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# Postmodernism, science education and the slippery slope to the epistemic crisis

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Western guilt might have helped the rise of philosophical and educational postmodernism. And for those of us who were raised in the boundaries of the western world, perhaps postmodernism felt like striking back to some elitist, enlightenment ideals. This might be the reason why so many, even amongst us, subscribed to it. Felt like revenge. And it became popular, even in countries like mine (Greece).

Postmodernism's educational ideals speak of dialogue and multiculturalism, talk against western superiority, and it is all so liberating when you first read about them (Peters, 1995). In the light of postmodernism, even science education is relaxed (Zembylas, 2000). It informs about what some scientists in some cultures currently believe; their limited consensus is the only norm by which to teach their theories; and at the end of the day, it just teaches us about which discourse politics and manoeuvres made it all the way, until the final cut, which is any day now, since all is always moving. But seeing science as mere socio-historical consensus can only go so far. On the postmodern hype, ideals of universalism and cross-cultural rationality were mocked as cultural imperialism; claims of truth and knowledge were presented as the winners of some worldviews' power-play (Nola & Irzik, 2006; Schulz, 2007). Moreover, trying to resist the postmodern view of science, you were immediately accused of scientism; trying to resist a simplistic view of science as a bunch of Truth-given statements, you were a postmodern (Loving, 1997). Polarisation is easy and when you are on hype, it gets worse fast.

Day by day, postmodernism has helped dismantle theoretical tools and ideals that could potentially undermine superstition, fake news, vaccine resistance and cults' apocalypses. And sure, the discussion about genes, quanta, AIDS and dark matter is still on, but if truth is not even our ideal end-station, the slope gets slippery. When, even talking about *criteria* is dismissed as despotism, and *rationalism* becomes synonymous to dogmatism, rock bottom is reached. We are there. Today. Already reached the new consensus of social media democracy, which is excused, once again, in the name of the weak, the outcast, the oppressed.

Today's epistemic crisis happens at the same time with the decline of philosophical and educational postmodernism. And for those of us who never subscribed to its ideals - for there are such - its decay is hardly comforting. The damage is done: the irrational is already the new consensus. In the day after postmodernism is not dead enough.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

**Renia Gasparatou** is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Sciences & Early Childhood Education, University of Patras. Her research interests include epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of education and science education.

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