

Moral Injury on the Front Lines of Truth: Encounters with Liminal Experience and the Transformation of Meaning

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Abstract: Today's fast-moving, (new) media lifeworld embodies many of the metaphors of its analog predecessors – including those of warfare and conflict. The metaphor of warfare is used to describe everything from corporate marketing strategies to political campaigns, often with harmful consequences. In one way of exploring the *front lines* of the resulting war on truth, we describe some lessons learned from the experience of military veterans who have actually endured the liminality of combat, and who emerge with what is increasingly termed *moral injuries*. We use their experience as an analogy for competing (ante)narratives in cyberspace, where objective standards of truth and facticity are apparent casualties, and where *fake news* is emerging as victorious. We then apply models of social construction, specifically the practical theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM), and the metaphor of

jazz improvisation in the context of Schutz's lifeworld phenomenology as possibly useful, helpful, and hopeful ways of acting into the complexity of truth together.

Keywords: moral injury, social construction, liminality, metaphor, jazz improvisation

He rose to his feet and stood staring at what was his own land, crying mournfully: 'Alas! and now where on earth am I? What do I bere myself?' That he had been absent for so long was not the whole reason why he did not recognize his own country; in part it was because the goddess Pallas Athene¹ had thickened the air about him to keep him unknown while she 'made him wise to things' (Schutz, 1944, p.4)

Introduction

This quotation from Schutz's essay, "The Homecomer" (1944), succinctly describes the age-old experience of the warrior, returning to his homeland after the profoundly disorienting lived experience of combat. The history and literature of war veterans throughout recorded history have contained similar accounts of self-image and worldviews turned upside down by living through the *liminality* of combat, a time and space where the rules and conventions of the civilian social lifeworld no longer seem to apply (Turner, V. 1964, Turner, E. 2012). In today's shifting and fast moving (new) media environment, contemporary citizens may likewise feel alienated by an endless onslaught of conflicting (and perceived as untrustworthy) news swirling around them. Indeed, much of contemporary political and social discourse presents itself as a metaphorical battle of competing narratives in cyberspace, each side seeking to dominate public opinion by capturing and holding attention. Scrupulous adherence to factual reporting has seemingly taken a back seat to the imperative of sustaining the interest of the audience. In the process, the (new) media have taken on qualities of an unsettling liminal space, where objective facts can no longer be relied upon to determine truth (Dempsey & Branfman, 2017, p. xii). To help navigate this perplexing and seemingly contradictory media landscape with some sense of coherence, we present the position that Schutz's perspectives on the phenomenology of the lifeworld offer contemporary citizens some useful lenses to better discern the patterns being enacted between competing narratives. We further suggest some additional tools and concepts of communication and social construction that may be useful for

¹ In Konstanz, we did not have the overarching influence or protection of Pallas Athene, but instead the iconic figure of Imperia - who seems to have played something of a similar (if dubious) role in the history of the city. This too is shrouded in mystery.

engaging more intentionally with the formative forces of (ante)narratives and action-logics that help to create those patterns. Equipped with these insights and tools, we offer an alternative to the metaphor of warfare in cyberspace, setting aside the notion of winning or losing and following instead the way that well-trained jazz musicians enter skillfully into an unfamiliar jam session to jointly construct a new and vibrant, emerging performance.

This article reflects an exploration of this topic by the authors, together with our colleagues at the 2018 Schutz Circle conference in Konstanz with the theme of *knowledge, nescience, and the (new) media*. In our workshop at this conference, we considered ways to navigate the communicative space with a Schutzian lifeworld perspective, augmented with tools and heuristics for social construction in communication, drawn from the practical theory of CMM: the Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce, 2007). We call particular attention to parallels between Schutz's conceptualization of relevances (Campo, 2015) and the invisible yet potent *logical forces* that shape the communicative space to afford the emergence of patterns that are not always apparent to those enmeshed in them (Pearce, 2007).

In bringing life and dimension to the *warfare metaphor* for the conflict of ideas in the (new) media, we draw upon contemporary experiences of warfare by combat veterans and their interpretations of ways that the liminality of combat experience affects the way they experience the forever changed social worlds to which they return. Since the time that Schutz described this phenomenon in "The Homecomer", psychologists working with veterans have developed a conceptual model of *moral injury* to describe this condition (Shay, 1995). They have also subsequently identified several causal factors that may contribute to it, and ways to address its disorienting effects through perspective transformation (Falke & Goldberg, 2018). Such lived experiences of liminality *on the front lines* have the capacity to cause those who endure them to see the world in new ways, but this is not always easily or coherently expressed. The difficulty of capturing the essence of liminal war experiences has been described by some authors as a struggle to express rationally things that did not occur in an orderly way or in a chronological sequence, complicated by the fragmented nature of human thought. This appears as a practical expression of the phenomenological concept of inner time, suggesting an emergence of subjective meaning behind the "objective, already constituted meanings" (Bentz & Rehorick, 2018, p. 6). Paralleling this difficulty with the limitations of objective expression, the metaphor of *moral injury on the front lines of truth* gives some sense of the current experience of many citizens who are troubled by the ongoing fight between narratives in media, with our news sources and devices seemingly becoming weaponized in our very hands. What is needed are more useful, helpful, and hopeful metaphors for making shared meaning to replace those of losing or winning a conflict. Towards that end, we revisit

some of Schutz's key ideas about the social construction of the lifeworld, and offer some suggestions for going beyond interpretation and critical analysis to performance. That is to say, moving towards a practical theory, with pragmatic ways of navigating (and possibly facilitating collaborative change in) complex social systems by "engaging in the details of lived experience that facilitate joining with others to produce change" (Cronen, 2001, p.14). This turn to the practical is one that we believe Schutz would have greatly appreciated, based upon his lament in later life that, despite his intention to lead social change, his theories could not be used to change things, and instead would only be useful in describing, but not preventing, the "collapse of a great civilization" (Doherty, 2009). While Schutz may have been disappointed that his theories did not have his intended effect in his own time, we believe there is both hope and evidence that they can be used to help us make better social worlds today. Today's postmodern social worlds are, after all, more complex, interconnected, fast-moving, and in many ways more apparent than they were in Schutz's time. The social construction theories pioneered by Schutz and Luckmann are also in many ways further developed and more widely known today than they were at the time of their conception. Today, more people might acknowledge the world as complex than in Schutz's time. The desire to act into that world with a fitting vocabulary, rooted in a fitting philosophy is probably greater today too.

The terms "fake news" and "alternative facts" are intended as derisive, but suggest a growing awareness within the public consciousness that the standards of objectivity and facticity are no longer serving us well in discerning truth. This manifests itself in a number of problematic ways, one of which is the difficulty of combat veterans in communicating the meaning of their experiences to those who have not shared this experience. This current "civilian-military divide" has been a source of frustration and alienation for contemporary combat veterans. Even more significantly, this divide is also preventing the public from learning vital lessons about the social forces that led to war in the first place. Unfortunately, the social space for a meaningful conversation about the underlying intersubjective *truth* does not currently exist. Describing the purpose of his forthcoming book "War Narratives", veteran-author Caleb Cage states the following:

Because these narratives arose from an unprecedented divide between the civilian public and its military as well as an increasingly mediated information landscape ... (they) underscore the deep complexities inherent in wartime decisions and actions, complexities that are often excluded from debates about the wars. *War Narratives* is not intended to offer new truths, but rather to suggest that, when taken alone, (existing) narratives merely allow for a limited understanding of war, its costs, and its effect on the broader society....understanding the

complexities that challenge these narratives is crucial to *ensure that the public is not further manipulated by them in the future* (Cage, 2018.)

Cage's conclusions are that we need to create a different kind of dialogic space, embodied in this case by literary fiction, in which we can *allow a better truth to emerge*.² This is a space where we can transcend purely factual descriptors and become better attuned to allow otherwise "untellable stories" (Pearce, 2008) to be told. We further suggest here that Schutzian lifeworld phenomenology offers conceptual tools for further development of this kind of postmodern sensibility in the (new) media. Adding to this, we offer the metaphor of *jazz improvisation* and the perspective of constitutive communication in *social construction* to mitigate the limiting images and language of warfare and conflict, both physical and ideological. By means of illustration, we present several concepts from our work with metaphor and jazz improvisation in the design of communication (Barrett, 1998; 2012), and the social construction of trauma and mental health as it relates to the reintegration of combat veterans (Walker, 2016). We use these examples to encourage our readers, as philosophers and scholars, to further re-imagine the practical applications of Schutz's lifeworld phenomenology theory in navigating the social space of (new) media, in a way that can help this better truth to come forward and break existing repetitive patterns, archetypes and identities that no longer serve us well.

Perspectives and acknowledgements of the authors on this subject

The authors of this piece embody something of the interplay of diversity and coherence with which we engage this subject matter. One has a particular interest and background in working with the embodiment of metaphors in the design process of software and web-based systems, another is a jazz musician, musicologist and systems scholar, and the third is a retired military officer who teaches at a school of military psychology and leads retreats for combat veterans. All three of us are board members of the CMM Institute for Personal and Social Evolution³, an organization which was created to perpetuate the development and practice of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) as a practical theory of social construction in communication, or the process of "making social worlds" (Pearce, 2008). We are therefore mindful of the pioneering work of Alfred Schutz in further developing Husserl's

² From a presentation on "The All-Volunteer force and the Civilian-Military Divide" by Army veteran Caleb Cage at the War, Literature and the Arts Conference at the US Air Force Academy, September 21, 2018; panel discussion titled "Language, Literature and the U.S. All-Volunteer Force"

³ See: <http://www.cmminstitute.org>

concepts of lifeworld phenomenology, and in particular his contributions to both the field of communication, and the early conceptual development of theories of the social construction of reality. Lest we be accused of contributing to the phenomenon of fake news, we do not consider ourselves to be Schutzian experts. Many of the insights represented in this article came from the subsequent sharing of ideas after our workshop presentation with many of the eminent scholars of Schutz at the 2018 Schutz Circle gathering in Konstanz. We are particularly grateful to Claudia Gahagan, Alfred Schutz's granddaughter, who was present with us in our workshop session, as she shared her insights in to how Schutz's war experience may have affected his perceptions of the lifeworld, and the difficulty of homecoming afterwards.

Seeing the world through thick air

Alfred Schutz was himself no stranger to the notion that contemporary lifeworlds are socially constructed. This is evident from Schutz's work with Thomas Luckmann (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973), who had earlier helped to establish scholarly thought around the phenomenon of the social construction of reality with Peter Berger (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In fact, it has been a central concept of phenomenology all along to uncover the essences of lived experience as a counter to the prevalence of rational-empirical approaches to the social sciences (Endress, Psathas, & Nasu, 2005). This seems to be much the same issue we are looking at now in the (new) media, where objective models of ascertaining truth appear to be failing us. We also know that Schutz's wartime experiences deeply affected some of his views on life (Barber, 2004, pp. 4-5). This is something that we take into consideration in adopting the lifeworld perspective of combat trauma as a metaphor for what is happening to our psyches in contemporary media space. By way of graphic illustrations of this metaphorical concept of war and liminality in the (new) media, we offer here some paintings by Sterre van Middendorp, the daughter of one of the authors. We then consider some alternatives to the metaphor of warfare, including the concept of working with *minimal structures* in jazz improvisation (Barrett, 1998; 2012), and some constitutive models from the practical theory of CMM: the Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce, 2008), as a way to help envision the creation of better social worlds in communication, as potentially better ways of envisioning what we are *making together* in these liminal spaces.

A metaphorical journey to the front lines of truth

Metaphors play an important role in our meaning making. But most metaphors are embodied through a continuity of experience, and work beneath

the surface of our conscious awareness (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Therefore, becoming aware of metaphor is essential to our capacity to engage it mindfully, that is to say, either *we* have the metaphor, or the metaphor has *us* (Turbayne, 1971). If the metaphor has *us*, we perceive it as literal truth. In that case, and depending on who the creator of the metaphor is (and what their intentions were for making it), we could unknowingly find ourselves subject to manipulation. Unmarked, hidden metaphors are more likely to be taken literally than explicit, marked metaphors. The war metaphor, for example, is used to make sense of concepts in many different domains, like medicine (parasites *invading* a body), marketing (*targeting* customers), and scholarship (*attacking* and *defending* an argument). These conventional uses of the war metaphor usually go unnoticed, but with some time for reflection we can easily see them *as* metaphor. In other cases, like the war on drugs or the war on terror, the war metaphor becomes further hidden. Barrett and Sarbin (2007) point out that the war on drugs is still used as a metaphor, even though there are no countries fighting each other, nor is anyone claiming territory. Also, it is hard to envision what peace negotiations would look like in the war on drugs. They go on to describe the case of the war on terror, which, like the war on drugs, started out as a metaphor. Through persistent use of the metaphor as a guide for action, it resulted in *boots on the ground*, and an extended conflict now spanning almost two decades despite a quick initial *accomplishment of mission*. The war on terror, like the war on drugs, cannot be *won* as it has many dis-analogies with real war. Perhaps this is one reason that both are still going on, with no end in sight.

Despite the ability of metaphors to influence and capture us in illusion, metaphors can also help us break free and create new worlds. Generative metaphor, as defined by Don Schön (1993), has the potential to create a new *seeing-as* to help us become aware of possibilities for the creation of new social realities. For example, when we use the term fake news, we can use the qualifier *fake* to see news in a new way. In this case, it appears to be news deliberately constructed to be false. In the history of warfare and politics, such false narratives have been termed *propaganda* but have operated outside of the news organizations themselves. The connotation of fake news is that the news delivery vehicles themselves are now complicit in creating the fabrications. This way of seeing-as also (re)generates the notion that even though news is by definition supposed to be grounded in facts, news is also a human creation and therefore includes the inherent subjectivity of its creation process. This in turn calls into question the taken-for-granted notion of news as based on objective facts, which may no longer be accurate, and therefore is an assumption that may no longer serve us in making sense of the complex and dynamic lifeworld of the (new) media (Dempsey & Brafman, 2017). In this context, we would like to offer an artful analysis of the metaphor *fake news* as being a

war among competing antenarratives to change what may currently be regarded as truth by capturing collective attention. Our purpose in this is to raise our awareness of what may be going on in the relationship between the fabrication and delivery of fake news, the impact on existing structures of meaning and typification around what is true, and the emergence of a new (intersubjective) sense of truth within the lifeworld. Within this metaphor, persons encountering antenarratives that they perceive as fake news may indeed suffer from a form of moral injury, experiencing something of the liminality that can often surround the warrior in combat. To illustrate this phenomenon, we will use the paintings that Sterre van Middendorp created specifically to support our presentation, from the perspective of a young person who has grown up as a *digital native* among mobile devices, online social worlds, and the action-logics of the world wide web. The first of these, in figure (1) below, shows a user of digital devices which are figuratively *under attack* in a cyberspace war of news and information:



Figure 1. A view of the daily information assault from cyberspace. Painting by Sterre van Middendorp

This first painting depicts the front line of truth as a mobile device at war with the devices of those who create manipulative content to engage their readers to participate in the war on truth. The protagonist is focusing

attention on his smartphone, which, out of peripheral view, is under attack from other devices that fire abusive content which is formed to be attractive for the protagonist. In this painting, as third person observers, we sense the feeling of assault, and perhaps the despair of having few defenses to being targeted. But the protagonist seems detached from the apparent violence among the devices, suggesting a possible lack of awareness of the events. The form in which the content is presented, engages the protagonist's neural embodiment to non-consciously produce positive feelings and emotions related to human interaction, thereby seducing the protagonist to stay on the content creator's chosen side of the conflict.

In the next painting at figure (2), we zoom in more closely on the inner dimensions of the lived experience of the protagonist:



Figure 2. Disruptions at the interface of human-computer interaction. Painting by Sterre van Middendorp

Here we see the protagonist's device, previously seen as recipient of hostile fire from other content-creators, extending its arms to disrupt embodied sensory, cognitive and emotional responses, or mess with the protagonist's mind. It sets off false alarms and unplugs existing connections. We can see this physical representation of the interface of human-computer interaction to be ultimately one of emotional manipulation, through the influences on triggering mechanisms. As another way of telling this story, this painting symbolizes

the effect of the complex interaction between content and body-mind created with the goal to either draw as much attention for as long as possible, or conversely, desensitize. In the (new) media, attention is the new currency (Wu, 2016), and content creators have taken the leading edge on this front by leveraging an emerging body of empirical knowledge about our subjectivity, derived through second generation cognitive science⁴ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Gains in scientific knowledge about the working of our subjectivity and our neural embodiment are used to shape these interactions and to capture us in whatever frame the creators have in mind. In the case of the phenomenon popularly referred to as fake news, the line between metaphor and reality becomes thin, which can be disconcerting and disorienting, forcing the emergence of a liminal (cyber)space. This takes us to the third painting shown at figure (3), in which the conflict generated among competing narratives, antenarratives and purported facts serves to generate a cloud of *thick air* around the protagonist.



Figure 3. The liminal effects of the fog of cyber-war in creating thick air. Painting by Sterre van Middendorp

⁴ Second generation cognitive science takes as its starting point that the mind is embodied. This notion, developed by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), in turn, is rooted in the phenomenology of perception of Merleau-Ponty (1964).

We can now see that the conflict among online narratives and their sensory/cognitive impact have begun to blur the perceptions of the protagonist, disrupting the implicit system of relevances or the *moral code* which he has assimilated through learning and cultural immersion to navigate social space. As described eloquently by Schutz (1944), soldiers have long experienced this feeling of liminality, expressed as the *fog of war* or *Nebel des Krieges* by military historians (Von Clausewitz, 1832). Having been immersed in the fog of war on the frontlines of truth for some time, our protagonist, like Schutz's Home-comer, returns from the battle for his attention raging in cyberspace, thrown back into the social space of the human lifeworld with thick air surrounding his mind.⁵ This causes him to see the world differently than others around him who had not been affected by the same experience,⁶ making communication difficult. This is depicted in figure (4) the final painting in this series.



Figure 4. Thwarted communication and isolation between the homecomer, family and community. Painting by Sterre van Middendorp.

⁵ A key difference between the warrior and our protagonist is that the warrior engages in warfare consciously, while our protagonist engages in the war on truth mostly non-consciously. A key similarity is that both the warrior and our protagonist's bodies are aware of the disconnect between their perceptions and their moral code. While the sudden shift into liminality is clear to the warrior, the protagonist is seduced to slowly go into liminal space without knowing so consciously. Is the trauma the same?

⁶ Our protagonist's family may be lucky. The war on truth in the United States in particular seems to be splitting families, friendships, and neighborhoods.

The depicted contrast between thick and thin air can be seen as a threshold for engagement between the military homecomer and his family and friends as described by Schutz, and also as a way of seeing the effects of disruptive and polarized new media narratives and antenarratives on social discourse. To further extend the metaphor between cyberspace and the experience of combat, we will next look more closely at some of the stories of veterans, and how they struggle to make new meaning after their return.

Untellable Stories: Living the Liminal Experience of Combat

Many veterans report the trouble they have in sharing their front-line experience, and therefore keep it bottled up inside them (Chrisinger, 2015). It is not that they do not want to share these experiences, but there is no context for it outside the battle space or the camaraderie of fellow veterans. In the language of CMM, we refer to these as “untellable stories” (Pearce 2008, p.212). Trying to tell a story when it is not understood or perceived as welcomed does no justice to the shared experience of having been there. Other barriers to connection include the assumptions of not wanting to burden the other with one’s liminal experience. As a result, we simply cannot communicate. This contrast was beautifully set to stage by a group of students of John Chetro Szivos in Washington DC in 2014 in a play titled *Outside the Wire*. The title refers to the area “outside the encampment where soldiers know they’re safe; it’s a place of insecurity and anxiety you wouldn’t ordinarily visit.”⁷ This metaphor, when applied to the phenomenon of fake news, suggests that all of us may be outside the wire when navigating the open and mostly unregulated frontiers of the (new) media in cyberspace. Here, all of us who have a smartphone with free apps are exposed to the war for our attention. Many of us, by engaging with the functions and content to exchange information with others, will also feel like casualties in an apparent war on truth, which is at its core an assault on our moral code and the way we perceive the world. The question is: are we aware that we are drafted into this war, by whom we are recruited, and how this ultimately affects our perceptions of truth? By accepting something other than an objective standard of truth and considering the possibility of multiple realities governed by alternative facts, are we in danger of sliding into moral relativism as well as moral injury? In the rest of this article, we will consider some possible conceptual frameworks for deciphering and possibly transcending such moral conflicts (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997), and considering some ideas from Schutz for seeing systems of relevances by

⁷ From a review of the theatrical production “Outside the Wire” <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/entertainment/ent-columns-blogs/lawrence-topppman/article62606957.html>

which coherence may be created among conflicting narratives and antenarratives. A key to this discussion will be the conceptual model of *cosmopolitan communication* (Pearce, 2008), representing an essential structure of a form of discourse that transcends many of the embedded and implicit cultural forces that shape our perceptions of truth. We will refer to this model in discussing essential qualities of communicative space that potentially may serve to help create coherence across cultural and perceptual differences, including those created by entrenched and unexamined narratives acting as constitutive forces of social reality.

Antenarrative, Jazz Improvisation, and the simplicity on the other side of complexity

Admittedly, we have just painted a complex and possibly disturbing picture of lifeworlds in conflict. We believe that Schutz's conceptualizations of relevance and typifications may be helpful in navigating the social dynamics of this complexity, seen as a form of collective attention. One of the apparent essences of the (new) media landscape is a quality of non-linearity, which seems resistant to empirical methods to determine ultimate authority of truth through traditional processes of fact-checking. To Schutz's insights in this area, we propose to add some practical, conceptual tools of social construction that, like our friendly goddess Pallas Athene, might help to *thin out* the air surrounding our protagonist. We will return to this shortly. First, we wish to say a bit more about the elements and resources of which competing narratives are formed as a way to understand the emergence of meaning from social discourse in the (new) media. One useful concept is the *antenarrative*, or the communicative force that exists before the narrative itself is fully formed (Boje, 2001). The etymology of the term antenarrative represents both the sequence of something that comes before the narrative itself, and also a *bet* or wager on the eventual outcome, such as the ante before a hand in a game of cards. The antenarrative can therefore be seen as (n)either true or false, depending upon how things go in the communication process. The dominant and accepted paradigm in the media and news business has traditionally been the reporting of factual information. This paradigm is strongly rooted in the *transmission* model of communication taught in most schools of journalism and communication (Pearce, 2008). In contrast with the transmission model of communication, the social construction paradigm views communication as constitutive. Communication theories based upon the social construction paradigm such as the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) redirect our attention to looking *at* (not *through*) communication to see what reality is being *made* or *co-constructed* in patterns and episodes of discourse (Pearce, 2008). The transmission model of communication causes us to see disparities

between content of media reports as either truth or fake news (deliberate *lies*) as evaluated by a presumed objective, external, empirical standard of truth. The social construction paradigm on the other hand offers a somewhat more nuanced explanation of this phenomenon: as a form of dissonance between competing antenarratives, in which all participants in the communication process have both agency and responsibility for deciding what is (intersubjectively) true. In the non-linear (quantum) space of (new) media interaction, we consider the possibility that the ultimate truth may not have emerged yet. This emergent intersubjective truth might take the form of a dominant narrative by which the earlier antenarratives can then be compared and evaluated as to whether they still fit, or not.

Tuning in: The Jazz metaphor of making coherence

To contribute to our understanding of how the co-construction of intersubjective truth in the new media lifeworld plays out, we may consider the way that jazz musicians interact in the process of improvisation. Jazz players create a coherent performance by following the pattern of an established tune, and then interacting through a recognized set of minimal structures within which experimentation takes place (Barrett, 1998). The other players, in attunement with the audience, engage in a process of contributing variations on the theme, moving in the directions that emerge, to involve the whole system in the performance. The introduction of an antenarrative in new media may likewise represent a minimal structure put forward around which a fully-formed narrative might cohere, as an informed bet on the final narrative that might emerge. Like an emerging jazz performance that links together the musical sensibilities and expression of several artists, the *truth* of the performance might not be apparent until the completion of the episode of communication, and is always subject to a change in meaning by what comes next. Some antenarratives might be extinguished and others reinforced by the dynamics of interplay, and the audience is always an active participant in this process. Analogous to the observer effect of quantum physics,⁸ the audience's role here is a factor in what is ultimately created in a participative act of facilitated co-construction. In moving towards this metaphor, we are suggesting a shift in thinking from evaluating truth in media from an objective fact-based standard to a more subjective and intersubjective one, engaging whole-system dynamics of meaning-making as an emergent, inclusive, and participative process.

⁸ The observer effect is a significant way that quantum mechanics deviates from Newtonian physics. This addresses relationality between observer and observed, or the change in the phenomenon that is brought about by the process of observing it.

Formation of Moral Code in the Lifeworld

Engaging the term *moral injury* as a part of this discussion is potentially controversial due to sensitive connotations of the terms *moral* or *ethical* in both popular and philosophical discourse. The moral dimension of the lifeworld is something that Schutz was well aware of, and which he - according to many accounts - scrupulously avoided (Barber, 2004, p. 39). With this firmly in mind, our intention here is to likewise refrain from moralizing, but rather to engage the notion of *moral code* as a socially constructed force that is an integral part of the lifeworld. The term moral code as we use it refers to the often-unwritten system of valuations by which we make sense of what is done and said within the context of our shared lifeworlds. We do not think this concept is too far from the way Schutz considered relevances. The impact of the disruption of the moral code of the lifeworld has ripples that touch both individuals, and the broader social fabric. In connection with the social world of combat veterans, this type of disruption has been referred to as moral injury, a term introduced after the Vietnam war by psychologist Jonathan Shay (1995). From a clinical perspective, a moral injury is created when we either fail to prevent harm, or cause harm to others, by our actions or inactions (Buechner & Jinkerson, 2016). This also applies to the failure of individuals or institutions to live up to their expected responsibilities. Our discussion of the meaning of this term led to the wry conclusion of one participant in our Konstanz workshop that, at any given time in America, “at least half of the population may be suffering from a moral injury.”⁹ This observation underscores the notion of the moral conflict behind polarized narratives in the (new) media that are fed by the beliefs and agendas of various ideologically-motivated political and social activists and organizations (Pearce and Littlejohn 1998). The environment for this has been stoked in recent years by increased access to (new) media channels, the increased use of sophisticated and coordinated propaganda techniques by activist organizations, and the segmentation of traditional broadcast news outlets into multiple providers that cater to particular audience demographics, in effect serving as *echo chambers* that reinforce the beliefs and typifications of those tuning in. Be that as it may, the implications of this for both the homecoming veteran and the would-be participating citizen seem clear: a damaged moral code can become a pathway to alienation, and the characteristics of a healing response should be to co-construct a more inclusive narrative. Like a jarring chord or unexpected melodic turn in a jazz performance, disruptions to the coherence of

⁹ This comment has been made to the authors by many others as well, some going so far as to use the term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The universal humor of such comments suggests a deeper underlying truth.

the performance can indicate the introduction of a new minimal structure of some kind. When such disruptions emerge, the skill and mutual *tuning in* of the artists can offer either a linkage to a path of return, or possibly to a new direction for exploration.

Untellable Stories: Creating space for collaborative meaning-making

As another way of engaging the metaphor of thick and thin air surrounding this type of discourse, we can think of the reason veterans sometimes struggle with communication as a perceived absence of appropriate context for telling their stories, or some quality of the *untellable* that is inherent in the story itself. Branham (1980) gives us some thoughts about responses to the ineffable, or an encounter with things that we do not have the capacity to understand, or the vocabulary to directly express in words. According to Branham, the four potential responses to the ineffable are:

- Partial or total silence;
- Explicitly qualified expression;
- Self-destructive anti-expression, or
- Poetic evocation

Each of these responses can be problematic (or at least enigmatic) in its own way, and there are, of course, a variety of forms that these responses can take - some of them involving violence, and other forms of rebellion against the status quo. We can see such patterns in both the communication of and with homecomers, as well as in the current fragmented (new) media discourse. Being impeded by barriers of thick air, we can withdraw, avoid commitment one way or another, get angry and/or violent, commit suicide, start a rebellion, or wax poetic. Applied directly to the homecoming experiences reported by many contemporary veterans, silence is sometimes characterized as a symptom of cultural difference, or a so-called *military-civilian divide* that has presented itself – for a variety of reasons – for generations. Such real or perceived social divisions prevent us from learning valuable lessons about the nature of conflicts from the direct lived experience of veterans, and consider how in the future such conflicts might be prevented. Qualified expression can be seen as either a deliberate lie, possibly as an expression of irony, or an equivocation of sorts, conveying the message that, one way or another, it doesn't really matter. Self-destruction can be metaphorical or literal, in the case of the rising epidemic of suicide among returning combat veterans and others of their generation (Reimann & Mazuchowski, 2018). Suicidality is something with which Schutz himself struggled, however it seems this may have changed for him after his military service (Barber, 2004, p. 4). Among the possible responses to ineffable experience posited by Branham, poetic evocation seems to hold

the most creative potential for considering alternatives for making meaning together during or after experiences of liminality. This may account for the outpouring of literature, poetry, and musical compositions that seems to have accompanied the experience of warriors throughout recorded history. For this project, we will focus primarily on the modality of jazz improvisation. In the spirit of this metaphor and the experimental crossing of boundaries, we ask the reader to bear with us in this part of the essay as we work with some evocative concepts and styles from musicology that may at first appear unfamiliar.

From thick air to co-hearence: Seeing and changing patterns through virtuosity, heightened awareness, and attunement

In one of his many writings on improvisation and the creative process, Frank Barrett says that “there is a popular misconception that jazz players are inarticulate, untutored geniuses, that they have no idea what they are playing, as if picking notes out of thin air” (Barrett, 1998, p. 606). He goes on to show that the seeming ease of the thin air is based on seven characteristics of jazz improvisation that require skill, courage, structure, collaboration, community, challenge, and the openness to not-knowing (nescience) of where a performance might go. Using our interpretation of Barrett’s conception of thin air as a starting point, the contrast between thick air and thin air in figures (1-4) can be seen more as a difference in the state of mind of the protagonist in relation to the type of air, than that of an *actual difference in substance* between thin and thick air. The thin air, in this notion, entails the ability to see through the substance the possibilities for improvisation in the current context. Seeing such possibilities, and being able to enact them in real-time performance, are as much skills embodied in the person as they are circumstantial *in the air*. Someone ready to make the best of such a situation needs years of dedicated practice to be able to do so. This practice requires a sort of attention and focus not dissimilar from that which could be employed by our protagonist in interaction with his device and its captivating contents. At least a part of this ability to focus, and a most critical part, is the ability to pay attention to what is going on in the collective space in a way that allows individual contributions to be made appropriately and coherently with what is going on. The authors have coined the term *co-hearence* to describe this quality, which combines the notion of paying attention and what Schutz referred to in his writings about music as “attunement” (Barber, 2004, p. 25). With this in mind, what is the difference between thick and thin air, seen through the metaphor of skilled performance, and what do those differences afford us in terms of our interactions with fake news? For this, let’s make a bridge between the metaphor of jazz improvisation, and social construction

in communication. The liner notes of Ralph J. Gleason on the album cover of *Filles de Kilimanjaro* (1968) by Miles Davis describe the phenomenon of communication of ineffable qualities through music as follows:

The organization of sound into music can set off all kinds of responses through the human ear far beyond the mathematics of the music itself. David LaFlame, the San Francisco electronic violinist, once described this as ‘light shows for the blind’. Miles Davis does this all the time. The consistency of his music is really amazing.¹⁰

Apparently, for Gleason, there is something *consistent* happening here. What is striking in this context. Further on, in the same liner notes, he says:

This is the thing about improvisational music. When it is right, it takes great strength to leave because you have the overwhelming feeling at each moment that more surprises and delights are coming. [...] Each time I hear it, it becomes a new soundtrack to a new movie in my mind. [...] just to evolve out of what went before and lead naturally into what follows.

This speaks to making something good from the collision of perspectives: consistency welcoming the new. Instant processing of what emerges through the interaction. Barrett calls this “boost(ing) information processing in the midst of action” (Barrett, 2012, p. 165), building on his seven principles of organizational improvisation as a guiding framework to explore the leadership mindset that helps in understanding and facilitating the innovation process. The new arises. The new emerges. The new integrates. The new is always in the making. Nothing possible ever has been invented. We are always enacting Mystery, as described in a pending publication on *Cosmopolitan Communication* by Arthur Jensen (2018).¹¹ The deep connection of these types of views, taking place in the scholarly ‘gumbo’ where jazz improvisation, sophisticated takes on human communication, and social constructionist ideas are inseparable ingredients, their own flavors synergizing into the taste of the gumbo itself, is emerging among scholar/practitioners working in these areas. In other words, we can expect to see many emergent forms of truth emerging from collaborations that cross boundaries. As one example, prominent organizational development theorist Karl Weick, Frank Barrett and others

¹⁰ Liner notes by San Francisco Jazz music critic and writer Ralph J. Gleason. Text retrieved from https://rateyourmusic.com/list/Joci/miles_back_cover_liner_notes/5/

¹¹ Jensen is the former Associate Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University. His seminal project “Cosmopolis 2045” envisions various social institutions in an age where social constructionist forms of communication have supplanted the previous transmission model, reshaping the dominant way of being and making meaning together. See: <http://cosmopolis2045.com/>

initiated a collaboration that is widely regarded as the real starting point of *organizational improvisation*, which has now become a mature field of research, interest and application.¹²

This might lead us into a type of reasoning that dares to explore the frontlines of truth from a truly engaged and more radical perspective: we are always *Jamming on the frontlines of truth*. We are *always* creating the new by engaging in a reality that unfolds by this engagement itself. "...action creates feedback that informs the next step" (Barrett, 2012, p. 182). From this angle, a sentence like *the only way out of the complexity is through it* (Nachmanovitz, 1990), offers even more comfort than it does when we interpret it from the perspective of a peaceful outcome of a tremendously challenging and confrontational Odyssey. Not too much silent Zen out there. Odysseus returned home, but the journey wasn't over. In his case, he had to revitalize his archery skills to bring down the number of Penelope's lovers down to a manageable level. But even after that, while the Hollywood versions of our grand epics and myths reassure us, sending us out of the cinema with a soothing soundtrack and tons of names of people that cooperated in reframing our myths into bits and bites for 21st century moviegoers and lifehackers, Odysseus was not really retiring. We are always in the jam. Truth is always in the making. Emerging reality is always washing our faces, renewing the very eyes that help us 'perceive' it in the first place. We are always on the front lines of truth. So the homecomer has a story that is part of a grander, greater narrative. We hear an episode: An episode of a play. A Season. A yearlong soap opera that takes shape while we enact it, with no separation between the players. As we co-invent some new boundary-spanning narratives in conversation with Schutz's archetypal homecomer, we might further allow ourselves to invite the homecomer to a new home. In this sense we offer a truly human invitation to share unique, otherwise 'untellable' stories, sharing the experiences of an ineffable Odyssey with a language and a level of communication that is not designed to simply *be* but to *become*. Such a new language responds in a response-able way to the needs of the emergent social reality for signs, signals and metaphors that it will need to perceive the melodies emergent from what is otherwise just seen as noise.

Now for an example: Returning to the album *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, here Miles Davis, in the song *Mademoiselle Mabry*, invites - virtually - Jimi Hendrix to the jam by creating a dialogue between *The Wind Cries Mary*, as a minimal structure, and his band's major contribution to set the stage for the emergence of a new, greater narrative. Hendrix is not a homecomer anymore, principally. He's just a human being sharing a unique story. The essence of

¹² Referring to their celebrated collaboration at the 1995 Academy of management conference in Vancouver, British Columbia.

jazz ('Take the music, make it yours, and then give it to someone') takes his story, without bias from 'not understanding it yet', but as a stepping stone to another turn of the cosmic jam that these creative geniuses were engaging in. A lesson to be learned here: moral injury might be more artfully healed by diminishing the social judgments we place upon it: the sense of *in-jury-ness* and the prejudice coming from the social construction of mental illness with which we have labelled it (Walker, 2016). This can take the form of honoring experience for what it is, dispelling the illusion that truth is true because it has been proclaimed so by so-called experts and that a lie is in fact a *lie* because calling it that helps us to artificially separate ourselves from the part of the Odyssey that we would like to ignore, but cannot. These reflections may offer some comfort, and help us to see some *light shows*, not only for the home-comer, in his or her deep tragedy, but also for society writ large as *the blind*; those whose contribution to or complicity in this tragedy might be just as deep or even deeper, from a systemic, communicative and more fully human perspective. As another possible way of stating this, the process of finding an intersubjective measure of truth calls us to a deliberate act of co-creation. Such a creative endeavor can be healing for the home-comer, and also potentially expands the horizons of the rest of us.

Tuning in to the Lifeworld: Casting, Rituals, and Improvisation

Moving now from the jazz improvisation metaphor to social construction theory, we consider some tools and practices of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) that may help to envision some ways to engage with virtuosity in the new media space. Building and elaborating on Schutz's conceptualization of social construction of the lifeworld, CMM theory offers some conceptual tools to help recognize patterns in communication that are constructing the (actual and virtual) lifeworlds around us in real-time, and help us to act more wisely in those moments that Pearce refers to as "bifurcation points" (Pearce, 2007, p. 93), to enact more inclusive and harmonious social realities. Analogous to the emergent *truth* of jazz performance, these conceptual tools offer a way of explaining how certain social realities get made in communication with or without our specific awareness or intentionality. Pearce (2007) goes on to describe three models of realizing episodes of communication; dramatic "casting," planning "rituals" or emergent "improvisation" (pp 148-157). In the first of these, we engage in the social world as actors with some fixed lines (reflecting our preferred antenarratives) that we throw out hoping for a favorable response. Other actors are out there as well, as often with conflicting lines as with agreeable ones, and so we look for others to "cast" in certain roles in the dramatic production we hope to realize (Pearce,

2007, p. 149.) This is much like the current online lifeworlds of biased and polarized narratives, *echo chambers* and irreconcilable differences we find in the (new) media, and increasingly in the mainstream media as well. The second model of planned communication is the ritualized forms of performance that institutions often create to maintain order, such as can be observed in church services, city hall public meetings and other formalized situations. Pearce uses the metaphor of a sports contest and its rules and regulations to exemplify this form (Pearce, 2007, p. 152). In such contests there is an imposed order and sense of civility, but also in the end there is a winner and loser as each episode of communication concludes. The third model, improvisation, is the one we are most interested in for our purposes in this essay. To be skillful in improvisation, participants must develop a certain competence, including a level of virtuosity in performance, and the ability to pay attention to context, and what others are doing in it (Pearce, 2007 p. 153). Where Pearce makes the distinction between planning, casting, and improvising, Schutz, in his essay "Making Music Together," focuses on the mutual tuning-in relationship. He says:

It is precisely this mutual tuning-in relationship by which the 'I' and the 'Thou' are experienced by both participants as a 'We' in vivid presence. [...] It appears that all possible communication presupposes a mutual tuning-in relationship between the communicator and the addressee of the communication. This relationship is established by the reciprocal sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time, by living through a vivid present together, by experiencing this togetherness as a 'We' (Schutz 1974, 161).

The blending of ideas around tuning-in, awareness of (the flux of) experience, and experiencing togetherness as a We, is a valuable line of thinking that most musicians will recognize. Be it a classical orchestra, a folk band, a jazz combo, a large choir or a singer-songwriter duo, the presence of a *band feel* might be one of the defining aspects, the minimal structures, of what collective performing of music is in the first place. This focus on the experience provides a different perspective on the distinctions that Pearce makes: Is there really a qualitative difference between classical music and jazz? Schutz says: "there is no difference in principle between the performance of a string quartet and the improvisations at a jam session of accomplished jazz players" (Schutz 1974, 177). There are many possible angles from which one could look at the differences and similarities between classical music and jazz performance. From a metaphorical perspective however, there is a defining difference when it comes to the possible space for improvisation: there is much more freedom for improvisation in a jazz combo regarding the notion of creating *novelty*. There are several implications of this observation for our specific topic of dealing with fake news in the (new) media. Most importantly, it calls for the participant(s)

to be more mindful of both the quality of attunement with the other participants, and have an awareness of what form of performance is being enacted. A skilled musician, for example, might be equally at home in either a symphony orchestra or in jazz quartet, as long as the context is made clear. Likewise, the discriminating participating citizen is at a loss and a disadvantage if only consuming (new) media content passively, without awareness that the content is a *mélange* of antenarratives and factual information. In order to be an informed and active participant, the citizen will require some conceptual tools and the perspective of being a part of the action, not just an observer. There will also be a need for some mutually understood and agreed upon rules for participation. Otherwise, what is being made in this completely unstructured communication environment might be analogous to a room full of beginning music students in a room together, each making attempts at something musical but with no coherence evident. Not a pleasant prospect!

Getting to “We”: The Making of Intersubjective Truth

When looking at the aspect of what a “We” would be in music making, the experience of improvising musicians playing together is linked to creating something new, and this only works, from a jazz musician’s point of view, if there is an open mind in all the players, a safe and supportive culture of trust and connection, a holding environment or container for setting expectations of how everyone will participate. This might include things like an agreement to applaud for everyone stepping forward, allowing freedom for experimenting with new ideas that would not emerge in more controlled settings. In intersubjective terms, a dialogic form of container might be organized along well-known lines of social roles, with their associated prescripts, fears, and repressions. Or paralleling the space for jazz improvisation, it might be more open to experimentation, and less constrained by the *logical forces* that come with social roles, identities, political orthodoxies, and so on. This factor is key in the value and essence of the “We” that is at the foundation of the tuned-in personalities. The emphasis in interacting is less on form and structure and more on the “I’s and Thou’s” of the players joining in the collective creation of music (or dialogue). The presence of this *band feel*, as musicians who *know* this from experience would call it, is the foundation of whatever communication emerges. True social interaction, from a deep, existential, shared experience happens *inside*. And just like an *outside* groove is the foundation for whatever musical ideas will emerge, an inner groove is the foundation of the tuning-in on each others’ *whole* personalities. A groove that invites precious and high quality communicating on-stage. These concepts and ways of being are well known to musicians, but the parallel for citizens as “persons-in-conversation”

(Pearce, 2008, p. 30) are less well defined. How do we facilitate and practice such virtuoso performance in other communication contexts?

Enacting dialogic virtuosity

According to Pearce and Pearce (2000), virtuosity, like that of the improvising jazz musician, requires at least three things: a grand passion for what one is doing, an ability to make very fine distinctions, and an ability to engage in skilled performance using these distinctions. For many jazz musicians, for example, jazz is a way of life. There is a grand passion for the music, for performing it, for playing together, for always learning, for practice. Also, the aforementioned minimal structures can only be applied by a musician who can make very fine distinctions across a range of intermingling concepts that make up the music, including rhythm, melody, harmony, musical keys, chords, styles, and instrumental techniques. The more one knows, the more sophisticated a minimal structure can be arranged for improvisation in the moment. In our own experience of performing jazz as an organizational metaphor, for example, we would often request that the audience call out different styles in which to play a song.¹³ Whether the audience wanted hard-rock or samba, it didn't matter. The musicians would exchange a few glances, one or two words, a nod, and they would perform a tune in something like the requested style. George Gershwin's "Summertime," for example, is normally a blues tune in the key of "C," but skilled players who are attuned with each other can render it in virtually any style called for. It is the perspicacious distinctions that make up a style and our knowledge of them that enables us to respond to such requests in real-time. Finally, in addition to knowing one's standards, one must be able to actually perform them. This requires practice, which builds skill. Jazz musicians combine their passion, knowledge and practice to always push the edge of their skill to play their instrument in an improvised performance. The dual, parallel skill of playing an instrument and focusing on the moment is what makes improvised music so exciting. Pearce and Pearce use the metaphor of virtuoso performance to reflect on a multi-year action research project in which the citizens of a town in California engaged in public dialogue to improve their community. In doing so, they draw useful analogies between the dialogue performance of the community and the requirements for virtuosity in the performing arts. Analogous to the artful performance of jazz, they find that dialogical performers who facilitate dialogue professionally should strive for a similar form of virtuosity. For

¹³ For many years, and in differing constellations, the authors have used musical improvisation as a metaphor to inspire dialogue in organizations about complexity and emergence in the context of different management and leadership challenges.

this they must be able to make fine distinctions, both within the concept of dialogue, as between dialogue and other forms of communication. Pearce and Pearce also point out that it is more important to develop a language that enables us to make comparisons and distinctions ‘about’ the dialogue as it unfolds, rather than being able to definitively state what it is at a given time. This is because the concept is under continuous development, and any empirical distinctions of facticity will be outdated quickly. For this, several CMM concepts are particularly useful. A prime example is the notion of contextual hierarchy, in which several potential levels of context of a phenomenon might be rank-ordered, and the participants asked to come to some consensus on which level of context is most desired by all (Pearce, 2008). In co-creating this choice, the participants see and experience the shared reality that dialogue involves self, other selves, and the relationship between selves. By taking this perspective, any focus on the parts can remain related to the complexity of the whole, and through this, create a self-reinforcing social dynamic that increases the overall quality of communication as it recursively comes into play. Pearce calls this type of self-reinforcing pattern a “charmed loop” (Pearce, 2008). Finally, Pearce and Pearce come back around to the metaphor of improvisation, when they say that:

Part of the work that constitutes dialogic virtuosity consists of making a responsible judgment of what needs to be done in the moment (rather than being a one-trick pony and only knowing one thing to do); another part of the work consist of knowing what to do and being able to pull it off (Pearce & Pearce 2000, 174).

When we relate this observation back to our relationship with the phenomenon of engaging with forms of antenarrative in the (new) media, we can see more clearly how these conceptual dialogic tools can help us engage in a more constructive and positive way than simply labeling them as fake news based on a fixed objective standard. Instead, we can engage in an examination of the dialogic construction of some variations of what Schutz described as “multiple realities.” (Pearce, 2008, p.41) Thinking back on what has just been described about the phenomenon of improvisation in jazz, improvisation in communication, and their common metaphor of virtuoso performance, let us consider their application to the possibility of dialogic communication in the new media space. There are some important implications here that might help us to reframe our relationship to our (new) media devices (and the others that we are in dialogue with through their content), and possibly in the process resolve some of the conflicting moral code that may be causing a form of moral injury. From this reframing, it is possible to consider the context of apparent moral conflict or lack of truth and integrity in the (new) media as something else, such as a rich fog of competing antenarratives. Within this fog, acting as skilled dialogic virtuosi, we may be able to improvise together

and possibly co-create new and more hopeful patterns that may ring true to a wider circle of participants.

CMM as musical notation for creating magic moments of social world construction

In consideration that Schutz on occasion turned to music as a way of finding normative order and meaning sometimes lacking in the more chaotic life-world of his times (Barber, 2014, p. 223), we offer here some further thoughts about the possibility that several of the conceptual models offered in CMM theory might be used by an informed citizen in the interactive world of (new) media. Much in the way that a skilled jazz musician uses musical notation as a key to engaging the structure of a piece, we can envision that a well-informed citizen might use this awareness to more artfully interject meaning and improvise with minimal structures in (new) media space to make an episode of collaboration. This capacity of using CMM for generative communication was described in a keynote address at the 2017 CMM Learning Exchange in London by John Burnham, a family therapist who uses CMM theory extensively in his practice, as “Creating Magic Moments.”¹⁴ Very often, such magic moments can be the lived experience of an *aha* experience, when new understanding is created across bifurcated social worlds or diametrically-opposed positions.

The Participating Citizen: Narrative formation in the (new) media as an act of inclusion

As a practical example of the dynamics of the social construction of shared truth in the (new) media we have just described, we turn to recent work by the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Martin Dempsey, describing what he sees as an emerging leadership paradigm of “Radical Inclusion” in an era that is marked by competing narratives (Dempsey & Brafman, 2017, p. 169). Using examples of news media coverage of a violent clash between conservative and liberal forces on the University of California Berkeley campus, Dempsey and Brafman described the interplay of competing narratives (none of which proved to be factually accurate), and how the hidden logical forces of tacit

¹⁴ CMM Learning Exchanges are collaborative conferences in which all in attendance are included in dialogues around the uses of CMM theory in research and practice. The purpose is to embody the theory itself in the processes of participation in the event. The 2017 CMM Learning Exchange was held in partnership with the Institute of Family Therapy in London, UK, October 23.

antenarrative were implicated in the process (Dempsey & Branfman, 2017). Dempsey and Brafman go further to describe the skillful navigation of this complex interaction among and between competing multiple social worlds as a new form of leadership, and argue for a new way to think about social dynamics of inclusion as a way to construct better social worlds. In CMM terms, inclusion is elevated as the *highest level of context* in this dialogic process, displacing the need for the two sides to discredit each other by assembling and weaponizing supporting objective facts, and thereby fight a metaphorical war for dominance. As an ardent proponent of the participation of informed citizens in civic affairs (Barber, 2004), we believe that Schutz would very likely have grasped the significance of these dynamics of inclusive social construction, and may have incorporated them with his concepts of the phenomenology of the lifeworld. In this spirit, we propose further interdisciplinary scholarship in this area, incorporating both the conceptual framing of Schutz and Luckmann, and incorporating the heuristic models offered by the “communication perspective” of lifeworld structure detailed in CMM theory (Peace, 2008. p. x). Building upon the organizing principles of so-called minimal structures in jazz improvisation (Barrett, 1998; Barrett, 2012), these conceptual models can serve as a road map for both interpretation, and for practical action for change. While time and space here do not permit further elaboration, some of these promising conceptual tools include the *Storytelling* model, the *Serpentine* model of dialogic co-construction, and the concept of *Logical Force* in shaping interactions through influences of identity and “oughtness” (Pearce, 2008). For scholars of Schutzian phenomenology interested in pursuing this further, we suggest the introductory text, “Communicating Possibilities” (Wassermann & Fisher-Yoshida, 2017).

Engaging with multiple Realities - the “Both/And” Perspective

In the field of musicology, the ability to see and bridge gaps of perception is sometimes described as restoring the lost skill of listeners to experience the interplay of the different horizontal lines of a fugue. This challenge of hearing the vertical harmonies and the horizontal melodies simultaneously, for the modern mind, finds a parallel on the visual level in this example of not being able to see *both* images in a visual dual depiction (such as the one below) at the same time. The skill lies in being able to truly see *both images at the same time*, not simply switching back and forth between the two, but actually seeing them simultaneously.



Figure 5. Seeing multiple perspectives at the same time

In CMM, this ability to simultaneously hold multiple perspectives, is called the both/and perspective (Pearce, 2008). This approach offers an alternative to the warfare metaphor for resolving competing narratives. It accomplishes this by transcending the ethnocentric approach to resolving conflicting narratives through a conceptual model that Pearce (2008) describes as Cosmopolitan Communication. As we noted earlier, Alfred Schutz is known to have devoted significant thought to issues of moral and ethical principles, and was himself a deeply ethical person - yet his writing avoided such absolutes, instead privileging a sort of “value-freedom” that might presumably lead to shared values such as “tolerance and self-responsibility” (Barber, 2004, p. 62). Pearce & Littlejohn (1997) take a similar approach to moral conflict, looking at it as not something to be resolved (creating a winner and a loser) but instead as a space for co-creation by widening the playing field, in essence transcending the conflict in discourse. They further define this “transcendent discourse” as a result of suspending judgment, probing further, making comparisons, and ending, not with a resolution, but a continuation of the conversation (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 153). Richard Rorty saw such a mindset as in keeping with the rejection of empiricism, setting aside (bracketing) rules and conventions of argumentation and critical evaluation to create what he referred to as “abnormal discourse” (Pearce & Littlejohn, p.16). Pearce & Littlejohn further argue that transcendent or abnormal discourse is necessary for engaging moral conflict. We believe that the moral philosophy exemplified

by Schutz is in keeping with this view, and wish to take this further as a way of proposing some ways of engaging the potential *multiple realities* of opposing (ante)narratives in (new) media space. The following is presented as working model of cosmopolitan communication as a form of transcendent or *abnormal discourse* which may serve to envision such a space. In defining and representing the lifeworld as a space in which discourse takes place, this model draws on Wilber's (2006) concepts of Integral theory to include the individual as well as collective dimensions of consciousness (top and bottom quadrants, respectively) and the interior and exterior (measurable) domains of experience (left and right quadrants, respectively) (Matoba, 2013). In this model of the lifeworld, the forces of social construction in communication are shown as coordination (how we get things done), coherence (how we make sense or meaning together) and mystery (emergent qualities, temporality, or things we cannot otherwise account for in our meaning-making schemas) (Matoba, 2013).

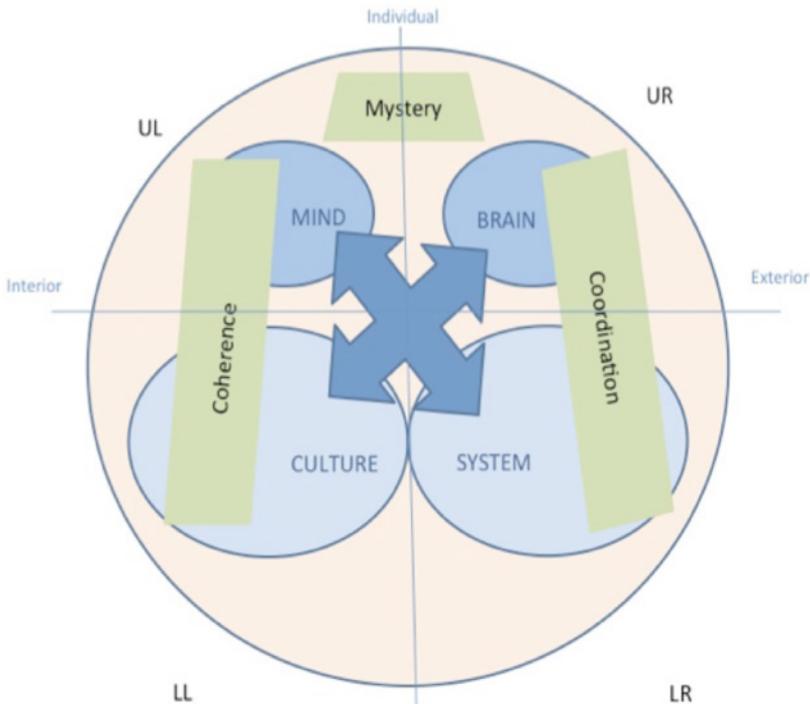


Figure 6. Conceptual model of Cosmopolitan Communication

Seeing the socially constructed lifeworld as a composite of many resources and influences provides a frame of reference for further contextualizing the impact of culture on meaning-making, and likewise the potential for balancing

the subjective, objective, and intersubjective forces that act to shape our view of truth. In the lower left quadrant, for example, we can envision different types of culture, their moral and ethical underpinnings, and how they might come into conflict. Pearce (1998) categorized cultures as being monocultural, ethnocentric, and modernistic and also envisioned a fourth type, cosmopolitan in which transcendent forms of discourse might be possible. Another way of describing the phenomenon of cosmopolitan communication illustrated by this model is to look at the lifeworld as an open process of *design communication* in which individuals are interacting spontaneously around commonly sensed energy in the moment, and not adhering to pre-existing forms (Matocha, 2013). We can return to our jazz metaphor to further envision how a cosmopolitan form of communication (using the action-logics of suspending judgment, paying attention to each other and probing, and keeping the conversation going) might lead to the enactment of more creative, participative, and vibrant social discourse.

Concluding thoughts: summary and implications

Taking a perspective from Schutz's phenomenology of the lifeworld, we drew a metaphorical connection with competing narratives in the social space of new media as constituting a form of warfare in which truth may be widely perceived and experienced as a casualty.¹⁵ We applied and tested some of these ideas in a workshop at the 2018 Schutz Circle gathering in Konstanz to suggest ways in which tools from social construction and lifeworld phenomenology may help us navigate this territory with greater insight and intention. We reasoned that persons seeking to participate as informed citizens today would be as troubled by the ongoing fight between competing narratives in the media as returning veterans are by the sense of liminality felt in enduring the vicissitudes of war. It is most disconcerting to feel that previously trusted news sources and familiar devices are seemingly becoming weaponized in our very hands. To explore this phenomenon further, we returned to Schutz's notion of the homecomer, rooted in his own wartime experience, and made an analogy between the would-be well-informed citizen, alienated by the onslaught of suspected fake news, and the returning veteran, both unable to recognize their homeland due to the 'thick air' shrouding their heads. We went on to share a metaphorical journey to the front lines of truth, illustrated by four paintings: the daily information assault from cyberspace, disruptions at the interface of human-computer interaction, the liminal effects of the fog of cyber-war in

¹⁵ Roughly paraphrased from a quote attributed to US Senator Hiram Johnson (1917) "The first casualty when war comes is truth"

creating thick-air, and the thwarted communication and isolation that results between homecomer, family, and community.

In these uncertain times, we relate to Schutz's desire to see his theories move beyond description and analysis. To that end, we offered here some subsequent developments in the practical theory of social construction that we hope may add to reflection and performance. These were illustrated by metaphors of improvisation and social construction in communication that add to the lifeworld conceptualizations of Schutz, derived from own experience with returning veterans, jazz improvisation, and metaphor in the design of (new media) systems. We invited the reader into this conversation by wondering aloud how this mix might invoke some practical applications of Schutz's lifeworld phenomenology theory in navigating the social space of new media, as defined by the 2018 Schutz Circle conference theme.

In viewing (new) media interaction as a socially constructed phenomenon, we considered the possibility that an empirical or objective truth may not have fully emerged yet in this space, and that such a construct might be best recognized in the form of a dominant narrative by which the veracity (or relevance) of earlier antenarratives can be compared and evaluated. Applying a jazz music metaphor, specifically the notion of minimal structure, we envisioned ways to apply similar tactics as a way to envision formation of narratives in an emergent sense, in the complex territory of the new media.

Drawing an analogy of a well-informed (but perplexed) citizen in the new media landscape with a military veteran who may be morally injured by the disruption of the moral code in the liminal space of combat, we considered the types of responses possible to this sometimes ineffable experience and situation. We then shared how principles of jazz improvisation can also be seen as a metaphorical ground for artful communication, and as a way to engage in the type of performance that might serve to deal with moral injury. In doing so, we created a bridge between jazz improvisation and the heuristic models of CMM, which can be helpful when enacting improvised communication. By further laying out aspects of virtuosity of performance in dialogic communication, we strengthened the analogies between jazz improvisation and socially constructed communication. We present our view that this offers some insights as to how such communication virtuosity can be cultivated among well-informed citizens who wish to enact forms of transcendent discourse to help bridge the present divides. We advocate the position that such well-informed citizens may use the CMM models described here, along with well-established principles of lifeworld phenomenology by Schutz and his successor philosophers, to enhance their potential to shape the emergent narrative in which they are participants and co-constructors. The CMM model of Cosmopolitan Communication is of particular use for illustrating the potential for multiple realities based upon culture and perspective, on the basis that the holding of

multiple perspectives in the moment may be key to the enactment of a more creative, participative, and vibrant social discourse.

Being aware of the universal nature of the impact of conflicting antenarratives in the new media may help people to appreciate the homecomer in all of us and at the same time gain an appreciation of the uniqueness of the homecomer in themselves. Knowing that this uniqueness of the inner world results in each of us experiencing ourselves as a literal homecomer at times might be a stepping stone to getting closer to experiencing what cosmopolitan communication feels like.

Like Schutz in his age, we are drawn in our own time to stories of social systems in conflict, possibly out of a hope to learn more about the nature of that conflict, and hopefully before it is too late. Veterans of military conflict, like Schutz, may have some particular insights in the life-and-death consequences of this phenomenon, both individually and collectively (Barber, 2004, 4-5). One of the most powerful lessons we can learn from the difficult time veterans have in returning home is that something is broken in our society, or leading in a direction that invalidates the things we value as human beings. A Schutzian lifeworld perspective may help us better to see these frictions and fractures of the moral code for what they are, but instead we socially construct forms of mental illness, particularly Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Walker, 2016) as the dominant, but profoundly stigmatizing way of explaining the thick air surrounding the current generation of homecomers. Knowing how to create space, hear the otherwise untellable stories that veterans bring home with them as a hidden gift, and to act to change our social world accordingly could be the focus of our own scholarship and advocacy as the kind of informed and participating citizens envisioned by Schutz. This awareness offers new hope of being able to engage his legacy of the phenomenology of the lifeworld by using his theories to advance social change, and not simply, once again, detailing the failings of the status quo and thereby missing out on what could have been. This call to scholar-activism can be directed by our growing postmodern theoretical awareness of social construction of reality, with a goal of achieving a form of transcendent discourse (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997) in which our common humanity, not a political or ideological agenda, is valued as the highest level of context for the common reality that we co-create in our (new) media social worlds.

Among other things, the foregoing analysis points towards the need for engaging with veterans more purposeful in the arts and human sciences, including communication and phenomenology. We know that phenomenology can be personally transformative if practiced in a mode of self-reflective learning (Bentz & Rehorick, 2008), and may also have collective transformation dimensions from a lifeworld perspective. If there is indeed something to be learned from this current generation of returning combat veterans that can

contribute to *making better social worlds* (Pearce, 2008) for us all, then they will need our support and such wisdom as we may be able to offer to help it to emerge from the increasingly thick air that surrounds us all. This may include a more inclusive stance to narrative formation by interjecting more purposeful and positive forms of antenarrative into our increasingly polarized global civic discourse. Recognizing more fully what is going on at the systems level, we can perhaps find a new way of evaluating truth in media that transcends outdated notions of empirical objectivity. This may point the way to the *better truth* described earlier in this article by combat veteran Caleb Cage (2018). Namely, a form of inclusive and intersubjectively-sensitive truth that ultimately reflects the ongoing evolution of our emerging selves and our common humanity. Not just the continuing reliance upon the assumed facticity of *flawed narratives that merely explain (events) in terms of (pre-defined) accepted political and cultural worldviews and perspectives*. This is not simply another form of relativism, in that we are not suggesting that objective values be entirely discarded, but rather that they be considered in context of a shared sensibility and intersubjectivity that we deliberately co-construct. Such a socially constructed standard of what is *truth* in the lifeworld calls us to seek mindfully and skillfully for what version of emerging reality meets our shared and felt sense of what is *better*.

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