“I got hit by a bus”, in different times could have represented a major personal disaster, yet in the ensuing months of late 2014 through 2015, enforced immobility and difficulties reading, created an unusually intense, at times frightening window on a world in crisis. This paper is an exploration of the impact of a distressing ‘aha’ moment when, having worked and lived in Paris, a deep sense of solidarity with the people of France, combined with an academic awareness of the numbers of people killed in Muslim countries in more quietly reported attacks by the same terrorists, gave rise to a period of intense personal reflection. Stark uncertainties came to the fore from the unprecedented combination of worldwide crises and events. A sense that worldwide discourse is increasingly limited by the immediacy of messages, became belief, and a concern that the more discourse, both political and social, is limited to ‘soundbites’, the more populist views and what Foucault would describe as ‘episodic’ or ‘sovereign’ acts of power, self – propagating acts of domination and coercion – by individuals, groups and states, would be perpetrated.

Events ranging from global humanitarian crises – refugees fleeing on an unprecedented scale, horrific wars with complex, often hidden root causes and interests, to more localised and individual reactions to the global economic crash and anxieties around supporting families are almost daily occurences. Fear of terror is pervasive and real. Media trustworthiness has been destroyed, and across the world division and hatred are being both articulated and acted upon in the most regressive manner. Worldwide, political leaders are under pressure, and maintaining meaningful discourse is increasingly difficult. The paucity of the discourse in both the UK BREXIT Referendum, and the US Presidential Campaign is testament to a global ‘disempowerment’ in the Foucauldian sense. Foucault’s ‘general politics’ and ‘regimes of truth’ are no longer the result of scientific discourse and institutions, but are instead driven by the media and a democratic process increasingly responding to popular bias to maintain power – power has become an end in itself rather than a process constituted through knowledge and understanding. Knowledge and learning have themselves become commodities, in the US and UK in particular. The US and the UK are in constitutional crisis, European Leaders are struggling with their own populist movements, movements not based on agency and a ‘battle for truth’, but instead a much more visceral ‘fight or flee’ response emerging from the uncertainties and creeping poverty emerging from the economic crisis. A watershed moment, on an individual and global level.

For Foucault, this now missing sense of agency, and the role of education and science in informing and driving the ‘battle for truth’ is central to maintaining discourse and the positive, social power which creates a battle for the ‘status of truth and the economic and political role it plays’. The ‘aha’ question to be explored is the extent to which facilitators of learning can continue to unpack, question and work to overcome the global realities which impact on individual ‘lived experiences’.