

questions about disciplinary boundaries, periodization, and the use of large data in historical research. This excellent book will influence the field for years to come.

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Democracy and Truth: A Short History. By *Sophia Rosenfeld*.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. Pp. viii+214. \$22.50.

Are we living in a post-truth era and, if so, does it presage the end of democracy? No, says Sophia Rosenfeld, in this timely book. It is true that we are living through a major crisis. But speaking about “post-truth” suggests that there was once a golden age when everyone agreed upon objective facts and spoke the truth. This, Rosenfeld explains, is a myth. “Fake news” is a very old phenomenon, while the idea of truthfulness in reporting is relatively new. In fact, for much of human history, few people have seen much contradiction between lies and effective rulership. And while truth has always been touted as a key democratic value, its nature, and who has the authority to determine it, have always been contested.

According to Rosenfeld, our own “regime of truth,” in the Foucauldian sense, goes back to the “truth culture of the transatlantic Enlightenment.” It was during the eighteenth century that the eradication of error and falsehood became a major preoccupation. Thinkers from Voltaire to Kant all associated untruth with superstition, outmoded dogmas, and prejudice. All of these, in turn, served to prop up an antiquated and unjust sociopolitical order. And whether we are speaking of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Abbé Mably, or Thomas Paine, each thought that transparency, openness, and an “ethos of truth telling” were especially necessary in republics. We are the inheritors of these eighteenth-century *philosophes*’ moral crusade.

To understand our current predicament, it helps to know what kind of truth we are speaking of. Rosenfeld provides welcome clarification. She explains that there are three types of truth: the mathematical or logical variety (such as “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”), the empirical or contingent variety (such as “yesterday I went to the doctor”), and then normative or moral truths (such as “lying is wrong”). It is the empirical variety of truth that concerns us today. Moreover, what concerns us is also who gets to decide what constitutes the truth, and what standards of proof we should accept. Should we rely on an elite of the supposedly most qualified and intellectually capable among us to tell us what the truth is, or should we trust the purported common sense of the “people”? Do we arrive at the truth through discussion and debate with those like us or do we learn it from “experts”?

This question, Rosenfeld explains, was built into modern democracy from the beginning. If we owe our preoccupation with truthfulness to the Enlightenment, we also owe to it our suspicion of “experts” and faith in the so-called “common sense” of “the people.” Ever since the eighteenth century, these two competing sources of truth, the supposed wisdom of the crowd and the specialized knowledge of a learned elite, have co-existed. The expectation was always that they should work together. It was necessary for ordinary citizens to have confidence in both experts and one another for the system to work. The regime of truth depended on a considerable amount of trust.

Of course, that trust and complicity never actually existed. In Rosenfeld’s telling, the history of modern democracy has been riven with a constant tension between elite knowledge, on the one hand, and a popular wisdom on the other. Disdaining expertise, valorizing the feelings of “ordinary” people, and proposing simple solutions is not a new idea: it

has been with us for the past 300 years, from Thomas Paine in the eighteenth century to Donald Trump in ours. Trump's brand of populism is just "nastier, crasser, and more belligerent" than the earlier varieties we had before. It is also more widely disseminated and possibly more effective thanks to modern media. Today we are literally overwhelmed by misinformation, untruths, and outright lies. According to Rosenfeld, much of the blame can be placed on what she calls a "technological shift in information dissemination as massive as that which gave us mechanical printing in the fifteenth century" (40).

What can be done? Rosenfeld offers a number of suggestions. Knowing the history that she recounts is a first step. Then we need to revitalize the norms and institutions that build trust and harmonize expert knowledge with a populist "common good." This will, however, not be enough. Perhaps an even more important problem, she contends, is moral failure of our economic system. The more polarized we are, and divided by gross and growing inequality, the harder it becomes for us to find the shared ground of truthfulness on which democracy ultimately depends. Perhaps the answer lies in increased government regulation. Rosenfeld writes that "enhanced rules and regulations for communication are required if truth is to be either the starting point of our political process or the aim."

In these troubled times, Rosenfeld's book is both illuminating and useful. She is to be commended for her lucid and jargon-free prose. She translates sometimes quite complicated ideas into something readable and thought provoking. One can't help wondering, however, why she began her story with the birth of *modern* democracy in the eighteenth century. Surely the problem has roots stretching far back in history—in fact, back as far as the very origins of democracy in Ancient Athens. Moreover, debates about what constitutes the truth, how we arrive at the truth, and who gets to decide this were a recurrent theme in Christian debates throughout history and continue today. Whether we learn the truth through revelation, reason, or conscience has been hotly debated for centuries. The "immortal and celestial voice" vaunted by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his Profession of Faith of Savoyard Vicar is something quite different from the wisdom of the crowd. There are those who have said that valuable truths come to us through our emotions, passions, and/or sentiments. And, throughout the period, such questions were wrapped up in issues of gender. Were women's conceptions of and access to the truth equivalent to those of men? Finally, as to Rosenfeld's suggestions for a solution, who is going to decide which regulations we need to help us get at the truth? Who shall we entrust with the power to regulate? Experts? But perhaps Rosenfeld's book, which is brief on purpose, is valuable also because it triggers us to pose such questions.

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Decolonizing the Map: Cartography from Colony to Nation. Edited by *James R. Akerman*. Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography. Edited by *James R. Akerman*.

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The edited collection *Decolonizing the Map: Cartography from Colony to Nation* (2017) is the latest installment of essays based on the Kenneth Nebenzahl, Jr., Lectures in the History of Cartography at the Newberry Library in Chicago. Edited by the library's curator of maps, James Akerman, *Decolonizing the Map* is a successor volume to a previous book in the series, *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire* (Akerman, ed.,