

Making Sense of 911: Part Three

Truth-telling and Storytelling

by Richard Ramsbotham

There is an immense amount of detailed and exact research demonstrating that many aspects of the ‘official explanation’ of the events of September 11th, 2001 in New York are both incomplete¹ and incorrect. Millions of people, world-wide, are now convinced of this. (The lowest estimates reckon this to be about 15% in U.S.A. and more in many other countries.) Yet it is currently impossible (or impermissible) for this research to be openly discussed in mainstream politics or the mainstream media. What might be necessary for this situation – this taboo – to be overcome? This was the question with which I finished Part Two of this article. [*New View* Winter 2011/12.- Ed.]

“What is truth?”

Our contemporary culture has a very flimsy grasp of the prerequisites of truth – of what the requirements are which can enable us to know for certain that our experience or apprehension of something is true. On the one hand, there is the widespread view – popularized and elaborated in much ‘post-modern’ thought – that to speak about the attainment of truth is impossible, for all we say or think is always relative and subjective. On the other hand, we are asked by ‘science’ to *believe* in certain ‘facts’. Endlessly we are expected to accept certain things as true, without our being able to experience these ‘truths’ for ourselves, through our own perception and understanding. These two attitudes – of believing we can never fully know anything and of accepting ‘scientific’ facts – are often held simultaneously, without people concerning themselves about the contradiction.

This, as we shall see, has a very particular relevance to our understanding of 911. For the argument between supporters of the ‘official version’ of 911 and supporters of the ‘911 Truth Movement’ is by no means merely a question of one attempt to understand the truth of that day being honestly weighed up and considered against another. The way the events of September 11th, 2001 are reported and understood raises enormous questions not only about the truth of this or that viewpoint but also about truth itself and *truth-telling*. We shall now turn to this.

When Philip Zelikow, the person primarily responsible for writing the *911 Commission Report*, was asked in public why the report did not mention some of the great anomalies regarding the events of September 11th, 2001, he replied: ‘*you couldn’t have sustained the narrative*’.² When the 9/11 commissioner Chris Cojms was asked by a Congressman (Weldon) why the *911 Commission Report* had excluded mention of another highly significant fact, which the commission admitted they knew about, Cojms replied: “*it did not fit with the story we wanted to tell*”.³

What do these two remarks say about the *attitude to truth* of the *911 Commission Report*?⁴

Narrative

‘Narrative’ is clearly one of Mr. Zelikow’s favourite words. In an interview at the Council on Foreign Relations Zelikow said: “what we did after 9/11 was we made the enemy big enough *to fit the narrative* that made logical sense to us.”⁵ This was a mistake, Zelikow later said: “We tried to make 9/11 *a grand narrative*, but it’s not.”⁶ “We all grew up, you see, in an era where we were in great danger, apocalyptic nuclear danger, but in *the narrative that had a sort of grand, logical coherence to it*. And now we live in an era of vulnerability that’s not really quite susceptible to *the same sort of epochal narrative conventions*.” In Part Two I addressed the current views of Zelikow and others about the ‘meaninglessness’ of 9/11: “there is a level to me at which it’s meaningless... the act is so ridiculously disproportionate to the pathetic group of zealots who carried this out that... *we struggle... to make that fit into a grand narrative* that somehow fits the calamity.” He is not saying, however, that there is no ‘narrative’ – only that it cannot be fitted into “any of the

conventional narratives.” Zelikow is always searching for *new narratives*. Thus, after the so-called death of Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Zelikow wrote an article in the *Financial Times*, beginning: “The next 10 years will be quite different from the last 10. Osama bin Laden’s death is one of those catalytic moments that seize mass attention, as people sense a turning point of some kind. But what kind? Leaders who seize the chance can regain precious strategic initiative, to redefine interests and *offer a fresh narrative.*”⁷

What are the consequences of such an excessive interest in ‘narrative’ with regard to 9/11 – or more particularly regarding the official viewpoint about 9/11, for which Zelikow was responsible?

The Story of 9/11: Making History

Nothing can answer this question better than a short examination of how the *9/11 Commission Report* was conceived, written and then launched into the world.

The mainstream presumption is that such a Commission would first impartially examine all the conflicting information regarding the events of 9/11, in order to arrive slowly but thoroughly at the truth of what happened, and then provide the public with a truthful statement of all this, which people might test against their own perceptions and understanding.

Let us compare this, briefly, with the extraordinary manner in which the Commission was conceived and carried out. I am not interested here in looking at the Commission’s *politics* – relevant as it undoubtedly is – but at its *epistemology* – at the suitability of its principles and the way it worked as a method for attaining truth – and at the way the 9/11 Commission related to *truth-telling* on the one hand and *story-telling* on the other.

Zelikow’s main co-author and closest colleague regarding the kind of report he wished to see written was Ernest May.⁸ May was the chief consultant to the 9/11 Commission and describes his own role as follows: “I had no managerial responsibility. My job was to help produce the historical narrative.” May has also been helpful in providing an indispensable narrative⁹ about the way the report was created, to which I am indebted in the section that follows.

May describes the very first telephone conversation he and Zelikow had had about the 9/11 Commission, in January 2003. As this conversation is clearly recognized by May as somehow containing the essence of everything else that came later in the report, it is worth noting the three main things that Zelikow and May discussed.

Firstly – in discussing the necessity of such a report, they discussed the similarity of 9/11 to Pearl Harbour: “September 11th, 2001 was a watershed moment, on a par at least with Pearl Harbour.” They discussed how the three Pearl Harbour investigations had all given too much emphasis to ‘blaming Americans’ - and had failed, therefore, to make fully clear the ‘Japanese role’ in the attacks. No such error should be repeated this time. As there was already much information about “Al Qaeda, the Islamist terrorist network behind the sinister plot”: “here was an opportunity to try and tell the whole story from both sides.” (May speaks of telling the story “from both sides” – and yet here, even before he and Zelikow had joined the commission, he states categorically who was “behind the sinister plot.”)

Secondly, they discussed the *effect* they wanted the report to have – the measure of success and influence they wanted the report to achieve. Their stated wish was that the report should: “remain the reference volume on September 11th, sitting on shelves of high school and college teachers a generation hence.” So serious were they in this intention that they took the question of how to achieve it to the U.S. Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz. In telling of this, Wolfowitz candidly admits to the completely partisan nature of the 9/11 Commission Report, as this conversation took place *before* completion of the report.¹⁰ In Wolfowitz’s words (from a 2004 lecture about Paul Nitze): “When Don Rumsfeld and I had lunch with members of the 9/11 commission recently, one member asked what could they do to ensure that their report would make a real difference, that it would be read five or 10 years from now, instead of just filed away on a dusty shelf.”

Wolfowitz’s answer was that they should “write something similar to George Kennan’s long telegram or Paul Nitze’s NSC-68.”¹¹ This is a telling remark, seeing as neither of these documents

had had the aim of truthfully examining something that had already happened – but rather of dictating strategy and policy regarding what *should happen*.

Wolfowitz also spoke to the commissioners, though, of the Pearl Harbour report lacking popular interest or appeal: “I told them that, rarely to my knowledge, has anyone other than historians with a specific interest in the subject, gone back to read the report of the Pearl Harbor Commission. NSC-68, on the other hand, is still studied in colleges and universities, including colleges for strategists like the war colleges of our military services or our National Defense University.”¹²

This leads to the third thing discussed by May and Zelikow that evening – the question of *how the report should be written* – in order to attain the scale of political influence and popular appeal they were seeking. They would need to avoid the traditional method of fact-finding and presentation of evidence – and provide instead a thoroughly readable historical *story* or narrative: “Typically, government reports focus on ‘findings’ and array the evidence accordingly. None, to our knowledge, had ever attempted simply to produce professional-quality narrative history.” May elaborates on what he means by this. The report would need “to deal not only with the immediate past but also with the long background... if, as we said to each other, the report was to remain the reference volume on September 11(...) a generation hence.” When they first began work on the report they planned “starting with the rise of Al Qaeda, perhaps even beginning with the birth of Islam, then moving through the story chronologically.” The report, therefore, envisaged from the beginning as something of a best-seller, would be a rewriting of history, providing people with a long perspective within which to understand the attacks of 9/11, followed by clear statements about the policies and directions needing to be taken *after* 9/11. Furthermore, not only should the report provide, as no other report had ever done, a long historical narrative leading up to the events in America in 2001; but it should also do so in such a way that this new historical perspective would be valid not just for America but for the whole world. It would be the first time a government report had been conceived as international history, not just American history.”

The above makes clear why May called the essay in which he describes all this: “*When Government Writes History*.” Philip Zelikow would use the same phrase at the end of a memorandum he wrote welcoming all new members of staff working for the Commission: “You are now part of *a history-writing and history-making enterprise*, working with some of the most talented people in America, and led by an outstanding group of commissioners. Welcome.”¹³

After their first telephone call Zelikow took on to persuade the chair and vice-chair of the commission, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, to agree with this idea of ‘couching the report as a history’ – and both, according to May, immediately agreed.

Pre-emptive Outline

The next thing to take place has fairly frequently now been condemned for its inappropriateness, if not its scandalousness, in a report that still *purports* to be presenting the results of an honest investigation into the events of 9/11. It fits perfectly, though, when we see, as we have done, that May and Zelikow aimed from the beginning, to create a popular historical narrative.

As soon as Zelikow and May had both signed up to the Commission, before therefore any but the most preliminary investigations can have been carried out, they drafted *a complete plan of the narrative to be written*: “he and I worked up an outline for a sixteen-chapter report. By the middle of March 2003, the outline had chapter headings, subheadings and sub-subheadings.” As this once top-secret document is now openly available on the internet,¹⁴ one can see for oneself the remarkable extent to which the scheme of the final Commission Report, published 16 months later, is almost identical to this first draft outline, with only three significant changes being made to it. (This makes, I think, abundantly clear why Zelikow, asked why the official report mentioned none of the anomalies relating to 9/11, truthfully replied that this was *not* because of ignorance, but because: “you couldn’t have sustained the narrative.”)

Zelikow and May then showed this narrative outline to the other four leading members of the commission¹⁵ and: “They all approved, but agreed that for the moment (...) the outline should be treated as if it were the most highly classified document the commission possessed.”

(Appalling as is the blatancy of the control exerted from the beginning on what the report would contain, there is nevertheless something admirable in Ernest May's honesty in putting down, before he died, these details about how the 9/11 Report came into being.)

As far as was possible, they recruited staff capable of writing such "narrative history". According to May, however, the severe time-constraints necessitated that most of the staff were people who "already had high-level security clearances." The 50 or so professional staff seconded from government departments therefore needed to be 'trained' because: "For the most part these government veterans tended to assume that the commission would produce a report of the traditional type. *They had to be educated to the idea of writing a narrative.*" (My italics.) The final report, says May, is the evidence of the success of this 'education': "Its first eleven chapters would not tell such a riveting story if the commissioners and the staff had not accepted and internalized the idea of the report's being an enduringly readable history."

The moment was bound to come when Zelikow and May would have to reveal to everyone the outline of the *pre-existing master narrative* into which everyone's research and writing would need to fit. This must, one imagines, have been a significant moment for May and Zelikow, obliged to admit quite openly to such out-and-out prejudice in the report. According to May, by this time (late spring of 2003) the staff had "accepted... the idea of the report's being an enduringly readable history" to such an extent that: "when the outline was finally unveiled before all the commissioners, it appeared to have won acceptance among the staff. The commission endorsed it almost without debate." May, though, is either trying to fool himself or us. For the admission certainly did *not* pass without cynicism on the part of some members of staff. They wrote their own two-page parody of the draft outline, which they named with both truth and humour: "Preemptive Outline". It has chapter headings such as: "We Haven't Seen The Evidence Yet. But Really. We're Sure."¹⁶

Nonetheless, the victory had been won. From then on the *9/11 Commission Report* was, effectively, a *fait accompli*. As May put it: "Everyone became a storyteller."!

May does also mention some political questions regarding the completion of the report, such as that the commissioners were *never* allowed to speak to any of the arrested "Al Qaeda detainees".

After May had written his article this particular question escalated to such a size that, had it been about another event, it might have ignited a public scandal. It became known that there had been CIA videotapes of these interviews with 'Al Qaeda suspects' and that the videos had been destroyed, without anyone on the 9/11 Commission hearing about this. Zelikow, the executive director *may* of course have heard about it. But Thomas Kean, the *Chair* of the Commission was justifiably furious not to have been told about the existence of these videotapes. Kean and the Commission's Vice Chair, Lee Hamilton, wrote an article in the *New York Times* together, entitled: *Stonewalled by the CIA*. It ended: "As a legal matter, it is not up to us to examine the C.I.A.'s failure to disclose the existence of these tapes. That is for others. What we do know is that government officials decided not to inform a lawfully constituted body, created by Congress and the president, to investigate one of the greatest tragedies to confront this country. *We call that obstruction.*" (2nd Jan, 2008.) Asked about the CIA's remarks that the Commission hadn't explicitly asked for these tapes, Kean replied: "They can parse their words all they want. We asked for every single thing that they had, and then my vice chairman, Lee Hamilton, looked the director of the CIA in the face and said, 'look, even if we haven't asked for something, if it's pertinent to our investigation, make it available to us.' And our staff asked again and again of their staff and the tapes were not given to us. So there was no question."¹⁷ (When one reads this – that even the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission were kept in the dark – and aware that both they and Ernest May have made public statements about the serious failings of the report - one cannot help wondering whether Philip Zelikow was the *only* person on the Commission who actually knew what was happening.)

Our present theme, however, has more to do with how Zelikow ensured that the report *told a story*, the outline of which he had already decided on and how he then launched the story to try and achieve his aim that the story should become a part of popular consciousness.

To achieve this, Zelikow again broke with the tradition of government reports and brought out

the report with a popular commercial publisher. The contract with the publisher, Norton, stated that “the report be put on sale in most bookstores in America on the day of its public release and that the price not exceed ten dollars.” There was considerable concern about this among some people, but, as with everything else, all took place in accordance with Zelikow’s master-plan. As May describes: “Norton managed to print six hundred thousand copies overnight... . The copies flew off booksellers’ tables. Norton had to print another half-million within a week. Over the next eight months (it) sold something like two million copies, and an astounding 6.9 million copies were downloaded from the commission’s website.” The public success of the 9/11 Commission Report culminated in its even receiving a nomination for a National Book Award.¹⁸

Zelikow was asked (by Philip Shenon) about his own response to the praise the report had received and replied: “The praise was gratifying... More gratifying than the praise, though, was the reaction from people... not only were millions of people buying or downloading the report, they were actually reading it, and reading it through.” He then describes his greatest satisfaction – that his storytelling experiment had worked! - “As you know we had *developed a theory about how to prepare the report and put it out* and then worked hard to execute the design. *So the reaction was akin to that of a scientist who designs a pathbreaking experiment, expecting certain results, but feels pretty gratified when the thing actually works.*”¹⁹ (My italics.)

Very many people – of whom I am one – would of course say that the *9/11 Commission Report* should not be viewed as a success. Its inaccuracies, flaws and omissions have been consistently and thoroughly shown up almost from the moment it appeared.²⁰

The viewpoint expressed in the report, though, *has been successful* – because it is the prevailing viewpoint – both popularly – and in mainstream media and politics. (At least in the Western world or in countries modelled on it.)

This official *story* of 9/11 also proved “successful” by becoming the prevailing ‘myth’ behind U.S. and then U.N. policy and military action. (I am using the word ‘myth’ as Philip Zelikow uses it, which I shall say more of.) Despite the huge emphasis we observed being placed on *narrative* and *storytelling* in the *9/11 Report*, the purpose of the report was nevertheless completely pragmatic. After the first 11 chapters, which told: “*such a riveting story*” (May) the last two chapters abandon any wish to tell stories and are overtly, unashamedly political. Their titles are: *What To Do? A Global Strategy* (Chapter 12) and *How To Do It – A Different Way of Organizing the Government* (Chapter 13).

(This is a dubious kind of storytelling. If some people even dislike French fables for finishing by preaching a ‘moral’, this American version leads to a call to arms. This touches on the terrible abuse of all we are speaking about here against genuine “fiction” and storytelling. A true story leads to no direct outer action – but is, in a way, its own end. The *9/11 Commission Report*, by contrast, uses storytelling in order to influence its audience and to explicitly dictate a certain response. This is not storytelling at all. This is ‘creating a myth’ or, to put it bluntly, embellishing a lie in order to achieve through this one’s own ends. Zelikow’s use of the word “myth”, which shall be addressed, is equally a grotesque distortion of genuine myths, which, even if “fictional” in form, embody profound spiritual truths.)

The storytelling aspect of the *9/11 Commission Report* is only one half of it. The other half is its impact upon policy. This same division may be seen in Philip Zelikow’s *two* documents written in the aftermath of 9/11. The *9/11 Commission Report* was for public consumption and had, as we have seen, its chief emphasis on storytelling. Prior to this, though, Zelikow had also authored *the* statement setting out what became known as “The Bush Doctrine” – overturning or rewriting all previous legalities about what was permissible regarding a “pre-emptive” or “preventive” military strike against another country. (Without it being necessary for there to be any clear signs that this other country was wishing to attack.) This was *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2002). This was a much more private document, specifically setting out government policy – but it is a twin document to the *9/11 Report*. As Zelikow writes: “I was a principal drafter of the National Security Strategy that was later published in 2002... The document was strongly influenced by reflections on 9/11, very much along the lines of what the Commission ended up

saying in its report.”²¹

Contemporary Political Myths and Storytelling

We see a stark polarity here or two-edged sword – one of its edges being the “riveting story” and the other being the violent political and military response. The story (supposedly) presents the *knowledge* – and the political and military strategy the *action*.

It is the main intention of this article to explore the first of these – and to examine its validity or invalidity as a *method* of arriving at knowledge.

In order fully to understand the background of Zelikow’s enormous emphasis on ‘narrative’ we need also to look at his work prior to 9/11.

In October 1998 Zelikow gave the opening address at a conference on *Contemporary Political History*.²²

Zelikow’s short presentation is like a manifesto declaring the importance of a certain way of presenting history – and defining how it functions.

Contemporary history, says Zelikow, consists of “the public’s presumptions about its immediate past.” These “public presumptions” might also be described as “public myth(s)” – “*though without the negative implication sometimes invoked by the word ‘myth’.*” (Zelikow would unquestionably agree that the public perception of 9/11 completely qualifies it as such a “public presumption” or “myth”. He would also agree that these myths are a huge determining factor for how the public and the government respond.)

Zelikow defines these presumptions as: “*beliefs... thought to be true (although not necessarily known to be true with certainty)*” – and as “*beliefs... shared in common within the relevant political community.*”

The ways people receive these “presumptions” are either “personal (from direct experience)” or “vicarious (from books, movies and myths).”

If we think of 9/11, we cannot help but note that Zelikow, who played such a key role in creating the “public presumption” of 9/11, not only clearly knew better than almost anyone “the power of these presumptions” – in his own words - but also *how* they can take root in people.

There are four chief characteristics of such public presumptions, says Zelikow – and a popular myth may possess just one of these, or in a massive instance like 9/11, all four of them. There are “generational” myths – “etched in the minds of those who lived through them”. Secondly, when events are “particularly ‘searing’ or ‘molding’” they become “transcendent” myths. Thirdly, there are presumptions that acquire an almost timeless character - “dramatic stories plucked out of time.” Zelikow quotes ‘the Titanic’ as an example. Lastly, there are “myths” that “have a particular resonance for us... because they seem to explain ‘why we are the way we are today.’”

When Zelikow looks at “political history” he turns to the question of what provides “a history’s narrative power.” This comes into play when people can feel a connection between what has taken place and “their own lives.”

Zelikow finishes the address by anticipating a strong future for “contemporary political history” – speaking of “the extraordinary and continuing power of political history” and “the public’s huge appetite for more.”²³

Story-telling and Power

As regards its validity as *knowledge*, and as a way of *arriving at knowledge* about events in the world, Zelikow’s methodology clearly will not do.

He would have our understanding of our present and our past based on common *presumptions* or *myths* – which are: “*beliefs... shared in common*”... “*thought to be true (although not necessarily known to be true with certainty).*”

These presumptions or beliefs acquire “narrative power” –which powerfully fuels the common response to them – when people feel personally affected by them. This may happen through “direct experience” – if they have witnessed the event, or if people they know have been directly affected. Even if this has not happened, people may still feel a powerful “vicarious” connection to the

presumption or myth through “books, movies and myths”.

If Zelikow had at this point urged extreme caution on people – making them aware of the enormous danger of mass public suggestion governing their responses to political events and directives – his analysis might have proved helpful. But this is in no way Zelikow’s intention. Quite the opposite. He welcomes these *public presumptions* – and the “mythic” events that cause them. It is by such events, in his eyes, that history is made. And the public has a “huge appetite for more.”

When we now remember Zelikow’s calculated creation of the “narrative” of what took place on 9/11 – ignoring from the beginning whatever did not fit with this – we realize we have been observing Zelikow at work *creating* just such a “public myth”. It becomes quite clear what he meant by telling his staff they would be involved in a “history-writing and *history-making* enterprise.” We must look squarely in the face at the fact that we are dealing with a *making* or rewriting of history – with a massive “public presumption” explicitly intended to determine the whole global political response that would follow. Lest there be any doubt that a *public presumption* has *direct* political consequences, the *9/11 Commission Report* provides the supreme example when after 11 chapters of “riveting story” the last two chapters tell us: “What to do?” and: “How to Do It?” In the light of this, many people rightly focus on the political *agenda* which high-sounding words like Zelikow’s try and mask. In this article, though, I wish to focus rather on the *understanding* about knowledge and public perception displayed here, disseminated at the highest levels and put into effect everywhere through popular culture and popular opinion.

We should not suppose that the “official version” thinks one version of events to be true and the “9/11 Truth Movement” thinks another version to be true and that it is left open to people to weigh these two viewpoints up against one another. This is to assume that each viewpoint recognizes that it ultimately stands or falls according to its *truthfulness*. But this is not the case.

Many people in the “9/11 Truth Movement” do genuinely state that they only wish for there be a full examination of the truth. (A brief look at the many seriously expressed petitions for there to be new and genuinely independent investigations of 9/11 makes this clear.)²⁴ (There are undoubtedly also others who *do* attempt to sway people by force of emotive opinion.) But this is *not* the attitude of those responsible for the official version of 9/11, such as Zelikow. It is *no* interest of theirs to see their interpretation of 9/11 critically examined for its *truthfulness*, whatever this examination might bring. (I do not say *this* emotively.) We have seen this quite clearly in the destruction of crucial evidence, which outraged even the senior 9/11 Commissioners. And there are countless other examples. Testing the *truth* of the *story* of 9/11 is not what is important for Zelikow. What is important, as he unambiguously spells out, is the power it possesses as a *belief*. (Zelikow is of course only one representative of this view, but he does in a certain way epitomize it.) His writings show that he understands to an almost unparalleled degree the exact way in which this happens – the way a “belief” can become a “public myth”.

“Books, movies and myths”

Imagining and never having imagined

Let us take one final look at Zelikow’s exact knowledge of *how* “public presumptions” are created and at *how* this knowledge is deliberately used in order to create them.

Zelikow described (in *Thinking about Political History*) that “public presumptions” acquire “narrative power” when people feel personally affected by them. This may happen through “direct experience” or “vicariously” – through “books, movies and myths”.²⁵

A month after this defining speech by Zelikow, he elaborated on this “vicarious” connection in much more specific political detail (in the November/December 1998 issue of *Foreign Affairs*).²⁶ This was in an article proposing actions “that can be taken by the United States government... *to prepare the nation better for the emerging threat of Catastrophic Terrorism.*” (My italics.) The first thing to be done is named as *Imagining the Transforming Event*. “Lack of imagination” is described as the worst hindrance to the necessary action being taken against the threat of “catastrophic terrorism”. The article asks its readers to take seriously the scenarios in certain: “books, movies and myths”: “*Long part of Hollywood’s and Tom Clancy’s repertory of nightmarish scenarios,*

catastrophic terrorism is a real possibility.”

As this 1998 article explicitly urges people to “imagine the possibilities for themselves” it is obviously no accident that Tom Clancy is the one author Zelikow names.

For Tom Clancy had written two novels – *Debt of Honor* (1994) and *Executive Orders* (1996) – where a 747 (Japanese airlines) plane was “kamikaze’d”²⁷ into the Capitol building in Washington, killing the U.S. President and most members of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court. *Both of these* books had made it to top of the New York Times bestseller list - two years and four years respectively before Zelikow’s article. Clancy’s pictures therefore could certainly have been brought to mind by many people. (The book *Debt of Honor* had a first edition of *two million copies*.)

Here is a clear example, therefore, of how “books, movies and myths” can give people a “vicarious” experience of such events.

Zelikow describes two ways in which “books, movies and myths” may serve. They may, as Clancy’s novels are explicitly named as doing, “prepare the nation” beforehand to imagine such an event. Or they may help afterwards – through the constant repetition of certain images and storylines – to create and reinforce people’s vicarious feeling of connection with the “presumptions”. Zelikow, however, is *caught out here by his own intentions*. For whereas it was necessary in 1998 to *prepare* people to recognize the “mythic” quality of an event such as 9/11, once the events of 9/11 had happened – it was obviously essential that everyone believe they had been completely unforeseen. Thus, *although*, inevitably, it was often said on 9/11: “what is happening is like right out of a Tom Clancy novel”²⁸, top government and military officials were at the same time consistently denying *ever* having imagined the possibility of such an event. George Bush declared: “there was nobody in our government at least and I don’t think in the previous government that could envision flying airplanes into buildings on such a large scale.”²⁹ Condoleezza Rice repeated the same: “I don’t think anybody could have predicted that these people would have taken an airplane and slammed it into the World Trade Center, taken another one and slammed it into the Pentagon.”³⁰ The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General Richard Myers, commenting on the complete military failure to respond to the incoming planes, said: “you hate to admit it, but we hadn’t thought about this.”³¹

These remarks are ludicrous. Tom Clancy is not some author unknown to the U.S. administration and military. As well as his bestselling fiction Clancy has written several non-fiction books about the U.S. military – one with the former deputy head of “U.S. Special Operations”, General Carl Stiner.³² According to a review of this book, Clancy is “regarded as an insider” in both “the armed forces and the CIA... and granted an amazing level of access”. Commenting as to why this was, Stiner said: “we trust him. We know he gets it right.”³³ Clancy’s wife is a cousin of George Bush’s Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

These connections – let alone the fact that his book with the 911- style disaster at the end of it³⁴ had a first edition of 2 million copies and was top of the New York Times bestseller list – *let alone* the fact that Philip Zelikow had specifically urged people (in *Foreign Affairs*) to take note of “Tom Clancy’s... nightmarish scenarios”³⁵ – show a remark such as that of George Bush: “nobody in our government... could envision flying airplanes into buildings” to be a direct and blatant lie.

Philip Zelikow’s use, though, of Clancy’s novels, as examples of how an event such as 911 could be imagined, clearly shows us what he means by saying that people can have a “vicarious” experience of such events through “books, movies and myths.”

We must recognize the complete unacceptability of this. If such things are not seen through, people will find themselves watching movies made by those who wish to control world events, and taking those movies to be reality.³⁶

We can only ask, therefore – *what* is necessary in order for people on as wide a scale as possible to be able to see through the manipulation of truth that occurred in relation to 9/11 – so that it might even be thinkingly addressed in mainstream media and politics? The attempt of this article has been to address *one necessity* if such a change is eventually to come about. People must learn to see *how* a “public presumption” such as 9/11 is created. Only then may these “presumptions” or “myths”

begin to lose some of their power, for it will prove impossible or far harder for new ones to be created. The approach of Zelikow and others is to a certain degree *unthreatened* by arguments about the truth of this and other “official versions”, however accurately the truths are put forward, or by revelations about the clearly underlying political agendas. Their approach, which knows exactly how to create and then steer public opinion, has in a certain way already armoured itself against such arguments and revelations. This approach has a cynical voice, which, if it would ever express itself unguardedly might say: “Such arguments about truth and untruth *do not matter* – what matters is *popular belief*, regardless of what the “truth” is – and public belief is in our hands – we know how it is created and how it is maintained. We are therefore immune to whatever you may reveal to people.”

As we have been talking so much about “myths” this situation may remind one of some devastating mythical creature, which people find themselves powerless against, using the weapons they currently possess. Only when they understand *how* this creature attains its power can they find what is capable of overcoming it.

Similarly, when vast numbers of people begin not only to see the lies they are being asked to support and believe, but also *how* they are created and implanted, *how* opinion and belief are created, only then may this particular dragon (the power of public *presumptions*) lose the widespread hold it enjoys.

Telling beliefs

To accept the swaying of public opinion by the use of “books, movies and myths” to connect people to certain “beliefs” - as a permissible methodology, either in writing history or in influencing public opinion - is to open the door to any imaginable tyranny, with people blindly *believing* what they are told to believe.

The very greatest defence against the obvious dangers inherent in such *belief* is for people to know: *how they know*. The colossal power and resources behind the creation of *public* beliefs and public opinion are such that they will not be threatened or replaced by any alternative *opinion* or *belief*. And nor should we wish them to be. We are not in the Middle Ages. We are called on *to know* – and to do this we must know *how we know*.

There is nothing, perhaps, more telling or more disturbing than that Zelikow seriously asks people to accept that the whole of contemporary culture be governed by *beliefs*. Nor is he alone in urging this upon us. Knowing that public opinion could no longer be suggestively steered if people understood the difference between believing and knowing, it should probably come as no surprise – although it does! - that epistemology - the study of how we know – has recently been redefined as the study, in fact, of how we arrive at our *beliefs*. [This is already a ‘pre-emptive strike’ against using epistemology in its rightful meaning; again helping to obfuscate the search for the truth in any matter. Ed.]

This has come to light precisely in relation to 9/11. A ‘top’ law professor, Cass Sunstein, was appointed by Barrack Obama (in 2009) to run the Orwellian-sounding *Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs*. In 2008 Sunstein co-authored an article entitled: “Conspiracy Theories” in which he made the case that the government should “cognitively infiltrate” viewpoints such as those of the 9/11 Truth Movement. He advised that as it would perhaps not be constitutional literally to make such viewpoints illegal, the best approach would be, covertly, to deliberately spread confusion among people holding these views.

What is so telling in Sunstein’s proposal is that he makes use of an attempt to redefine or rather to wrongly define epistemology.

Sunstein states that if people agree with the findings of those in the 911 Truth Movement this is because they have a “crippled epistemology.” He borrows the term from a 2002 essay by Russell Hardin entitled: “The crippled epistemology of extremism.”³⁷ Hardin explicitly states that by epistemology he means “the way people hold their beliefs”. Revealing exactly the kind of disinclination to think through received information that leaves many people defenceless against the suggestive power of “public myth(s)”, he says: “Most of us do not have the time or incentive to be

deeply committed philosophers or scientists and we need not even suspect that there is anything questionable about our beliefs.” David Ray Griffin once again brings a lance of truth to Sunstein’s and Hardin’s error: “If one is not interested in epistemology, one should not use the word. If one is interested in the sociology of belief, there is a perfectly good term for this area of interest: ‘sociology of belief’ ... It would have been better if Hardin and Sunstein... had simply spoken of a ‘crippled process of belief-formation’.”³⁸

What this makes clear is that for the likes of Zelikow or Sunstein, who are deliberately working to ensure that people follow or swallow the ‘right’ public “beliefs” – those who do *not do so* are to be seen as “crippled” in the way they arrive at their beliefs – leading them, therefore, to hold the *wrong* beliefs.

This will not do. Truth and knowledge and the understanding of how we arrive at these are *not* questions of belief. We are not, to repeat it one more time, in the Middle Ages.

There have, since then, been hundreds of years of development in culture, philosophy and spiritual understanding – progressively achieved by some of the greatest and most spiritually awake artists and thinkers. We ignore this development – let alone fall back from it – at our peril.

*Never let it be said that he
Despising his own intellect
Art and his whole Past Wrecked
And cast his planet’s faith beneath the sea.*

Vernon Watkins
‘Ode at The Spring Equinox’

Overcoming the division between faith and knowledge

In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas *did* present the view that there was a boundary to what intellectual knowledge may justifiably claim to know – and that for us to go beyond this boundary can only be achieved by “faith”. [”Faith may also be seen as an open-hearted trust that there is something as yet unknown. This is, potentially, based upon knowledge that is inscribed in the very kernel of the human being but remains latent and is mostly, as yet, un-remembered. Ed.] *At the time* this was, in fact, a huge advance, for it showed that there is no fundamental divide between knowledge and faith – that they were, ultimately, in harmony with one another. However, to continue this paradigm of Aquinas’s beyond its appropriate time *would be* to create an ever-widening split between what we can and cannot know.

The creation of precisely such a split was achieved – or given its most complete philosophical expression – by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). For Kant, unlike for Aquinas, *all* intellectual and scientific knowledge about the world is, in the end, impossible. He states that such is the make-up of our knowing apparatus, as well as of the structure of the world and of things, that the true reality – “*the thing in itself*” – behind any thing or event or person that we meet, is impossible for us to know. (Kant does, though, claim to know *this* with certainty!) Having “established” this, Kant then immediately asserts that we must, nonetheless, have “faith” in the divine and in the moral world order. Although, or perhaps *because* we can have no real *knowledge* of this moral world order, we must, according to Kant, *obey* what it commands us to do - its “categorical imperative”.

As the devil tells “restless old Immanuel” at breakfast in Bulgakov’s novel *The Master and Margarita*: “Say what you will, Professor, but you have thought up something that makes no sense.”

Nevertheless, even if few people know very much about Kant nowadays, his *basic outlook*, almost as a subconscious assumption in people, is still all too prevalent today. As I mentioned at the beginning of the article, many people *remain* torn between on the one hand the conviction that they can never fully know anything, and on the other simply blindly accepting what they are asked to believe in. This may still be a question, as it was for Kant, of belief in religious truths. But it may equally well involve nowadays blindly accepting what they are *told to believe* and told to follow by

“science” or by the media or by political leaders.

One place that Kant’s name has been brought to people’s attention, interestingly, is by Robert Kagan, one of the founder members of the *Project for the New American Century*, who has attempted to describe the differences between America and Europe as being typified by the differences between Hobbes and Kant.³⁹ There is much we could say about Kagan’s views on this and what they reveal, but for now we will only say that if all we are left with is a choice between Hobbes (1588-1679) and Kant then our future is definitely bleak!

Fortunately, however, many thinkers, particularly in the 18-19th centuries, from Coleridge to Blake to Fichte to Hegel to Goethe have gone far beyond Kant in his understanding of knowledge and freedom. One of the greatest dangers, though, in increasingly taking our lead in things from the United States, is that the immense cultural and philosophical developments that took place in Europe, which can still provide enormously fertile ground for a true understanding and development of many aspects of our culture, are ignored.

Goethe called his autobiography *Poetry and Truth (Dichtung und Wahrheit)*. If the likes of Zelikow and Kagan were to immerse themselves in this for a few years many of the ills of our culture might be overcome. They would learn, for one thing, the extraordinary discipline of truth that even storytelling – despite its existence as *fiction* – *must* possess. About *Poetry and Truth* few people can ever have been more qualified to speak than Goethe – a poetical giant in German and European literature – and the creator, in seed-form, of a new way of doing science – able, potentially at least, to overcome many of the limitations that natural science has in great measure imposed upon itself.

The task of editing and elucidating Goethe’s scientific work was given to someone whose work in the area of the science of knowing is still not sufficiently known – Rudolf Steiner. After this work on Goethe, Steiner named his own first philosophic work: *Science and Truth (Wahrheit und Wissenschaft)*. It begins: “Present-day philosophy suffers from an unhealthy faith in Kant. This essay is intended to be a contribution toward overcoming this.”

It goes on:

“It would be wrong to belittle this man’s lasting contributions toward the development of German philosophy and science. But the time has come to recognize that the foundation for a truly satisfying view of the world and of life can be laid only by adopting a position which contrasts strongly with Kant’s. (...)

“(Kant) showed that the foundation of things lying beyond the world of our senses and our reason (...) is inaccessible to our faculty of knowledge.⁴⁰ (...)

“*The aim of this essay is to show that everything necessary to explain and account for the world is within the reach of our thinking.* The assumption that there are principles that belong to our world, but lie outside it, is revealed as the prejudice of an out-dated philosophy...”

“Unlike Kant, the purpose here is *not to show what our faculty of knowledge cannot do, but rather to show what it is really able to achieve.*”

Many people are put off from looking into Rudolf Steiner’s work because they suppose that it must be based on what *cannot* be known. But here, in *Science and Truth*, Steiner’s PhD dissertation, lies an essential basis *not* for something that cannot be known, but for *getting to know how we know anything* – for an epistemology, that is, without presuppositions.

We all, perhaps, to a greater or lesser degree, carry some element of ‘unredeemed Kantianism’ where, on the one hand, we set limits to what we subject to our thinking examination, considering the understanding of certain things to be “beyond us” – and where, on the other hand, we simply accept or believe something, without fully making clear, to ourselves and to others, the way in which we arrived at this view.

Epistemology and freedom

With regard to 9/11, to return to the main subject of this essay, this is also often the case. Belief and opinion *will not suffice* with anyone’s arguments – whether these arguments are supportive of the

“official version” or of the 911 “Truth Movement”.

When people are able to become fully clear about the prerequisites of truth and what the activity of *knowing* demands from us, the appallingly flimsy scaffolding of the official version of 911, for example, made out of thin and hollow poles of propaganda and presumption, that we have hopefully shown up in this article, will surely come crashing down by itself, revealing the naked lies of those “emperors” in the fields of politics and public opinion who have upheld certain “myths” for the sake of their own power – and for the sake of keeping others subservient to it.

For a thorough relationship to truth has its consequence. Genuine individual understanding of truth *must* in the end lead to freedom. Steiner’s *Science and Truth* was therefore – *almost* inevitably – the prologue to his fuller and ground-breaking work: *The Philosophy of Freedom*.

The preface to *Science and Truth* already prepares this, describing how the ability to know: “has the most significant consequences for the laws that underlie our deeds”. These “consequences” have to do with the possibility of true human freedom.

If we are able to know for ourselves then we may also know *our own motives*, which means “rejecting the ‘categorical imperative,’ an external power whose commandments we have to accept as moral laws.” We will then not only see through attempts to have us blindly go along with “public presumptions”, but we will also be able to unlock the springs of our own free activity – and in this way gradually find the way to renew our culture, in every different area of it, through infinitely varied free acts of creativity and initiative.

If we do not do so, we have only ourselves to blame if we fall back into some kind of version of Orwell’s *1984*. Orwell’s book may have seemed to belong to a previous decade, but it proves in fact strangely pertinent to our own (if we replace the communist-sounding “the Party” with something like “the creators of public opinion”) – describing, as it does, the struggle against a complete rewriting of history and the need to win through to a new recognition of truth.

“If all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed — if all records told the same tale — then the lie passed into history and became truth. “Who controls the past,” ran the Party slogan, “controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”...

“Once when he happened in some connection to mention the war against Eurasia, (Julia) startled him by saying casually that in her opinion the war was not happening. The rocket bombs, which fell daily on London were probably fired by the Government of Oceania itself, ‘just to keep people frightened’. This was an idea that had literally never occurred to him. ...

“In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five and you would have to believe it... The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears...

And yet... being a minority, even a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth and there was untruth...”

This study of story-telling and truth-telling has become much larger than I expected. I had initially imagined it forming just a preface to the final part of this article. There will therefore need to be a Part Four in the Summer edition of *New View*. I shall continue to discuss what might be necessary for the real background to the events of 911 to be openly discussed and understood. I shall attempt to explore what might even be called the greater “narrative” behind the events of 9/11 – involving wider questions concerning spiritual geography and world history and the significance of these for geopolitics – which the official “narrative”, so far, has perhaps been most successful of all in continuing to conceal.

Endnotes

1. For example, the 9/11 Commission Report made no mention of the collapse of WTC7, nor of any of the testimonies of the firefighters quoted in Part Two.(*New View*, issue 62, Winter 2011/12)
2. See: ‘Zelikow’s parallel universe’ – Snowshoe films – youtube, after 3:25minutes.

3. This concerned the knowledge that Mohammed Atta and other terrorists were well known to U.S. Intelligence in the years preceding 9/11 (1998/9/2000). Lt. Colonel Anthony Shaffer, who was actively involved in this intelligence work, described the details of this to the 9/11 Commission – but was then removed from office and denied access to all his existing documentation. See: “Able Danger and the 9/11 attacks”. “Unclassified draft prepared statement of Anthony A. Shaffer, Lt Col, US army reserve, senior intelligence officer - before the House Armed Service Committee, Congress of the United States.” (February 15, 2006) www.abledanger.blog
4. The 911 Commission Report may justly be seen as the ‘official version’ of what took place on September 11th, 2001. It was fully authorized by the U.S. Government and became a national best-seller, when it was published in 2005.
5. *Council on Foreign Relations* – “A Conversation with Philip Zelikow” – September 12th, 2011. (The other un-numbered quotations in this paragraph also come from this conversation.)
6. The Daily Cougar, Monday November 7th, 2011.
7. The Financial Times, May 3rd, 2011. *Bin Laden killing buries the trauma of 9/11*. Philip Zelikow.
8. Ernest May (1928-2009) was a professor of history at Harvard, the director of Harvard University’s Intelligence Policy Program and he and Zelikow had already co-written or co-edited several publications – mainly on U.S./Soviet relations.
9. *When Government Makes History* by Ernest May, first published in *The New Republic*. (June 24th, 2005.) (On “History News Network” website.)
10. Wolfowitz’s words come from his speech Paul Nitze’s legacy: for a new world – given on April 15th, 2004. The 911 Commission Report was not published until July, 2004. This “lunch” with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz should be compared with the other “lunch” – at around the same time – where the chair and vice chair of the Commission were “stonewalled by the CIA”. Kean and Hamilton describe how they met with the director of the CIA requesting access to the “Al Queda detainees”: “we decided that we needed to question the detainees directly, including Abu Zubaydah and a few other key captives. In a lunch meeting on Dec. 23, 2003, George Tenet, the C.I.A. director, told us point blank that we would have no such access.” (“Stonewalled by the CIA – New York Times – Jan 2nd, 2008.)
11. “*National Security Council Report 68 (NSC-68)* was a 58-page formerly-classified report issued by the United States National Security Council on April 14, 1950...Written during the formative stage of the Cold War, it was top secret until the 1970s when it was made public. It was one of the most significant statements of American policy in the Cold War. NSC-68 largely shaped U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War for the next 20 years.” (From Wikipedia.) Regarding the “long telegram”: “George Kennan (1904-2005) served as deputy head of the U.S. mission in Moscow until April 1946. On February 22, 1946... Kennan sent a lengthy 5,500-word telegram (sometimes cited as being over 8,000 words) from Moscow to Secretary of State James Byrnes outlining a new strategy on how to handle diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.” This and a later document by Kennan “quickly emerged as foundation texts of the Cold War, expressing the Truman administration’s new anti-Soviet Union policy.” (From Wikipedia.)
12. Wolfowitz’s comments that the Commissioners study Paul Nitze’s NSC-68 also show why Ernest May became the 911 Commission’s chief consultant. Already in 1993 May had written a book called: *American Cold War Strategy – Interpreting NSC-68*.
13. Memorandum by Philip Zelikow to “All Incoming Staff”: ‘What do I do now?’ Available at Scribd.com
14. For links to three different versions of this, see: <http://hcggroups.wordpress.com/2009/08/07/911-commission-report-outline-from-spring-2003-similar-to-final-report/>
15. Tom Kean, Lee Hamilton, Christopher Kojm and Daniel Marcus.

16. *The Commission. The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Commission.* Philip Shenon, pages 370-371.
17. Interview with CNN's *American Morning*, broadcast on December 24, 2007. See: *The Raw Story*– 24th December, 2007. “9/11 Commission chair: ‘No question’ CIA knew we wanted tapes.”
18. David Ray Griffin heard of this nomination just as his own searching analysis – *The 9/11 Commission Report – Omissions and Distortions* was going to press. He concludes his book therefore by adding: “I would not have been shocked by this news except for the fact that the nomination was in the nonfiction category.”
19. Email from Philip Zelikow to Philip Shenon. October 18th, 2007. (pdf of complete email exchange available at: www.philipshenon.com/content/behind.asp)
20. Several full-length books have been written just on this. For example: Philip Shenon, *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation* (2008); David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report – Omissions and Distortions.* (2004.)
21. From email to Philip Shenon, February 5th, 2007. (See note 17 for details.) For an excellent study of the further details and implications of the common authorship of these two documents see: *The Bush Doctrine and the 9/11 Commission Report: Both authored and by Philip Zelikow* by David Ray Griffin. Article available online at: ‘Information Clearing House.’
22. The event was organized by the Miller Center, University of Virginia, of which Zelikow was Director.
23. All the quotations from Zelikow’s speech from: “Thinking about Political History” – Miller Center Report, Winter 1999, vol. 14, No. 3. There is a link to a full pdf of this report in reference 15 at the end of ‘Philip D. Zelikow’ wikipedia page.
24. These are listed at the end of the web-page: <http://patriotsquestion911.com/#NewInvestigation>
25. “Thinking about Political History”. (See endnote 23.)
26. This was in an article entitled: Catastrophic Terrorism: Elements of a National Policy co-authored by Zelikow. I also referred to this article in Part One.
27. From first page of *Executive Orders* by Tom Clancy.
28. CNN – Sept 11th, 2001. (Judy Woodruff).
29. At: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jed-7H2jI8> “9/11 NORAD Rehearsed Crashing Hijacked Planes Into The World Trade Center Years Before”
30. Ibid.
31. American Forces Radio and Television Service - Oct. 17th, 2001.
32. *Shadow Warriors – Inside the Special Forces* by Tom Clancy, Carl Stiner and Tony Koltz. (2003.) Although this book was published in 2003, Clancy’s military and intelligence non-fiction began in 1993. His website states of his book *Special Ops*: “First canceled and then reinstated, the release of this book predates the September 11 terror attacks (released on February 6, 2001) but will prove to be an invaluable resource in the coming actions.” (www.clancyfaq.com/hold%20Originals/Non-fict.htm)
33. “Clear And Present Danger” by Warren Berger. BOOK, Jan-Feb, 2002. www.bookmagazine.com/issue20/clancy.shtml
34. *Debt of Honor* ends with the “kamikaze’d” Japanese Airlines 747 crashing into the Capitol Building, killing the President and most of the rest of his senior government members. *Executive Orders*, which is the sequel to *Debt of Honor* begins with a description of this attack.
35. Let alone Zelikow’s demand, in the same article where he refers to Tom Clancy, for “sensitive documents to be prepared by... small groups...”, which “should not be published” and which would look into the “most detailed and credible threat scenarios, based on close analysis of specific vulnerabilities.” (I referred to this statement in Part One of this article.)
36. This is no far-fetched future vision. There is ample evidence of this happening already, for example with the so-called killing of Osama bin Laden in 2011. Social media sites also create

the new possibility of a particular video “going viral”. See: “After Kony, could a viral video change the world?” John Naughton. Guardian.co.uk. Saturday 10 March 2012.

37. “The Crippled Epistemology of Extremism”, Russell Hardin, in: *Political Extremism and Rationality*, ed. Albert Breton, CUP, 2002. See David Ray Griffin’s *Cognitive Infiltration* (Olive Branch Press, 2011) for a thorough and satirical refutation of Sunstein’s calculated instigation of covert propaganda. I am indebted to Griffin’s book, from where all my quotations from Hardin have been taken.
38. See Griffin’s *Cognitive Infiltration* – pp. 166-167. Endnote 128.
39. In Robert Kagan’s article: “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review*, No. 113 (June and July 2002). Then in his book: *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (2003)
40. Rudolf Steiner also spoke about this in a lecture about Thomas Aquinas: “Kantianism... is the lowest ebb of Western philosophy, the complete bankruptcy of man in his search for the truth, a despair that man can in any way find truth in external objects.” *The Redemption of Thinking*. (New York, 1983.) pp.99-100.

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