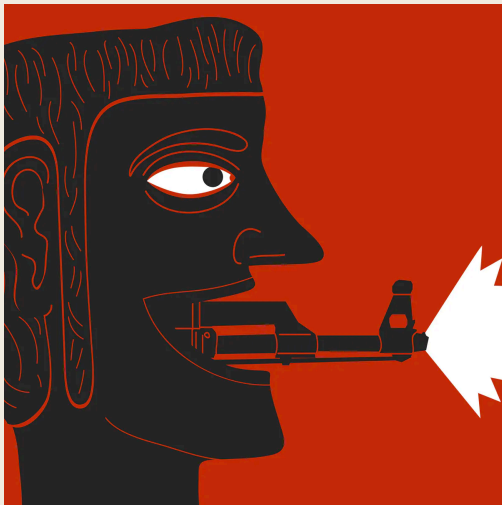# Knowledge & Language

Values & Ethics
TOK L24

- *Emotive language:* the aura of favorable or unfavorable feeling that hovers about a word ("public servant" vs "career politician")

- *Modifier words:* words that qualify a seemingly clear and precise statement, and make it vague ("Dentifresh toothpaste helps fight tooth decay.")

- *Spin Doctor:* a person whose role it is to portray an issue or idea in a favorable light towards a certain constituency

- *Alternative facts:* in the context of post-truth politics, the view that alternative information might count as a fact

Using Language to Influence and Persuade

WARSPEAK:

Neutralize (kill)

Collateral damage (bombed cities)

Strategic redeployment (retreat)

Pre-emptive (unprovoked)

How might our values influence the language we use, and the way that we represent the world using models and metaphors?

Logical Positivism:
Are ethical statements meaningless?

A group of thinkers collectively called the "Vienna Circle" challenged the meaning of language used by the political establishment and religious institutions. They argued that for a statement to be meaningful, it had to be verified.

The "verification principle" was born out of the idea that exact, scientific thinking in public intellectual life was a tool for fighting the theological dogma and social prejudice that dominated the discourse of the post-WWI era.

It paved the way for further examination of language in scientific terms: is there a difference between reality and how we describe it?
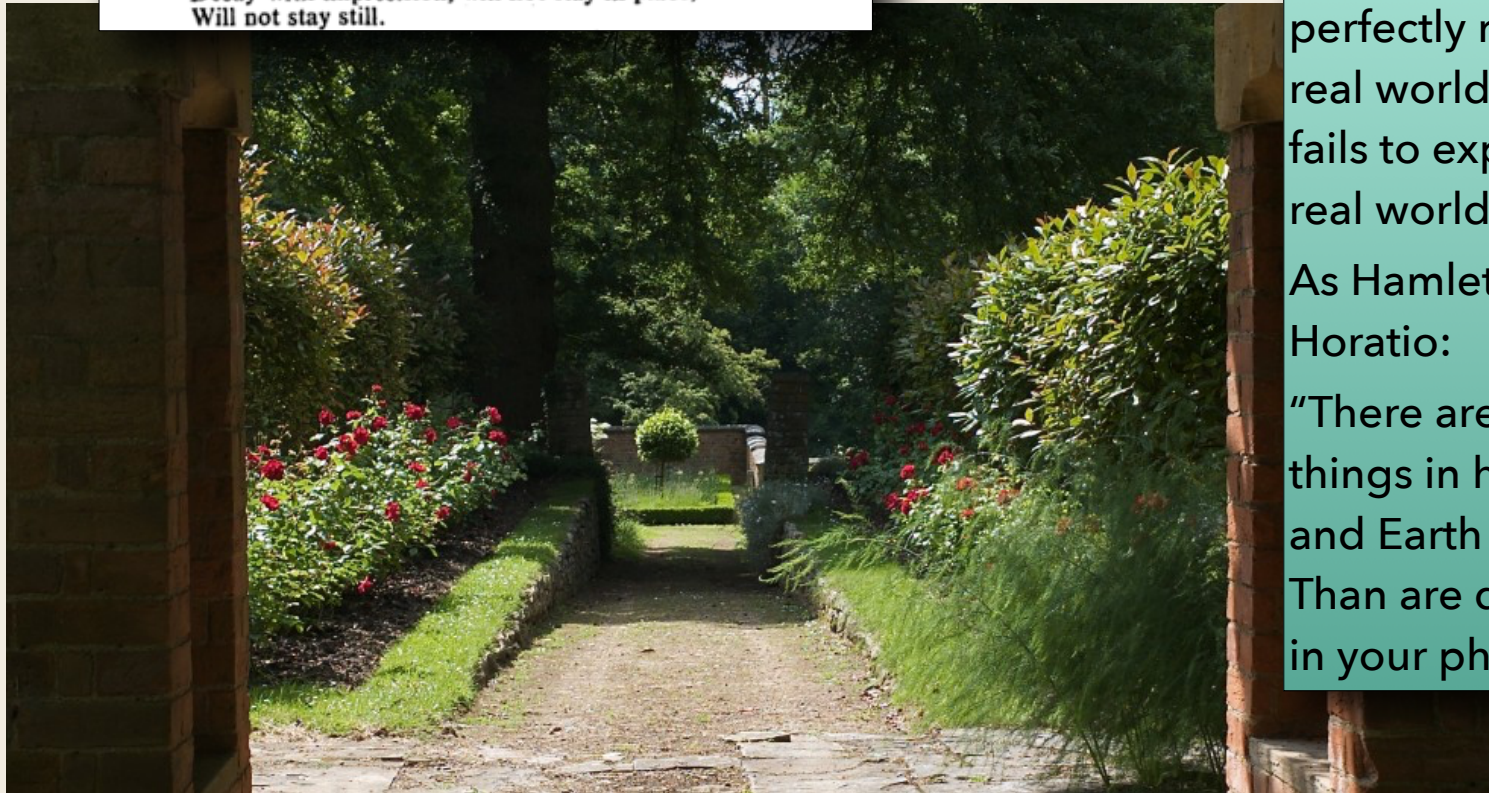

Anxious Attentive Relaxed Irritated

Predatory Possesive Offended Trusting

TS Eliot

Burnt Norton

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

Just as our knowledge fails to perfectly map the real world, language fails to express the real world.

As Hamlet tells Horatio:

"There are more things in heaven and Earth /
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."