

Edward H. Spence:

Government Secrecy, the Ethics of Wikileaks, and the Fifth Estate

Abstract

This paper aims to systematically explore and provide answers to the following key questions: When is government secrecy justified? In a conflict between government secrecy and the public's right to be informed on matters of public interest, which ought to take priority? Is Julian Assange a journalist and what justifies his role as a journalist? Even if Julian Assange is a journalist of the new media, was he justified in disseminating classified information to the public? Who decides what is in "the public interest"? Is it only journalists of the Fourth Estate who decide that or also journalists of the Fifth Estate (new media)? This paper will answer the aforementioned questions by arguing that the media in the form of both the Fourth and Fifth Estates should inform the public on matters of public interest truthfully and ethically, even if sometimes they have to breach government secrecy.

Author:

1 Introduction	38
2 Government secrecy: when is it justified?	39
3 The conflict between the government's right to secrecy and the public's right to know	41
4 Are new media activists the new journalists of the 5th Estate?	43
5 Conclusion	44

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1 Introduction

In disseminating classified information to the public, Wikileaks and its founder Julian Assange stand accused by an assembly of world politicians for doing something terribly wrong. Yet upon further reflection and all available evidence so far, this is by no means obvious. One could argue that on the contrary, in his capacity as a social journalist, if that is what he is, Assange could not have done otherwise. In disseminating information of public interest, Assange seems to have done the right thing. He informed the public of the truth. The further question that needs to be examined, however, is if the truth was a state secret of national security was it in the public interest to have kept it a secret instead of publishing it? Is this a case where the public interest would have been best served by withholding information and keeping the relevant classified information a secret?

Australia's Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance (MEAA) journalism code of ethics states that "respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism". Similar principles are also enunciated by the code of ethics of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which declares that "respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist".

According to those national and international journalism codes of ethics, Julian Assange, in his assumed role as a social journalist, has committed no wrong, at least no moral wrong, in disseminating documents concerning diplomatic classified information, if the dissemination of such information was in the public interest. His actions may have breached some as yet unidentified laws but that has yet to be established. However, even if it turns out that he has somehow technically breached some law concerning the dissemination of classified information that in itself does not make his actions ethically wrong. For consider: those courageous people who infringed the now discredited apartheid laws of South Africa did break the law but in doing so acted morally out of a sense of universal justice. Assange may in fact have acted as any honest, vigilant and competent investigative journalist does or ought to do, the world over. Consider for, example, two previous famous cases, those of *Watergate* and the *Pentagon Papers*. In both those cases, journalists disseminated information to the public that the US government at the time wanted kept secret. As it turned out, however, the information although embarrassing and damaging to the government was in the public interest.

As in the aforementioned cases, whether or not the information disseminated by Wikileaks was in the public interest may be a matter for the public to decide and not politicians who would rather keep their citizens in the dark and ignorant on some vague and misguided notion that they do so for the good of their citizens. Plato may have argued for the "noble lie" in the *Republic* when it serves the public interest, but there is nothing noble about lying or lying by omission in hiding and keeping secret, politically inconvenient truths.

Politicians serve the public interest and not the other way round. It is indeed this sentiment that gave rise to the perception of the media as the Fourth Estate. An independent and fearless disseminator of true information to the public so that citizens are able to make informed decisions on matters of public interest, which contribute to the common good and serve democracy. The advent of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as smart phones and twitter has enabled anyone to source and disseminate information of one-to-many, many-to-many, and many-to-one, anywhere, anyway, at any time. I will argue in this paper that the Internet and its associated ICTs have ushered in the *Fifth Estate*, endowing every citizen with the potential and opportunity to be a journalist. If this is correct, then Assange qualifies as a journalist of the Fifth Estate.

Some in the USA, including politicians, have been calling for Assange's blood. Other less bloodthirsty, have been calling for his arrest and indictment. This should not surprise us. After all there is a famous historical precedent for this. Socrates, probably the best known and celebrated philosopher of all times, had to endure as much and worse when he earned the wrath of a few very well-connected and powerful Athenians in 5th century Greece. He was tried and executed on charges for "corrupting the youth and being irreverent to the gods". Though not officially a journalist, he was by his own admission an annoying gadfly tirelessly exposing the ignorance and folly of powerful generals and politicians who claimed to know that which they lacked knowledge of. For Socrates, like committed investigative journalists today, was passionate about the truth. If he had lived today he would probably have been an investigative journalist or a social media blogger in pursuit of the truth for the common good.

Assange of course is no Socrates but if his motives for leaking information to the public are similar to those of Socrates, that is, to inform his fellow-world -citizens of the truth for the common good, annoying or embarrassing as that might be to some, should he not like Socrates as well as the leakers and journalists involved in the Watergate and Pentagon Papers, deserve praise rather than condemnation?

The above introduction was by way of situating and contextualising the following discussion in this paper within the ongoing current debate concerning the rights and wrongs of leaking and publishing classified information that governments wish to keep secret from their citizens.

In addressing the topic stated in the title, this paper aims to systematically explore the following key questions:

1. When, if ever, is government secrecy justified?
2. In a conflict between government secrecy and the public's right to be informed on matters of public interest, which ought to be given priority?
3. Is Julian Assange a journalist and if so what justifies his role as a journalist?
4. Even if Julian Assange can be considered a journalist, at least a journalist of the new media, was he justified in disseminating classified information to the public?
5. Who decides what is in "the public interest"? If it is the media on behalf of the public, is it only journalists of the Fourth Estate (old corporate media) who decide that or also journalists of the Fifth Estate (new media)?
6. Do we trust the media to make that decision on our behalf?

In summary, this paper will answer the aforementioned questions by arguing that the media in the form of both the Fourth and Fifth Estates should inform the public on matters of public interest truthfully and ethically, even if sometimes they have to breach government secrecy. However, in order to do so, it is essential that the media is trustworthy and credible. Insofar as the government is the elected representative of the public, it is accountable to the public. Insofar as the media's role is to inform the public on matters of public interest, the media must be trustworthy to fulfil that role without fear or bias, even if it means having to sometimes breach government secrets. After all, the primary role of the media in a democracy is to keep the government accountable. To do so, the government must be transparent, and it is the role of the media to provide transparency on matters of public interest. However, a key question this paper will address is whether in the wake of the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal the media can be trusted to fulfil that role. Is the media, especially the corporate old media, as untrustworthy as the government in engaging in covert operations that harm rather than benefit the public for their own self-regarding interests?

2 Government secrecy: when is it justified?

Sissela Bok in her book (1982) *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation*, defines "secrecy" as "intentional concealment" and "privacy" as "the condition of being protected from unwanted access by others – physical access, personal information, or attention" (1984: 10-11). Although sometimes the two overlap, when each involves concealment, secrecy and privacy, however, are different since what is private need not involve secrecy. For a private life, as Boc correctly points-out need not be and very rarely is a secret life (1984:11). Unless directly relevant to our discussion, this paper will only be concerned with secrecy, and government secrecy in particular, and not with privacy.

The question I shall be addressing in this section is what, if anything, justifies government secrecy. The related question whether government secrecy even when justified can be overridden by other conflicting considerations, such as the public's right to information, will be taken up in section (3).

"Reason of state" is one of the best known rationales offered for justifying government secrecy. The idea being that certain actions that would be deemed immoral if performed by individuals are justified when performed by the state. The usual justification offered is that individuals could not survive without the state. So when necessary for its survival and by extension the survival of its individual citizens, the state is justified in engaging in actions, which would otherwise be deemed immoral, including secret actions involving lying, cheating and in some cases torture, and murder (Boc 1984: 173).

A justification of this kind based on "reason of state", whether sound or not, could conceivably be offered for the existence and secret operations of the US Army detention camp at Guantanamo Bay. However, an argument against secrets of state is Bentham's claim that "secrecy, being an instrument of conspiracy, ought never to be the system of a regular government", which according to Boc is echoed also by Woodrow Wilson's observation that "government ought to be all outside and no inside" and that "there ought to be no place where anything can be done that everybody does not know about" (Boc 1984: 171).

Lord Acton makes a similar claim to the effect that "everything secret degenerates, even the administration of justice; nothing is safe that does not show how it can bear discussion and publicity" (Boc 1984: 105). The appeal to publicity is also reflected in Kant's legitimacy test of publicity. According to Simone Chambers, Kant claims that "all actions affecting the rights of other human beings are wrong if their maxim is not compatible with their being made public" (Chambers 2004: 406). The appeal to publicity provides a powerful prima facie reason against government secrecy, especially when that secrecy combined with power, can be used, and often is used, to violate human rights.

However, Chambers argues correctly that some government administrative secrecy is necessary for rational and critical deliberation on matters of policy. He offers that "deliberative secrecy" is justifiable as a "way of encouraging better discussion and fuller consideration of legislation" (Chambers 2004: 394) if such deliberative secrecy meets the "deliberative secrecy test", namely, "a secret or set of secrets is not justified merely if it promotes deliberation on the merits of public policy; citizens and their accountable representatives must also be able to deliberate about whether it does so". Chambers refers to this test as "a form of retrospective accountability for the process as well as for its results" (Chambers 2004: 394).

According to Chambers, ideally deliberative secrecy should meet two conditions of "public reason": (a) the justification test of "Socratic reason" that requires justification for one's beliefs and claims based on sound arguments that other reasonable people at large could accept and (b) the democratic accountability test that requires public legitimacy, through the democratic process. In a nice formulation of public reason, Chambers states that "the Socratic element stresses the rationality of public *reason* while the democratic element stresses the public nature of *public* reason" (Chambers 2004: 391).

However, quite correctly Chambers also recognises the potential conflict or at least tension that can arise between the two. For Socratic dialectic based on rational arguments of justification favours primarily the *rational* aspect of public reason, whilst rhetoric based on persuasion favours primarily the *publicity* aspect of public reason. Since persuasion as the effectiveness of advertising and propaganda demonstrate need not be rational or justifiable but merely persuasive or popular, it can undermine the rational aspect of public reason, and sometimes at least in politics, does so.

This brings us back to why sometimes administrative deliberative secrecy in rational political debate on policy issues may be necessary. So long as decisions made in camera can be defended to the public or their representatives on justifiable and rational grounds, some deliberative government secrecy may be unavoidable and indeed desirable. Importantly, however, it must meet both the rationality and accountability conditions of public reason. This, however, may be easier in theory than in practice and the difficulty reflects John Stuart Mill's concern of "how without publicity could citizens either check or encourage what they are not permitted to see" (Boc 1984: 179). For as Boc correctly observes "concealment insulates administrators from criticism and interference; it allow them to correct mistakes and to reverse direction without costly, often embarrassing explanations; and it permits them to cut corners with no questions being asked" (Boc 1984: 177).

When it comes to secrecy on military matters things get even more complicated. Boc observes that “the contradictions and tensions of secrecy are never stronger than in the military stance of nations” (Boc, 1984:191). Even Bentham, according to Boc, who was otherwise against government secrecy, was willing to concede that publicity, one of the corner stones of deliberative democracy, should be suspended if it favoured the enemy (Boc 1984: 194). Against that sentiment, Boc, however, rightfully, cautions that

“Under conditions of crisis, when nations feel beleaguered, military secrecy is likely to spread, invite abuse, and undermine the very security it is meant to uphold. The burden of excessive secrecy can be heavy; and the suffering it inflicts, domestically and abroad, may far outweigh even the strict military objectives it was meant to ensure”(Boc 1984: 194).

The torture, abuse and degradation of prisoners at Abu Ghraib in Iraq illustrate just one of many cautionary cases that can be marshalled in support of Boc’s concern of allowing the military too much secrecy. Unchecked military secrecy can lead to moral wrongs. Another more recent case, more focal for this paper, is that of Bradley Manning, the 24-year-old Army intelligence analyst who stands accused of releasing the *Collateral Murder* video as well as other classified documents to Wikileaks. The video that shows unarmed civilians and two Reuters journalists being killed by a US Apache helicopter crew in Iraq, received wide publicity in the mainstream media. It’s a paradigmatic example of the symbiotic relationship that now exists between the old corporate media and the new social media. It demonstrates how corporate media increasingly uses content generated by media- activist sources such as Wikileaks and many others to inform the public, and sometimes unwittingly as in the case of the “Gay Girl in Damascus”⁵ case misinform the public, on matters deemed to be of public interest.

Another paradigmatic case of making public that which the government and the military wanted kept secret and concealed from any public scrutiny is of course the *Pentagon Papers*. Boc quoting Daniel Ellsberg, the man in the Nixon Administration who leaked the Pentagon Papers story to the media, tells us how Ellsberg expressed the need to “find oneself loyalties long unconsulted, deeper and broader than loyalty to the President: loyalties to America’s founding concepts, to our constitutional system, to countrymen, to one’s humanity” (Boc 1984: 207). This was the man that Henry Kissinger had declared the “most dangerous man in America”. He was of course right. For those who seek the truth and are prepared to go to great lengths and at personal risk to themselves to bring it to light for the public good are often considered “dangerous” by the state.

3 The conflict between the government’s right to secrecy and the public’s right to know

Whistle-blowers and leakers are traditionally seen as the enemies of state secrets. Acting sometimes by stealth as in Bradley Manning’s case or openly as in the case of Daniel Ellsberg they claim to act on moral conscience by undertaking to make public for the common good what the state wants concealed. Manning and Assange more recently and Ellsberg before them leaked information to the public that they considered the public had a right to know. Before we proceed to examine under what conditions whistle-blowers and leakers are justified in publishing classified information to the public the state regards as secret, we must first enquire as to whether or not the public has a right to such information. What justifies such a right, and is such a right robust enough to override in principle, the state’s conflicting right to secrecy?

I would like to suggest that Socrates was probably the first investigative journalist. He is also one of the greatest philosophers and as relevant and inspiring today as he was 2500 thousand years ago. According to

⁵ The “Gay Girl in Damascus” case refers to an online blog that was supposedly written by a lesbian young woman named Amina Arraf living in Damascus. It purported to give minute by minute reporting on the Syrian conflict. The blog was in fact a hoax that was written by Tom MacMaster, a graduate student from the University of Edinburgh. It attracted wide publicity from around the world and led to its publication by the mainstream international media.

the Oracle of Delphi he was also the wisest. Being accused of "being irreverent to the gods and corrupting the youth of Athens" he told the court at his trial that like a "gadfly" his mission was to engage his fellow-citizens in debate on matters of virtue, truth and wisdom. He was sentenced to death by hemlock for his troubles. In his closing speech to the jurors he reprimands his fellow-citizens for caring more about money and reputation than about morality and knowledge: "O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth...? Are you not ashamed of this?" (Plato, *Apology*)

Since Socrates, many good and worthy of the name journalists have followed Socrates' footsteps. Some like legendary US journalist Edward R. Murrow who took on Joseph McCarthy and won at a time when all walked in fear of McCarthy; the respected Australian journalist Chris Masters who exposed wholesale police corruption in Queensland in the 1980s, and two women journalists, the Irish Veronica Guerin and the Russian Anna Politkovskaya, who like Socrates paid with their lives for informing the public of what they thought the public had a right to know. These journalists, whether consciously or not, shared Socrates' unshakeable conviction that truth and knowledge is the bloodline of a free democracy. And for present-day deliberative democracy the dissemination of information to the public on matters of public interest is arguably essential. This provides some initial justification for the claim that the public has a right to know of what the government gets up to. They have that right in view of the fact that citizens form part of the democratic process and therefore must have the necessary information to enable them to participate, at least in principle if not always in practice, in the deliberations carried out on *their behalf* by their elected representatives.

That conviction is also expressed in Australia's *Media and Entertainment Arts Alliance* (MEAA) journalism code of ethics, which states that "respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism". Similar principles are also enunciated by the code of ethics of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which declares that "respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist". The *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal by extreme contrast has shown us that very bad things can happen when journalists turn from seeking truth to engaging secretly in crime and corruption, putting profit before propriety.

In a previous publication (Spence 2003) I presented an argument for the justification of the claim that the public has a right to information. Due to constraints of space I reproduce the argument here only in summary:

The public has a right to information on matters of public interest such as health, education, war and government, among others, because it is in their interest to have that information. Why is it in the public interest to have such information? Before we can answer that question we must first define "public interest". I have proposed the following general definition: "public interest" is whatever secures and promotes the public's individual and collective rights to freedom and wellbeing.

Using the above definition we can now say that it is in the public interest to have access to information because such information can help secure and promote the public's collective rights to freedom and wellbeing. To the extent that the public requires information to secure and promote their rights to freedom and wellbeing, both individually and collectively, it is in the public interest to have such information. Informing the public about political, police, and corporate corruption, as in the current ongoing case of the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal, are just some examples of how media information is in the public interest. It is in the public interest just because it helps secure and promote the public's rights to freedom and wellbeing.

As to the further question of why the public has rights to freedom and wellbeing my answer, which I cannot offer here in detail as it goes beyond the scope of the specific aims of this paper, relies on a further argument based on Alan Gewirth's Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC). Briefly, the argument is that the public has rights to freedom and wellbeing because the public comprises of particular purposive agents who individually and collectively have rights to their freedom and wellbeing in accordance with the Principle of Ge-

neric Consistency (PGC)⁶. In conclusion, insofar as the public needs information to be able to make informed decisions on matters of public interest that affect both individually and collectively their rights to freedom and wellbeing, the public has a right to receive information from the media because it helps secure and promote those rights.

Having established that the public has a right to information we can now examine under what conditions and circumstances whistle-blowers and leakers are justified in publishing or arranging the publication of classified information to the public that the state regards as secret. Boc identifies three elements that characterise the dissemination of secret information to the public by whistle-blowers or leakers (for ease of reference I will henceforth use the term "leakers" to apply to both) and which together appear to provide prima facie justification for that practice.

The three elements are those of *dissent*, *breach of loyalty* and *accusation*. In addition, the accusation element concerns a present or imminent threat (Boc 1984, 214-215). In the case of leaking, dissent according to Boc involves disagreement with authority and more specifically it involves exposing negligence or abuse, alerting the public to a risk and assigning responsibility for that risk (Boc 1984: 214). Leaking also involves a breach of loyalty as it comes from an inside source. This typically places the leaker in a conflict of two loyalties, first, to their organisation and second, to the public. Thus Bradley Manning may have faced this conflict when leaking classified information of the US military to the public via Wikileaks. Leaking is also characterised by accusation, as it is intended as chastisement towards those within the leaker's organisation involved in unethical and/or illegal conduct. And finally, according to Boc, leaking concerns present or imminent threat (Boc 1984: 215). In the case of Bradley Manning although the leak concerned past events, such as the *Collateral Murder* video, the general threat that he perceived may have been the ongoing and systematic ethical abuses conducted by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Both Bradley Manning's and Daniel Ellsberg's leaking of information, the former secretly, the latter openly, illustrate the three characteristics of the practice of leaking identified by Boc. In addition, as Boc correctly observes, the three elements of dissent, breach of loyalty and accusation, also characterise the moral choice that leakers typically face. The correct choice is to leak information to the public when such information is considered essential and vital for the public good. In view of the moral weight and seriousness of the information leaked by Manning and Ellsberg respectively, such information can be seen to qualify as a matter of public interest. Hence, that information also qualifies as information to which the public has a right, since it potentially impacts on the public's individual and collective rights to freedom and wellbeing, as argued above; both narrowly in the case of US citizens who have a right to know what their government and their military does or does not do on their behalf, and more widely, in the case of non-citizens whose human rights were abused by the alleged violations contained in those leaks.

4 Are new media activists the new journalists of the 5th Estate?

In his article "Who is a Journalist" (Black 2010) Jay Black explores the question of who is a journalist? According to Black "broad-based citizen and web-based journalism augments the knowledge base and is making a persuasive case for enjoyment of the status, rights, and protections formerly enjoyed only by the elite media". "Now" as he correctly points out, "is not the time to argue for a narrow definition of journalism" (Black 2010, 112). He concludes that "the issue of who is a journalist should not centre on where one works, but on how one works" (Black, 2010: 114). Black's wider definition of who is a journalist, highlights correctly a major issue of journalism ethics raised by Christopher Meyers in the introduction to his edited book (Meyers, 2010) namely, that epistemic credence and trust is at the centre of who and what a journalist is or at least ought to be in principle – not just in name and style but more fundamentally and crucially, in substance. I agree with both Black's wide definition of what constitutes a journalist as well as with Myers' claim above concerning epistemic credence and trust. For what matters with regard to the dissemination of information both in the case where the dissemination is by a professional journalist of a major newspaper,

⁶ For further details for the justification of the argument for rights to freedom and wellbeing, based on Alan Gewirth's Principle of Generic Consistency see Spence 2006, *Ethics Within Reason*.

such as the *UK Guardian*, for example, or by a “web-based journalist” or “citizen journalist” writing a blog on the Internet, is whether the information is credible and reliable with regard to truth and trust, especially on matter of public interest.

Insofar as Julian Assange, has been disseminating information on his Wikileaks website that is true, credible, reliable, and trustworthy, and moreover, information that is of public interest, he too can, as he himself claims of himself, be considered a journalist, a journalist of the 5th Estate. I define the 5th Estate loosely here as the Estate comprising all the world-denizens operating in cyberspace that as individuals or groups disseminate information on matters of public interest to the world at large. And do so without fear or favor. In this regard, they provide an invaluable service in the best tradition of investigative journalism but without the commercial constraints that unfortunately sometimes at least undermine, restrict or even muzzle good investigative journalism, or worse, lead to the kind of gross ethical and legal abuses evident in the News Corporations, *News of the World* phone-hacking case.

Increasingly, as already mentioned, a symbiotic relationship is fast developing between the journalists of the 4th and 5th Estates. When done correctly, as in the case of the information leaked by Bradley Manning on the *Collateral Murder* video and publicized by Wikileaks and later the mainstream media that symbiotic relationship augments the quality and quantity of information disseminated to the public on matters of public interest and enhances the substance and scope of deliberative democracy. However, when done wrongly as in the case of the *Gay Girl in Damascus* blog, information becomes misinformation or worse, disinformation that undermines the public interest and casts doubt on what one can accept as true or dismiss as false on the Internet. This is a major challenge both for the journalists of the 4th and 5th Estates. Ultimately it comes down to a question of trust, a much larger issue which lies beyond the scope of our present discussion.

Lee Wilkins correctly argues that in addition to their traditional role of informing the public, journalists should also seek to mitigate harm to the public. To do so, she says, the definition of news should not only include what actually happens but also what might happen. As Wilkins eloquently puts it “preventing harm becomes the predominant ethical obligation” of journalists (2010, 313). Journalists, she argues, should become “mitigation watchdogs”. Wilkins’ argument for “mitigation reporting” sits well with my own position that a global ethics requires not only a negative duty of not causing harm but also a positive duty of offering others positive assistance and promoting their welfare when we can (Spence, 2007).

In agreement with Wilkins, this should include journalists acting as “mitigation watchdogs”. Wilkins argument lends further value and justification to the role that leakers and whistle-blowers, such as Bradley Manning and Daniel Ellsberg play in the world-wide dissemination of information to the public, with the generous and helping hand of journalists of the 4th and 5th Estates; as in the binary symbiotic relationship between the 4th Estate and Daniel Ellsberg; and equally as valuable and important, the tripartite symbiotic relationship between the 5th Estate in the form of Julian Assange and Wikileaks, Bradley Manning, as well as the 4th Estate, in the form of the international mainstream media that published the leaked information.

The only thing we have to fear from information is that its concealment by governments and the military can lead to far greater harm than its publicity. Specifically, when the information concealed is in the public interest and for the interest of supporting and promoting a healthy and robust deliberative and participatory democracy.

5 Conclusion

This paper has examined what secrecy is and when it is justified in its use by governments. Basing my argument on Sissela Boc’s definition of secrecy as “intentional concealment” and Simone Chambers’ notion of “deliberative secrecy”, I have argued that some government secrecy is justified for rational and critical deliberation on matters of government policy. According to Chambers “deliberative secrecy” is justifiable as a “way of encouraging better discussion and fuller consideration of legislation” (Chambers 2044: 394). Moreover, deliberative secrecy must meet two conditions of public reason: (a) the justification test of “Socratic reason” that requires justification for one’s beliefs and claims based on sound arguments that other reason-

able people at large could accept and (b) the democratic accountability test that requires public legitimacy, through the democratic process.

The paper then critically examined the conflict that arises between the government's right to secrecy and the public's right to know. In the discussion of that conflict in section (3), I argued that insofar as whistle-blowers and leakers such as Bradley Manning and Daniel Ellsberg serve the common good in disseminating secret information that is of public interest, they are justified in leaking such information. For it might otherwise not come to light, potentially undermining the principles of deliberative democracy. I then went to argue for the close and symbiotic relationship between journalists of the 4th Estate and those web-based journalists of the 5th Estate, including media-activists and social journalists such as Julian Assange. I concluded that what counts as a journalist in the age heralded as the age of information, is not as Jay Black clams, where one works but how one works. What should guide the journalists of both the 4th and 5th Estates in the 21st century and beyond are the principles of truth, trust, reliability, and justice. The information they disseminate on matters of public interest should be for the public good. To that end, journalists of the information age must not only seek after truth but also after wisdom. For if wisdom is understood as the knowledge of what a good life is and how to live such a life, then surely that is also in the public interest - a public interest that journalists of both the 4th and 5th Estates should promote. Journalists should not only become "mitigation watchdogs", they should also become "wise watchdogs"⁷.

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⁷ For a relevant discussion on information, knowledge, and wisdom see Spence (2011).