lukes, I am concerned that we do not take the mechanisms of habit formed through socialization as power effects. In both cases, I would not expect that others would necessarily accede to the Habermasian norms that Mark elaborates. In the absence of an acceptance of these norms as an *a priori*, it is difficult to see how theoretical consciousness can maintain an effective dialogue with practical consciousness.

**B.F.** Mark comes out swinging by claiming Stewart and I are subject to 'self-exception and self-deception', because we, according to Mark, (a) critique domination without making explicit our own normative foundations and (b) claim we are not ourselves making truth claims against domination. But Mark is wrong on both counts. I make my normative foundations explicit throughout my work, including above with the quote from Foucault that defines the normative foundation of phronetic social science as, 'to challenge "every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims".' If something is not explicit about this, the onus is on Mark to explain what it is. Second, to the best of my knowledge I have never claimed I do not make truth claims against domination, as Mark says, so he needs to tell me specifically where he



thinks I made these claims so we can address the issue. In my own understanding, I have repeatedly made the exact opposite claim in my work, namely that this is best seen precisely as truth claims against domination, and, moreover, the truth claims I or other phronetic social scientists put forward must live up to the same criteria for validity and reliability that apply to truth claims from other work in the social sciences. However, I do not claim to make *objectivist, universal* truth claims, which may be what throws Mark, because in my analysis no one has demonstrated such claims may be supported, as argued above. But that is not the same as not making truth claims. Mark is fighting a straw man here, twice over.

From reading Mark's second round of comments above I now understand that Mark, too, is not making universal truth claims. Mark explicitly states that 'liberal principles are not Universal (with a capital U)'. He then goes on to make an inelegant rhetorical maneuver that gives his game away, when he says, 'However, the generalizability criterion is universal (small u) within liberal democratic theory'. In short, Mark wants to have his cake and eat it. But to be 'universal within' something is an oxymoron, if I ever saw one. It is similar to saying the universal exists within local boundaries, which is nonsensical by the usual standards of philosophy of science. Principles and theories may be universal or local, and to be local is defined precisely by existing only within certain bounds. As a consequence, to be 'universal within' something is at best to be local, in which case we should call it that based on the epistemological principle of calling a spade a spade. At worst, to be 'universal within' seems to be an obfuscation, serving as a false security blanket for those who are unwilling to give up on the comfort of the illusion of having something outside their socio-historical context in which to ground their beliefs and actions. The history of philosophy, and indeed of humankind, shows this sentiment to be persistent and all-

too-human, and as such very understandable. Nevertheless, Mark's idea of being 'universal within' seems to me as imaginary as the emperor's new clothes and serving the same purpose: to give the illusion that the emperor, here Mark and other scholars unwilling to let go of the idea of universals, is not stark naked.

In a more positive interpretation, I welcome Mark's giving up on Universals with a capital U, because to me this is giving up on universals, period. It's an important step beyond Kant and Habermas, the latter explicitly and pretentiously calling his 'universalization principle' 'U' with a capital U (Habermas 1990: 120-21). What I now hear Mark saying is simply, 'I consider myself part of a group that subscribes to the principles of liberal democratic theory and practice'. I'm happy to join Mark in this group to fight the abuse of power by better understanding and better implementing democracy, even though I might want to emphasize more than Mark does here what I see as serious weaknesses, inequalities, and environmental strains in the way liberal democracy is currently practiced. Moreover, I agree with Mark that, despite flaws and setbacks, liberal democracy is a remarkably successful social and political project and a project worth working for. But this brings us straight back to Foucault, because our agreement, if it is there, is plainly us as a group of people deciding collectively, and therefore non-idiosyncratically, in our specific socio-historical context that these are our norms, this is what we want to work for, and there is nothing outside this context to help us in that decision and that work, as far as I can see. This is a concrete example of how the Foucauldian-Nietzschean tradition solves the problem of normative justification through contextualism: the justification lies in our consensus (including our consensus with other like-minded individuals and groups), and there is no objective 'better argument' outside this consensus that may be used to justify it. In sum, like Mark I'm happy to subscribe to the principles of liberal democracy, but unlike

Mark I don't need these principles to be justified by being 'universal within' or other rhetorical smoke and mirrors. Indeed, I take universal justification to be impossible and observe that Mark has not supported his call for such justification with a demonstration that it is possible, or even plausible. However, now that I've seen Mark give up on Universals with a capital U, I trust he will soon also give up on universals with a small u, the latter being a much smaller step than the former, in my analysis.

I would add here that only a superficial reading of Foucault could come away with Mark's conclusion that 'Foucault expects his readers to supply the normative evaluation' of his work. Foucault's work is self-admittedly normative through and through in its choice of problematic, evidence, teasing out of implications for the present, etc. It is true that Foucault, like any good writer, leaves space for readers to do their own normative evaluations and encourages them to do so. But to equate this with readers doing the full normative work is misleading and gets the point of Foucault's interventions and methodology wrong, in my view.

Mark challenges me to give him 'an example of *transparency*, however contextualist, that does not presuppose implicitly within it that "participants must openly explain their goals and intention"' (Mark's emphasis), as if that would be a difficult thing to do. But it's easy: the conduct of court cases in liberal democracies is such an example. Court cases are aimed at establishing transparency, typically about a conflict or a crime, so the judge (with or without a jury) can make an informed ruling on the case. It is not required, however, that all participants openly explain their goals and intentions. There is even a legal privilege that the defendant can keep silent, that is, the main participant has the explicit and undisputed right to be the exact opposite of open and to not explain anything at all, directly falsifying Mark's thesis. The

prosecution and defense also do not have to explain their goals and intentions openly or in a balanced way. The conduct of court cases allows for all sorts of strategic and tactical behaviors not permitted in Mark's and Habermas's ideal world of the force of the better argument. I encourage Mark and other Habermasians to think about why that is, perhaps after attending a few court cases and comparing what happens there with Habermasian discourse ethics. For me, the reason is that the people who invented and developed our court systems understood the relationship between power and truth and how to deal with it practically. We are lucky, it seems to me, that our courts were not designed by idealistic theoreticians like Mark and Habermas, but by pragmatic realists.

Mark's idealism leads him to conclude, 'It seems to be obvious that to the extent to which actors disguise their goals and intentions the process is not transparent and is normatively reprehensible, whatever the context!' That's a very global statement – Universal with a capital U ('whatever the context') and as such it immediately gets Mark into trouble, because it is not obvious at all it would apply under any and all circumstances. By this standard most court cases in liberal democracies would be normatively reprehensible, and perhaps Mark thinks they are. I respectfully disagree and have argued elsewhere that solving conflicts, including court cases, by means of Habermas' five discourse-ethical principles would lead to deadlock and break down of the court system (Flyvbjerg 2001: 106). As observed by Bernstein (1992: 221), any society must have some procedures for dealing with conflicts that cannot be resolved by argumentation, even when all parties are committed to rational argumentation. Courts in liberal democracies secure this type of conflict resolution, among other things. Mark's thinking here seems not only utopian but also sociologically naive.

Mark finds 'totally suspect', Machiavelli's observation that humans are 'ungrateful, fickle, liars, and deceivers'. This may be because Mark misses the point

Machiavelli is making. Mark thinks Machiavelli is out to make an 'essentialist claim', in Mark's words, which indeed would be suspect, but which would also go completely against character for Machiavelli, whose whole way of thinking and acting emphasized pragmatism and actionable *verita effettuale*. With the above observation, Machiavelli (1983: 111-12) simply wants us to remember that '[a]ll writers on politics have pointed out ... that in constituting and legislating for a commonwealth it must be taken for granted that all men are wicked and that they will always give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers.' This is worst-case thinking aimed at protecting a state and its citizens against human evil, not a global statement about human character. Machiavelli's point is that we will land in serious trouble if we organize society based on idealist ideas, like Habermasian discourse ethics, that assume away evil and thus contain no checks and balances – other than an abstract appeal to reason – to control evil. History teaches us that utopian thinking that assumes evil away typically gives free rein to evil. This is why Nietzsche (1968: 192-93) emphatically says 'perhaps there has never before been a more dangerous ideology ... than this will to good.' From this point of view the ideas of Mark and Habermas are part of the problem, not the solution. And the lesson to be learned from Machiavelli and Nietzsche is not so much that moralism is hypocrisy, but that the first step to becoming moral is realizing we are not. The next step is establishing checks and balances that adequately reflect this. The primary task is to reduce the scope for evil, not to increase the opportunity for utopia, be it discourse ethics or any other ideal construct. Mark asks, 'why should we care what Machiavelli (or Nietzsche) says?' This is why. And of course Mark would be the last to see this, because he himself, or rather his idealism, is the target of Machiavelli's and Nietzsche's critique. They understand that idealist theoreticians like Mark and Habermas are ultimately dangerous, to the

extent their ideas about power and truth were to serve as basis for designing real institutions in real societies. And Machiavelli and Nietzsche are keen to alert us to this danger and to explain how we may protect ourselves against it.

Mark makes a big deal of my winning the argument with the Aalborg alderman by means of a solid packet of data (Flyvbjerg 2001: 156-61). I agree with Mark this is truth prevailing over domination, and today I use different packs of data to similarly influence power relations for megaprojects (Flyvbjerg 2013). But Mark seems to think this undermines my understanding of the relationship between truth and power while supporting that of Habermas. This is wrong. My understanding of truth and power is exactly about understanding situations where truth may gain the upper hand as a 'weapon of the weak', and then acting on those situations, cf., my concept of 'tension points' (Flyvbjerg 2012). However, there are many more situations where truth loses out to power than the opposite, which means Mark is also wrong when he says that Stewart's proposition that 'it is power relations that determine what becomes legitimated as truth' is falsified by my work. On balance, my work, and that of other phenomenologists of power, proves Stewart to be exactly right on this point, which does not rule out individual instances of truth dominating power, needless to say, like in the case of the alderman. Moreover, I maintain that Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Foucault are superior to Habermas for understanding the truth-power complex, including grasping where and how truth may dominate power. But that's all I'm saying. I'm not trying to refute or dodge anything, as Mark says I am ('That is not a proper refutation'); I'm just pointing to what I consider the most valuable texts for anyone who wants to understand the relationship between power and truth.

Mark says, he 'does not know what it means to say that phronesis meets "the conventional standards of validity for social science research".' That's interesting and slightly disturbing. But here's a suggestion: Simply send a piece of research, phronetic or not, to a peer-reviewed social science journal that you respect, and your peers will tell you what the conventional scholarly standards are for those parts of your research that in their view don't meet these standards. That's concretely how scholars learn the conventional standards of their field, as shown by Thomas Kuhn, Bruno Latour, and other sociologists of science; not by reading Habermas or Popper in the abstract. However, for arguments sake I'm happy to accommodate Mark by accepting Popperian falsification and Habermasian force-of-the-better-argument as two of many possible criteria for establishing validity. That does not mean, however, I have to 'give up the view that truth is inextricably tied to power', as Mark says I must. Truth about social phenomena – maybe about natural ones, too, but let's leave that aside for the moment – will always have power effects, for instance by strengthening one social position and weakening another, and in this sense truth is always tied to power, no matter how the validity of that truth was established, as long as it was accepted as valid truth.

Finally, a minor point of clarification. Stewart says that above I propose 'the equivalence of "power" and "truth".' I hope not. I see power and truth as interrelated in a way where power influences truth and truth influences power. But that is not equivalence, because based on existing evidence I see the dominant relationship running from power to truth, that is, power holds more sway over truth than vice versa.

To conclude, I agree with Stewart that today a difficulty in philosophy and social science is maintaining an effective dialogue between theoretical and practical consciousness. This dialogue must be open and alive if we want philosophy and social

science to matter to society, and unfortunately it is not. However, the lack of effective dialogue is a self-made problem created by philosophers and social scientists following the rationalist tradition of Plato, Kant, and Habermas to its current dead end. The antidote is right there under our noses, complete with theoretical justification, methodological guidelines, and elaborate examples of application. It is the pragmatic tradition of Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche, begun more than two thousand years ago with Aristotle's critique of his teacher, Plato, for being too abstract and theoretical to be useful in practical life, and later refined in Machiavellian *verita effettuale*, Nietzschean *wirkliche Historie*, and Foucauldian genealogy with the explicit purpose of looking for truth that may effectively change power and practice. If you want to isolate yourself in theory and academia, the intellectual tradition of Plato, Kant, and Habermas will serve you well. If you want your work to make a difference in practice, I suggest the tradition of Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Nietzsche will be the better choice.

M.H: Well let me thank you both for participating in this lively debate. While we have come to the end, in response to the above I would like to make just two brief observations. First, I am not sure if the courtroom legal example stands on its own procedural foundation, without legitimation from underlying immanent liberal principles. If that were not the case, it would not make sense to say that a legal judgment was legally, technically, correct but unjust. In fact, law and legal procedure is revised if perceived to deliver unjust outcomes. Otherwise, the law falls into contempt. Second, when I argue that these liberal principles are universal, with a small u, I mean the following: a) that the principles are revisable and open to falsification and b) that they are only universally applicable to societies which hold



the underlying minimally liberal (with a small l) belief that society exists for the sake of the individuals that make it up. This is in contrast to strongly communitarian social orders, which believe that individuals exist for the greater glory of society, and its metaphysical representations, which include, following Durkheim, God and totemic representations of the sacred.

SC: some brief final words in response: first, the immanence of legal practice is clearly discursive and based on nothing so much as usage as recorded in precedent in the British system of common law; it is practice, not liberal principles, that determines what is legal or not (as well as what is considered to be 'liberal'); second, while legal principles may be said to be a fundamental truth, and thus falsifiable, this would seem to be a category error in the use of the terms 'truth' and 'falsifiable', as if they had some essential meaning irrespective of context. I would argue that truth, falsification and principle function according to different practices and procedures in the courtroom compared to the laboratory and that both differ from practice in the social sciences. Only in the very broadest sense that Pitkin (1972) suggests, of arguing from premises that all can accept, through steps that all can follow, to conclusions none can deny, is their commonality. But the specific ways of practicing this rationality can differ considerable and is not all of the same stuff.

Pitkin, H. F. (1972) *Wittgenstein and Justice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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<sup>i</sup> This email exchange took place in 2013.



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<sup>ii</sup> I remember that when reading these words I set the book down and wondered if I should give up academia altogether. Following fashion, to me, is a mindless and pointless activity.

<sup>iii</sup> Interested readers should also see: <http://www.watoday.com.au/federal-politics/federal-election-2013/truth-trivial-in-an-election-now-theres-a-fact-20130820-2s92b.html>. There are three fact-checking sites active in the current campaign: Polifact Australia (<http://www.politifact.com.au/>), *The Conversation's* Election Fact Check (<http://theconversation.com/au/factcheck>), and the ABC (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation*) FactCheck site ([www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/](http://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck/)). Of these, *The Conversation's* site most approximates the norms of social science in that each analysis is subject to peer review that is published along with the analysis.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom> (accessed 13/15/2015)

<sup>v</sup> I am deliberately referring Habermas, as presented by Flyvbjerg, to emphasize the performative contradiction.