**GW4 Rhetoric In Society**

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***Viral Rhetorics***

**Panel 4: Truth, Lying and the Postfactual (15 January, 11:00-12:45)**

**Handout with Extracts for Discussion**

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**1. Dr Paul Earlie on Postmodernism and Post-Truth**

**Extract from Matthew D’Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (Ebury Press, 2017):**

[I]t would be naive to deny that the principal thinkers associated with this loose-knit school, by questioning the very notion of objective reality, did much to corrode the notion of truth. Their natural terrain was irony, surface, estrangement and fragmentation. […]. Trump is the unlikely *beneficiary* of a philosophy that he has probably never heard of and would certainly despise. His rise to the most powerful office in the world, unhindered by care for the truth, accelerated by the awesome force of social media, was, in its way, the ultimate post-modern moment.

**Extract from Jacques Derrida, ‘History of the Lie: Prolegomena’, in *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp.54-57:**

Here, for example, is another, visibly minor sequence from the same story of a state confession. Because the media, as space of gathering, produc­tion, and archivation of public speech, must occupy a determining place in any analysis of the political lie and of falsification in the space of the *res publica*, it is not without interest to note that the *New York Times* wanted to report on Chirac’s declaration [of France’s responsibility for the persecution and crimes against Jews during the Occupation]. Concerned with truth and competence (let us assume that to be the case), it turned responsibility for the article over to a professor. The idea of competence is associated in our culture with the university and with university professors. Everyone assumes that professors know and say what is true. And that they do not lie. This pro­fessor presumed to know teaches in a great New York university. He even passes for an expert in matters of French modernity, at the crossroads of philosophy, ideology, politics, and literature. He is the author, as the *New York Times* recalls, of a book titled *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, I944-I956*. So on July 19, 1995, the *New York Times* publishes an article with the title “French War Stories,” by Mr. Tony Judt, Professor at New York University. Before applauding Chirac and concluding that, I quote, “It is well that Mr. Chirac has told the truth about the French past,” the author of *Past Imperfect* had nonetheless denounced the shameful behav­ior of French intellectuals who, for a half-century, had been in his opinion too little concerned with this truth and with its public recognition. Sartre and Foucault, he claims, had been on this subject, I quote, "curiously silent." He chalks this up to their sympathy for Marxism. This ex­planation is somewhat amusing, especially in the case of Foucault, when one knows that the majority of the latter's most durable and best known “political commitments” were anything but Marxist, and sometimes they were even expressly anti-Marxist.

[…] What exactly is the matter here? Incompetence? Lack of lucidity or analytic acuity? Good faith ignorance? Accidental error? Twilight bad faith falling somewhere between the lie and thought­lessness? Or, to invoke Rousseau's three categories, imposture, fraud, calumny? […] Shall we speak of compulsion and logic of the unconscious? An outright false wit­ness, perjury, lie? These categories are no doubt irreducible to each other, but what is one to think of the very frequent situations in which, in fact, in truth, they contaminate one another and no longer lend themselves to a rigorous delimitation? And what if this contagion marked the very space of so many public discourses, notably in the media?

[…] But Professor Judt does not stop there. After the subtitle “Shame of the Intellectuals” (a subtitle for which he must at least share responsibility with the newspaper, as we are unfortunately so often obliged to do when­ ever we think we have to write for the newspapers), the professor-jour­nalist denounces the shame of intellectuals who have come after Sartre and who maintained, according to Mr. Judt, a guilty silence in the face of Vichy France's guilt and its “crimes against humanity”: “No one stood up to cry 'J'accuse!' at high functionaries, as Emile Zola did during the Dreyfus affair. When Simone de Beauvoir, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida entered the public arena, it usually involved a crisis far away-in Madagascar, Vietnam, or Cambodia. Even today, politically engaged writers call for action in Bosnia but intervene sporadically in debates about the French past.”

Even if I am ready to concede a measure of truth in this accusation, I must declare that in the main it filled me with indignation. Not because, please believe this, it also concerns me personally, and because, along with others, I am the object of a veritable calumny. (This is not the first time that newspapers bearing the name of New York in their title say whatever they please and lie outright as concerns me, sometimes for months at a time and over several issues.) If I was particularly shocked, however, by this *contre-vérité* [counter-truth], as one calls it in French, it is not only for this reason, nor simply because, like others, I am among those who care about what Mr. Judt calls the “French past.” It is especially because, with others, I have more than once made this known publicly, including on subjects other than this one (Algeria, for example), and because along with others I had signed an open letter to President Mitterrand asking him to recognize what Chirac has just recognized. Upon reading the *New York Times* and feeling discouraged in advance, which is, alas, too often the case, I had al­ready given up any notion of answering and correcting this counter-truth become truth through the conjoined force of the presumed authority of an academic expert and a newspaper with a massive and international dis­tribution (both American and European, for the same article was re­printed as is three days later in the European edition of the International Herald Tribune). Fortunately, four days later, the counter-truth was de­nounced in the same newspaper by another American professor whom I do not know but to whose competence and honesty I wish to pay grate­ful tribute: Kevin Anderson, who teaches at a more modest rank in a less celebrated university (he is Associate Professor of Sociology at Northern Illinois University). The *New York Times* was thus obliged to publish a letter “to the editor” from Kevin Anderson, under the title “French Intellectuals Wanted Truth Told.” Such a letter is usually printed in an unobtrusive and sometimes unlocatable place, whereas the effect of truth, or rather counter-truth of the first article "properly speaking" remains ineffaceable for millions of readers, and especially for European readers of the *International Herald Tribune*, who will have never read the letter in question.

[…] To my knowledge, but I don't know everything and it is not too late, Professor Judt has not yet acknowledged publicly that he did not tell the truth. You will have noticed that, in speaking of the *contre-vérité* of his article, I never said that Professor Judt had lied. Everything that is false cannot be imputed to a lie. The lie is not an error. Already Plato and Augustine insisted on this in unison. If the concept of lie has some resist­ant specificity, it must be rigorously distinguished from error, from ignorance, from prejudice, from faulty reasoning, and even from failure in the realm of knowledge or still again—and this is where things will soon have to get more complicated for us—from failure in the realm of action, prac­tice, or technique. If the lie is neither the failure of knowledge and know­ how, nor error, if it implies ill will or bad faith in the order of moral rea­son, not of practice but of pure practical reason, if it addresses belief rather than knowledge, then the project of a history of the lie should not resemble in the least what could be called, […], the history of an error […].

No doubt, it would be necessary to keep a sense of proportion. But how is one to calculate proportion when the capitalistico-techno-mediatic power of an international newspaper can produce effects of worldwide truth or counter-truth, which are sometimes tenacious and ineffaceable, on the most serious subjects in the history of humanity, going far beyond the modest persons implicated in the recent example I have just given? Keeping everything in proportion, then, I will say that the history I have just recited would be neither the history of an error nor the history of a lie. In order to lie, in the strict and classical sense of this concept, one must know what the truth is and distort it intentionally. Thus, one must not lie to oneself. I am convinced that if Professor Judt had had a clear and distinct knowledge, if he had had a current consciousness of the fact that the intellectuals he accuses had signed that letter to Mitterrand, he would not have written what he wrote. I think it is reasonable to give him this much credit: he did not lie. Not really. He did not mean clearly and deliberately to deceive his reader and to take advantage of that reader's confidence or belief. Yet, is it simply, in all innocence, an error on his part or a simple lack of information? I do not believe that either. If Professor Judt did not seek to know more or enough about the subject, or every­ thing that a historian and conscientious journalist should know before speaking, it is also because he was in a hurry to reach a conclusion and therefore to produce an “effect of truth” confirming at all cost his general theses on French intellectuals and politics, with which one may be famil­iar from his other writings-and which I am not alone in finding a little simplistic. We could show this if that were the subject of our lecture and if we were given the time. What I want to underscore here is that this counter-truth does not belong to the category of either lie or ignorance or error, doubtless not even to the category of self-deception that Hannah Arendt talks about. It belongs to another order and is not reducible to any of the categories bequeathed to us by traditional thinking about the lie, from Plato, Augustine, and Rousseau up to Kant and even up to Hannah Arendt, despite all the differences that separate all these thinkers from each other.

**2. Dr Chris Heffer on Trump and the Post-factual**

*A. On Epistemic Partisanship and Trust*

It is not that we have ‘gone beyond’ truth, as the term ‘post-truth’ would seem to suggest. As we make our way in life, we slip into rabbit holes and find ourselves in echo chambers: spaces in which messages are both amplified and insulated from rebuttal. In those epistemically protected spaces, we can develop partisan ideologies that go unchallenged and so become normalized. And as they become normalized, they begin to go beyond being views that are at least theoretically open to challenge and become ‘truths’ that are beyond challenge. In this postfactual world, the assertions made by our favourite politician or paper are ‘true’ not because they are grounded in evidence but because they say what we want to hear. We judge an assertion as factually true or false according to whether it conforms with our pre-existing view. … If someone is epistemically partisan … they are impervious to other perspectives. A claim is true only to the extent that it is held by or supports one’s ideological party and is false to the extent that it fails to align with the party perspective. For example, the US right-wing commentator Rush Limbaugh once declared:

We live in two universes. One universe is a lie. One universe is an entire lie. Everything run, dominated, and controlled by the left here and around the world is a lie. The other universe is where we are, and that’s where reality reigns supreme and we deal with it. And seldom do these two universes ever overlap. (Roberts 2017)

If you are epistemically partisan, there is no point in being presented with counter-evidence because you already know the truth.

(Heffer 2020: ix-x. *All Bullshit and Lies? Insincerity, Irresponsibility, and the Judgment of Untruthfulness*. New York: OUP)

*B. The Epistemically Partisan Approach to Disagreement*

‘Well, so and so disagrees with me about p. But since p is true, she’s wrong about p. So however reliable she may generally be, I needn’t take her disagreement about p as any reason at all to change my belief.’

(Christensen 2011: 2. Disagreement, question-begging and epistemic self-criticism. *Philosopher’s Imprint* 11(6): 1-22)

*C. On Seeing Dead People*

So many cities are corrupt and voter fraud is very, very common. The following information comes straight from Pew Research, quote, "Approximately 24 million people, one of every eight, voter registrations in the United States are no longer valid or significantly inaccurate." One in eight. More than 1.8 million deceased individuals right now are listed as voters. Oh, that's wonderful. Well, if they're going to vote for me, we’ll think about it, right? But I have a feeling they’re not going to vote for me. Of the 1.8 million, 1.8 million is voting for somebody else.

(Donald Trump Campaign Speech, Green Bay, Wisconsin, 17 October 2016)

The inability of this paper-based process to keep up with voters as they move or die can lead to problems with the rolls, including the perception that they lack integrity or could be susceptible to fraud.

(*Inaccurate, Costly, and Inefficient: Evidence That America’s Voter Registration System Needs an Upgrade*. Pew Center for the States. 2012: 3)

The other thing, dead people. So dead people voted, and I think the number is close to 5,000 people. And they went to obituaries. They went to all sorts of methods to come up with an accurate number, and a minimum is close to about 5,000 voters.

(Trump’s Call to Raffensperger, 2 January 2021 – see below)

*D. On Epistemically Partisan Delusion: Trump’s Call to Raffensperger (2 January 2021)*

***Trump***: Okay, thank you very much. Hello Brad and Ryan and everybody. We appreciate the time and the call. So we’ve spent a lot of time on this, and if we could just go over some of the numbers, I think it’s pretty clear that we won. We won very substantially in Georgia. You even see it by rally size, frankly. We’d be getting 25-30,000 people a rally, and the competition would get less than 100 people. And it never made sense.

But we have a number of things. We have at least 2 or 3 — anywhere from 250 to 300,000 ballots were dropped mysteriously into the rolls. Much of that had to do with Fulton County, which hasn’t been checked. We think that if you check the signatures — a real check of the signatures going back in Fulton County — you’ll find at least a couple of hundred thousand of forged signatures of people who have been forged. And we are quite sure that’s going to happen.

Another tremendous number. We’re going to have an accurate number over the next two days with certified accountants. But an accurate number will be given, but it’s in the 50s of thousands — and that’s people that went to vote and they were told they can’t vote because they’ve already been voted for. And it’s a very sad thing. They walked out complaining. But the number’s large. We’ll have it for you. But it’s much more than the number of 11,779 that’s — the current margin is only 11,779. Brad, I think you agree with that, right? That’s something I think everyone — at least that’s a number that everyone agrees on.

*[Trump proceeds to detail groundless evidence of voter fraud]*

You had out-of-state voters. They voted in Georgia, but they were from out of state, of 4,925. You had absentee ballots sent to vacant, they were absentee ballots sent to vacant addresses. They had nothing on them about addresses, that’s 2,326. … I don’t know if you saw the hearings, but you have dropboxes where the box was picked up and not delivered for three days. So all sorts of things could have happened to that box, including, you know, putting in the votes that you wanted. So there were many infractions, and the bottom line is, many, many times the 11,779 margin that they said we lost by — we had vast, I mean the state is in turmoil over this.

And I know you would like to get to the bottom of it, although I saw you on television today, and you said that you found nothing wrong. I mean, you know, and I didn’t lose the state, Brad. People have been saying that it was the highest vote ever. There was no way. A lot of the political people said that there’s no way they beat me. And they beat me. They beat me in the... As you know, every single state, we won every state. We won every statehouse in the country. We held the Senate, which is shocking to people, although we’ll see what happens tomorrow or in a few days.

And we won the House, but we won every single statehouse, and we won Congress, which was supposed to lose 15 seats, and they gained, I think 16 or 17 or something. I think there’s a now difference of five. There was supposed to be a difference substantially more. But politicians in every state, but politicians in Georgia have given affidavits and are going to that, that there was no way that they beat me in the election, that the people came out, in fact, they were expecting to lose, and then they ended up winning by a lot because of the coattails. And they said there’s no way, that they’ve done many polls prior to the election, that there was no way that they won …

The other thing, dead people. So dead people voted, and I think the number is close to 5,000 people. And they went to obituaries. They went to all sorts of methods to come up with an accurate number, and a minimum is close to about 5,000 voters. …

***Meadows*** [Mark Meadows, Trump’s Chief of Staff]: So, Mr. President, if I might be able to jump in, and I’ll give Brad a chance. Mr. Secretary, obviously there is, there are allegations where we believe that not every vote or fair vote and legal vote was counted, and that’s at odds with the representation from the secretary of state’s office. …

***Raffensperger***: Well, I listened to what the president has just said. President Trump, we’ve had several lawsuits, and we’ve had to respond in court to the lawsuits and the contentions. We don’t agree that you have won. And we don’t — I didn’t agree about the 200,000 number that you’d mentioned. I’ll go through that point by point.

What we have done is we gave our state Senate about one and a half hours of our time going through the election issue by issue and then on the state House, the government affairs committee, we gave them about two and a half hours of our time, going back point by point on all the issues of contention. And then just a few days ago, we met with our U.S. congressmen, Republican congressmen, and we gave them about two hours of our time talking about this past election. …

***Trump***: Well, Brad. … We have all the votes we need. You know, we won the state. If you took, these are the most minimal numbers, the numbers that I gave you, those are numbers that are certified, your absentee ballots sent to vacant addresses, your out-of-state voters, 4,925. You know when you add them up, it’s many more times, it’s many times the 11,779 number. So we could go through, we have not gone through your Dominion [*voting machines*]. So we can’t give them blessing. I mean, in other states, we think we found tremendous corruption with Dominion machines, but we’ll have to see.

But we only lost the state by that number, 11,000 votes, and 779. So with that being said, with just what we have, with just what we have, we’re giving you minimal, minimal numbers. We’re doing the most conservative numbers possible; we’re many times, many, many times above the margin. … Because what’s the difference between winning the election by two votes and winning it by half a million votes. I think I probably did win it by half a million. You know, one of the things that happened, Brad, is we have other people coming in now from Alabama and from South Carolina and from other states, and they’re saying it’s impossible for you to have lost Georgia. We won. You know in Alabama, we set a record, got the highest vote ever. In Georgia, we set a record with a massive amount of votes. And they say it’s not possible to have lost Georgia.

And I could tell you by our rallies. I could tell you by the rally I’m having on Monday night, the place, they already have lines of people standing out front waiting. It’s just not possible to have lost Georgia. It’s not possible. When I heard it was close, I said there’s no way. But they dropped a lot of votes in there late at night. You know that, Brad. And that’s what we are working on very, very stringently. But regardless of those votes, with all of it being said, we lost by essentially 11,000 votes, and we have many more votes already calculated and certified, too.

And so I just don’t know, you know, Mark, I don’t know what’s the purpose. I won’t give Dominion a pass because we found too many bad things. But we don’t need Dominion or anything else. We have won this election in Georgia based on all of this. And there’s nothing wrong with saying that, Brad. You know, I mean, having the correct — the people of Georgia are angry. And these numbers are going to be repeated on Monday night. Along with others that we’re going to have by that time, which are much more substantial even. And the people of Georgia are angry, the people of the country are angry. And there’s nothing wrong with saying that, you know, that you’ve recalculated. Because the 2,236 in absentee ballots. I mean, they’re all exact numbers that were done by accounting firms, law firms, etc. And even if you cut ’em in half, cut ’em in half and cut ’em in half again, it’s more votes than we need.

*Raffensperger*: Well, Mr. President, the challenge that you have is the data you have is wrong. We talked to the congressmen, and they were surprised.

But they — I guess there was a person named Mr. Braynard that came to these meetings and presented data, and he said that there was dead people, I believe it was upward of 5,000. The actual number were two. Two. Two people that were dead that voted. …

(Trump’s Call to Georgia’s Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, 2 January 2021)

**3. Dr Maria Vaccarella on Fake Illness Narratives**

**Extract n. 1: from Belle Gibson, *The Whole Pantry: over 80 new recipes with a back-to-basics approach to wellness, lifestyle and nutrition* (Melbourne, Vic.: Penguin, 2014), pp. 1-5.**

The story so far

My social media community often ask me about my story and these are some of the questions that come up the most.

Who were you pre-cancer?

I grew up in a very dysfunctional home. I never knew my dad, and grew up with my mum, who had multiple sclerosis, and my brother, who was autistic. Because Mum was so ill, she needed a lot of help – I remember being six years old when I cooked dinner for the first time, standing on a chair to reach the stove. I didn’t understand the ritual of food – cooking was just a survival tool to me, a job, a way out of doing the dishes. Nutrition was drinking fruit juice (which has more sugar than Coca-Cola) and eating more than a stomach could handle – leading me to be severely overweight in my pre-teens years.

I moved out of home when I was twelve years young, changing my life forever. It was a year of many firsts – in my new home I had a vegetable garden and, for the first time, I found out what real food was, how it grew and the importance of nurturing a garden.

When were you diagnosed with cancer?

In June 2009, at the age of twenty. I had known that something didn’t *feel* right, but when I saw the doctor, he told me to ignore what I was experiencing and to trial anti-depressants. I tried them but they made no difference, so I went off them and went back to the doctor. I told him, ‘I’m having trouble reading and seeing; sometimes walking is hard and remembering has become difficult.’ All he said was, ‘You work too hard, you’re looking at a computer all day and you’re socially isolated. Let’s get your eyes tested and start that medication I gave you again.’ At this point, I could have taken control of my own life and got a second opinion, but instead of listening to my body and trusting my intuition, I put my faith in one ‘professional’. I felt like I had hit a brick wall.

Soon afterwards I had a stroke at work – I will never forget sitting alone in the doctor’s office three weeks later, waiting for my test results. He called me in and said ‘You have a malignant brain cancer, Belle. You’re dying. You have six weeks. Four months, tops.’ I remember a suffocating, choking feeling and then not much else.

When and why did you decide to try to heal yourself?

I tried chemotherapy and radiotherapy for two months, and one day I woke up in the middle of a city park just opposite the hospital, hours after falling asleep there. I had thrown up and passed out. When I got home I stayed up all night at the computer, reading everything I could about brain cancer and alternative treatment. One thing that really stayed with me was reading about the detoxification properties of lemons – that made me think about the importance of diet. It sounds naïve, but it all just clicked. I decided then that if all I had was between one hour and a month to live, I was not going to spend it passed out on the hospital lawn, knee-deep in nausea and other side effects.

I pulled myself out of chemo and radiotherapy – my doctor freaked out, but they couldn’t stop me. I started travelling around the country, speaking to anyone who might help me and treating myself through nutrition and holistic medicine. Meanwhile, I just kept reading, educating myself – everything I now know is gleaned from reading and speaking with as many people as possible.

I was empowering myself to save my own life, through nutrition, patience, determination and love – as well as salt, vitamin and Ayurvedic treatments, craniosacral therapy, oxygen therapy, colonics, and a whole lot of other treatments. […]

How do you manage the fear of living with cancer?

I’m not afraid of it. I now approach cancer (and everything else) from the simplest level. Despite it being debilitating and overwhelming at times, it never scares me – and that’s important. I’m matter-of-fact about it all and approach it from an ‘I know it’s curable, my immune system is just suppressed, support yourself through it and work through it’ mindset. I just get on with it.

I truly believe that society, big industries and the media have encouraged and conditioned a fear-based perception of cancer and major illnesses. ‘The big C word!’ And even from those close to me, I hear, ‘You can’t talk to her about that, it’s cancer!’ You can talk about it, and it is okay, and we *need* to discuss it, even. It’s just like any other illness, just harder to manage.

**Extract 2: from Anthony Godby Johnson, *A Rock and a Hard Place: One Boy’s Triumphant Story* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1993 [1992]), pp. 201-204.**

I’ve had so many infections and setbacks that I’ve lost count, and a day goes by when I don’t have an ache or a pain somewhere. I’m steady-dating an oxygen tank. Little by little I have lost parts of my left leg. First the knee went, then my toes, and finally the inevitable – amputation at the knee, because there were no more choices or reasons to save it. Those who love me said that it didn’t matter, that I’m alive and that I’m still me. They have made courageous attempts to reassure me that being *me* is the most important thing. They’re right, but there’s nothing like suddenly not knowing how to put your pants on.

 Often my trips to the hospital leave me feeling self-contempt. Doctors, nurses, and hospital staff are not always in the best of moods. There have been many times when I’ve wanted to bolt off a treatment table and to tell them to let me die. I noticed immediately that other people had “real diseases” that were no fault of their own. Theirs were afflictions that have made them unfortunate victims of nature. That has not always been the case for me. There’s nothing like the look in people’s eyes when they find out that you have AIDS. The first question is they ask is “How did you get it?” and then they make judgements about how to treat you. I have had things yanked from my hands while being sharply scolded that I should watch what I touch. My possessions have been thrown in the trash because they have been “contaminated.” Worst of all is when people talk about me as if I weren’t there. It’s as if I didn’t matter or didn’t have a mind. My feelings are immaterial, and my pain and tears are of no consequence. I suppose that’s why an ill-tempered doctor said, oblivious of the fact that I could hear him, that working on me would be more productive on an autopsy table.

 So much is said – and not said – about AIDS that it is no wonder there are such high levels of self-preservation. People don’t know the right questions to ask – or even whether they should, in fact, ask questions. They aren’t always sure they want to hear the answers.

 There is a constant fear in our world of getting too close to anything, because if you do that, you might be more affected than you want to be. Still, AIDS always fascinates people. Every time we hear of a celebrity who died from it, there is either an insinuation that the person was infected by a blood transfusion or an obvious avoidance of that fact, an implication that the person was gay or a drug addict, in which case he got what he asked for.

 A few years ago, when we read “The Death of Ivan Ilych,” the teacher talked about the inability of the people around the dying man to acknowledge his impending death. Tolstoy referred to the “vital lie” – how in denying death people kept the horror of this man’s disease far away from them. it made the dying man feel alone, afraid, and ashamed. Those feelings can kill faster than any disease can. I see that happening all the time with AIDS, and it has to stop. […]

 I will fight to keep a hold on who I am. I’ll continue to assure people that they don’t have to run away from me. My world is very small these days. Even some people who are steadfast in their fight against AIDS have fled. It’s easier to think I’m okay and to tell people that. Often, for the sake of making things seem normal, I end up reassuring people. There is one individual who says wonderful things about me every chance he gets. He tells people that I am an “inspiration,” and that I have made an impression in his life. He sure could have fooled me. he avoids having to say hello to me, and only does so when he’s forced to, because he’d rather not confront me and see the pain that might make him feel something he doesn’t want to feel. I find this kind worse than those who are flat-out threatened by and appalled at AIDS, and show it. You know where you stand with them, and you realize that you can’t control the way people think. When somebody acts like a fighter in the war, and then pushes away from the very cause that he’s fighting for, he’s a hypocrite and no better than the others. This person and others like him are the same people who will hear about my death and become outraged. They’ll cry and tell my family how sorry they are – and they’ll mean it! They’ll go to protest rallies and use my name in their talks. I would rather that they tell *me* they feel this way. I’ve cried because people have not realized that even with AIDS I am still Tony, and that nothing can interfere with that. I like Whoopi Goldberg – especially when she plays a singing nun – and get hysterical at Bart Simpson and his attitude. I can cook pretty well, and I play a decent poker game. My favorite color is purple, and I love cats. I’m a lousy video game player but I can sing old songs and I’ve played Felix Unger and Nathan Detroit in school plays. I know Spanish curse words and enjoy showing them off. Sometimes I’m afraid of the dark.