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Fact vs. Opinion

One of the biggest challenges faced in the post-truth culture is ascertaining what constitutes a “fact” and what constitutes an “opinion.” Whether one supports or opposes President Donald Trump, we should remember what philosophers and rhetoricians teach us — namely that there is an important epistemological difference between “facts” and “opinion.”

For example, Mr. Trump may be right when he opines that the economy is strong. However, it should be noted that he inherited a strong economy from Mr. Obama. Facts, unlike opinions, are persistent and inarguable. Case in point: Job growth has been slower in Mr. Trump’s first 19 months (average monthly increase of 194,000) than in Mr. Obama’s last 19 months (average monthly increase of 205,000). And real hourly wage growth has been lower under Mr. Trump (0.3 percent vs. Mr. Obama’s 0.8 percent). Blurring the distinction between facts and opinion, which seems to be Mr. Trump’s goal, threatens democracy and makes rational deliberation impossible.

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