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and Dariusz Juruś

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## CONTENTS

Monika Banaś, Dariusz Juruś	
Introduction .....	7
Milena Gammaitoni	
Building the Collective Imagination in the Bestsellers of the Western World .....	11
Józef Dulak	
Truth in Science and Medicine: The Hope and Hype of Stem Cell Therapies .....	25
Monika Banaś	
Trans-humanism's and Post-humanism's <i>Dialectics</i> between Truth and Post-truth .....	34
Dariusz Juruś	
Emotive Sources of Post-truth .....	48
Ksenia O. Prosyukova	
The Ethics of the Syrian Migration Crisis .....	63
Edmondo Grassi	
The Forgery of Deepfake and the "Advent" of Artificial Intelligence .....	76
Seweryn Krzyżewski	
Instrumentalization as a Sin of Untruth .....	92
GLOSSA	
Dominik Stosik	
It's Not at What You Look that Matters, It's What You See .....	111

## REVIEW

Dariusz Juruś

Michael Patrick Lynch, *True to Life: Why Truth Matters.*

Trans. D. Misztal, Lodz University Press, Łódź 2020, pp. 491. . . . . 121

## INTRODUCTION

The first philosophers, the investigators of the world, wanted to find out how things were, and so, in the words of Pythagoras, quoted by Cicero, they “earnestly inquired into the essence of things, (...) nobly beholding the world and gaining nothing for themselves.”<sup>1</sup> They wanted to know the truth. First about the external world and then about God, man, values, social relations, etc. The pursuit of truth characterized the first philosophers and one of them, Aristotle, even claimed that truth is more important than friendship (*amicus Plato sed magis amica est veritas*).

The classic definition of truth is found in Aristotle, who says in the *Metaphysics*: “To assert of Being that it does not exist, or of Non-Being that it exists, is false; but to assert that Being exists and Non-Being does not exist is true.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Middle Ages, thanks to Albert the Great and St. Thomas, truth was understood as the correspondence or compatibility of thoughts and things (*veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*). This definition, called the correspondence definition of truth, said that thought A is true if there is a corresponding fact in reality that corresponds to that thought. The thought “it is snowing” is true if it is actually snowing.

These definitions presupposed a kind of correlation between language and the world and were dominant in philosophy and, in the modern science that emerged from it. Both Aristotle and St. Thomas as well as Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton believed that they were discovering truth, whether that truth was metaphysical or physical. This belief was based on

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle. 1988. *Zachęta do filozofii* (trans. Leśniak K.), Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, pp. XIV–XV. All English translations by Monika Banaś and Dariusz Juruś.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle. 1983. *Metafizyka* (trans. Leśniak K.), Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 1011b.

the conviction that the world was written in some language that humans could read (this fact may cause surprise, which was expressed by Albert Einstein when he said: “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible”<sup>3</sup>). Medieval philosophers and modern scientists implicitly assumed that since there exists a language that adequately describes something objective, (i.e. something that is not a product of our mind), there must exist something or Someone who recorded this knowledge. Such a statement led to realism, which is the conviction that the world exists in reality and is not a product of human consciousness.

With the emergence of the so-called coherent and pragmatic conception of truth at the end of the 19th century, the previous vision of the world was questioned. The coherentist definition of truth, associated with Francis H. Bradley, lacked Hegelian metaphysical aura, proclaims that:

“a) no judgment is independent and cannot be evaluated in terms of truth and falsity if considered outside the system,

b) every judgment belonging to the system follows logically from the conjunction of the other judgments of that system.”<sup>4</sup>

Truth here ceases to consist in correspondence but becomes a certain formal feature; what matters is the coherence of beliefs, not their content. The real existence of the world in this case is redundant.

William James, the founder of pragmatism, defined truth in terms of utility. According to him, a judgment is true if and only if practical consequences follow from it. Truth, then, is not again a correspondence between thought and objective reality, but becomes a utility function. Truth is the correlate of action and not of thought. This view of truth consequently leads to the relativisation and subjectivisation of knowledge.

At the end of the twentieth century, a deflationary theory emerged, whose proponents maintained that the predicate of truthfulness does not express any general feature that all true propositions possess. There is no “nature” or “essence” of truth, that can be investigated. Therefore, the concept of truth cannot be the object of any analysis.

The neo-pragmatists, on the other hand, led by Richard Rorty, have stated that truth is a useless tool that should for the good of society be

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<sup>3</sup> Quote after: J. C. Lennox. 2018. *Czy nauka pogrzebała Boga?* (trans. Gomola G. & A.), Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Prowincji Dominikanów „W drodze”, p. 118.

<sup>4</sup> Hempoliński M. 1989. *Filozofia współczesna. Wprowadzenie do zagadnień i kierunków*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwa Naukowe, p. 547.

disposed of as soon as possible. They also questioned the idea of the correspondence between language and the world. As Rorty stated the world does not speak to us in any particular language, it is we who speak. "To say that truth is not outside is simply as much as to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and languages are creations of man."<sup>5</sup>

For the postmodernists who, according to Ernest Gellner, are, in the matter of truth, the heirs of the Marxists, truth as a claim to objectivity and thus to universality is an element of enslavement and as such a threat to freedom.<sup>6</sup>

In such a situation, the emergence of post-truth was natural. For since truth is founded neither in God, for as Nietzsche declared: "God is dead," nor in objective reality ("truth is a mobile army of metaphors," also Nietzsche) there is nothing left to do but to assume that truth no longer exists, and that all disputes are merely emotive in nature. After all, appealing to emotion is more pragmatic than appealing to reason.

The rejection of the notion of objective truth is particularly evident in the humanities (Einstein and Gödel had no doubts about its existence), especially where cultural relativism is the yardstick of truth.

It seems that in such a situation every reflection on, and in defence of, the objective truth, especially on the ground of the humanities, is valuable.

For this reason we offer our readers a collection of articles focused on the tension growing between truth and post-truth for at least several decades. This troubled relationship has been presented from several perspectives of humanities, social- and natural sciences. This allows us to emphasize the multitude of areas in which man, in his individual and collective existence, tries to name and recognize the objects and phenomena that shape him. The examples analysed in the particular papers of this journal show how difficult it is.

*Monika Banaś, Dariusz Juruś*

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<sup>5</sup> Rorty R. 2009. *Przygodność, ironia i solidarność* (trans. Popowski W.J.), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Gellner E. 1997. *Postmodernizm, rozum i religia*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, pp. 45–51.



MILENA GAMMAITONI<sup>1</sup>

## BUILDING THE COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION IN THE BESTSELLERS OF THE WESTERN WORLD

### Abstract

This study constitutes the first ever sociological investigation of the contents of western bestsellers, published and examined between 1998 and 2017. The research project analysed the contents, action and values, as well as the pathways pursued in order to construct social identity and create the stories and characters portrayed. It emerged that the cultural industry aimed at producing works with a high level of readability capable of facilitating their diffusion among people of the lower-middle, higher-middle and higher classes of society. Some advance the hypothesis that, in the face of economic crises and slowdowns in the global economy, there has been an increase in the need for literary fiction, for escape and identification with problems, such as the loss of employment, the impoverishment of families and emotional instability, common to the so-called fluid society.

Keywords: sociology, literature, bestsellers, content analysis, imagination, marketing

### THE PUBLISHING MARKET'S QUEST FOR BESTSELLERS

One may say that the western system of globalised capitalism or editorial neo-capitalism asserted itself in Italy in 1994, making its mark with the bestselling novel of the post-war period *Va' dove ti porta il cuore* [Go where your heart takes you] by Susanna Tamaro, published by Baldini and Castoldi. Translated into 35 languages, it was issued in over 6 million copies worldwide. After this book, the most striking Italian literary phenomenon

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was the resounding success of Andrea Camilleri's stories of police Inspector Montalbano as well as his historical novels, which simultaneously occupied the top 5 places in the bestseller ranking list. Between 1997 and 2001, his books sold over six and a half million copies in Italy alone, in addition to the French, Spanish, German and Japanese translations.

It was also in the 1990s that John Grisham erupted upon the publishing market. A former criminal lawyer who lent himself to the world of politics (from 1983 to 1990, he was a state representative for DeSoto County, Mississippi). At the age of 34, he completed his first novel, *A Time to Kill*, which he wrote between 5 and 9 in the morning, before going to work. Various publishers refused it, until it was published in a print run of only 5,000 copies by the Wynwood Press.

A decade later, Grisham sold the rights for the film version for \$6 million. In 1991, his novel *The Firm* remained in *The New York Times'* bestseller list for 47 weeks and was later made into a highly successful film starring Tom Cruise. The same happened with *The Pelican Brief* (starring Julia Roberts and Denzel Washington), *The Client* (with Susan Sarandon). Then followed an impressive string of successes at the rate of one book per annum, all published in Italian by Mondadori. A dozen legal thrillers, almost all of which were based on true stories experienced in the courtroom, totalled over 60 million copies and were translated into 31 languages. He became the trailblazer to the worldwide editorial successes of Stieg Larsson, Ken Follet, Danielle Steel, Patricia Cornwell, L.J. Smith (*The Vampire Diaries*) and E.L. James (*Fifty Shades of Grey*) – not authors in the classical sense, but writers whose stories became the stuff of cinema and television fiction.

Today, from a point of view of sales, bestsellers which sell 30,000–40,000 copies a year are called fast-sellers, while long-sellers are those which people go on purchasing over a longer period at a rate of up to 5,000 copies per annum. These publications belong to the highest ranks of the canon of world literature and range from the Bible, to the Koran, from Homer to Manzoni, from Shakespeare to Marx.

Nielsen and GfK Retail and Technology, the most accredited sales-data collection agencies, treat books as if they were mere consumer goods, while literary agents and publishing houses define their marketing policies depending on whether a book may be deemed a cultural or a consumer product (Fondazione A.M. 2009).

The national and international sources consulted while researching this study were the rankings published by Booksellers, *Publishers Weekly*,

Nielsen,<sup>2</sup> the International Digital Publishing Forum, Amazon, l'Associazione Librai Italiani, l'Associazione Editori Italiani, La Feltrinelli and *La Stampa* newspaper's *Tutto Libri*.<sup>3</sup> These ranking lists<sup>4</sup> are drawn up and agreed on by individual publishers (who sometimes create series they actually call bestsellers), national publishers/booksellers' associations, individual websites for sales to the public, and provide weekly, monthly, annual reports.<sup>5</sup> The present research team<sup>6</sup> did not take data concerning long-sellers and major classics into consideration, as its aim was to examine current publications and present-day editorial policies in Europe and the USA. With this in mind, the team chose the titles of the first three novels and narratives which recurred most frequently in national and international ranking lists, for each year between 1998 to 2012, thus for a total of 42 titles.

The examined sample was the result of a strictly qualitative approach involving continuous consultations with publishers and booksellers, in an effort to define the meaning of the term bestseller itself and detect the limitations of the national and international rankings, sometimes inhomogeneous regarding sales data. The European Permanent Observatory on Reading<sup>7</sup>, like many booksellers, explains how elusive and changeable the meaning of bestseller can be, as it is often closely linked to the fame of the author and his/her work, to the influence of impressive reviews by the press (beginning with *The New York Times*) which can interfere with the relative data (Calabrese 2015), while also distinguishing between cultural works or consumer products. A consumer product, that is a consumer

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<sup>2</sup> Nielsen, which deals with Global Consumer and Media Insights, has calculated that there were about one billion books of fiction in circulation in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> The ranking published by *Tutto Libri* is produced by the Nielsen Bookscan agency and based on 900 bookshops to which 100 points are assigned to the best-selling new titles, all the others are calculated proportionately. It indicates between brackets how many weeks the title has been included in the ranking scale.

<sup>4</sup> These sources were consulted periodically over 6 months during the year 2009.

<sup>5</sup> The rankings are not the same from the point of view of the position of the books; sometimes they differ from the data published by the author on his/her personal Wikipedia page.

<sup>6</sup> The research team, led by Marina D'Amato, included Anna Perrrotta de Stefano, Milena Gammaitoni, Francesca Anello, Valentina Punzo, Laura Giancaspero. The sampling was carried out by Marina D'Amato and Milena Gammaitoni, the construction of the analysis sheet involved the entire team over a 2-year pre-test period (2008–2010).

<sup>7</sup> Michele Rak.

book, may sell millions of copies a year, even in a few months, only to disappear almost entirely from the market in as little as four or five years.

In addition, some of the major publishers often create special editorial series called “best sellers,” listing their own best-selling titles, regardless of sales on the western publishing market.

The team was aware of the fact that it could not depend on a homogeneous source of quantitative sampling because of the lack of a sole, univocal, shared account of sales and that there was discordance between the data made available by the various agencies and publishers. Despite these discrepancies, the top five titles for novels or works of fiction featured in the national and international rankings were always the same, albeit with differences when it came to numerical data.<sup>8</sup>

While the bestsellers selected for analysis of content were mostly novels, in some cases these included other kinds of narratives. A content-analysis card<sup>9</sup> was drawn up by the team while reading the texts and subjected to continuous comparisons and verification on their part.

The five sectors the card contemplated were:

- 1) STRUCTURE/CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL;
- 2) STATUS AND ROLES: PROTAGONIST/CO-PROTAGONIST/ANTAGONIST;
- 3) ACTION/CHARACTERS/ATTITUDES;
- 4) VALUES AND DISVALUES OF THE WORK/PROTAGONIST/CO-PROTAGONIST/ANTAGONIST;
- 5) EPILOGUE OF THE STORY.

A final memo sheet was deemed useful in order to indicate any difficulties encountered by the readers regarding comprehension of the text and/or compilation of the form and an inability to formulate answers to issues posed by some of the closed questions.

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<sup>8</sup> These numerical discrepancies are attributable to the time when the sales data were gathered, and which agencies relied upon to analyse their sales data, and to whether publishers combined the sales data of their own publishing house with those of bookshops and for online orders. Although a single global datum is possible and published with the reprints of the books, these are completely uncertain.

<sup>9</sup> The card contained 100 questions.

## MARKETING FOR THE CREATION OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS

Today, *fiction* seems to be increasingly in need of *non-fiction*, to the extent that illustrator Brian Joseph Davis has created a website that permits us to see the faces of the characters in novels. In practice, thanks to software similar to that used by the police to create identikit and starting from the descriptions provided in the novels, one can generate and see the faces of Emma Bovary, Frankenstein, Lady Chatterley, Kurtz, Dorian Gray and others. Other blogs and websites deal with issues such as the protagonist people believe they resemble most, the food the protagonists of people's favourite novels eat, five things people would like to say to the characters they prefer, who they believe are the least reliable characters in recent literature (Bressa 2013),<sup>10</sup> and so on. To these sites, we can add various schools of creative writing which teach people how to create *credible* characters.

We know that the sales figures which establish a bestseller are no guarantee that a book has actually been read. They do, however, indicate consumption, provide an indication of status, of belonging to a group in which experiences and opinions are shared.

A symmetrical dialogue between the author and the reader does not exist. A book conceals. It is like a veil separating the two distinct, not always communicating aspects of the acts of reading and writing, making them, today in particular, two counterpoised, opposite absences: namely, the absence of the reader from the realm of writing and the absence of the author from that of reading.

As this project was unable to say just how many people had actually read the bestsellers analysed here, the research team had to depend on the characteristics of its own way of reading and, therefore, of interpreting the best sellers taken into consideration.

The author is dead, as both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault found themselves admitting in the mid-twentieth century. Today, however,

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<sup>10</sup> The narrative voice is an element of the novel capable of changing the cards on the table: the interpretation that the reader gives to the events of the plot inevitably passes through the eyes of whoever is telling the story. However, in literature we sometimes come across characters who surprise us, who do not tell the whole truth, perhaps, or who simply tell their own version of the "truth".

the author and authors have found new life on the web, through the social media, in their characters recreated in novels such as *The da Vinci Code*, in places where one can experience emotions generated by fantasy and adventure. It suffices to recall the castle portrayed in *Harry Potter* where thousands of visitors strive to relive images and sensations; in some cases even the author of a book becomes the actor-character of a film inspired by his own fiction/non-fiction, like Dan Brown who tells us that he is to become a fictional character in a Japanese manga.<sup>11</sup> Readers know that everything is possible, all their curiosities can be satisfied and the author can choose to live again in hypertexts, if we may call them so, in places and non-places, as Joshua Meyrowitz once wrote (Meyerowitz 1995).

Susanna Tamaro has declared that when she decided, while sitting at her desk, to write the best seller: *Va dove ti porta il cuore* [Go where your heart takes you], the metalepsis was a door open to millions of potential readers, a technique where the construction of the “author’s make-believe is transformed by fiction to trigger the empathy of readers prepared to make what they are reading real” (Calabrese 2015. 36). So much so, that the reader becomes a co-author by actually cooperating in the serial writing of novels by interacting with authors on their websites, on social media, giving life to the genre of the spin-off where the fate of the characters becomes so playfully important that possible new developments and endings are proposed. This is not only the case of Harry Potter and his famous creator J.K. Rowling, but also of declaredly autobiographical-educational novels, such as *The Kite Runner*. These novels become bestsellers because everything was delocalised, the author-character’s body was in one place, his/her mind elsewhere, ready to become the characters of films and TV series.

It was the Romans who designated the persona and its derivate, the personage, as the *per-sonar*, namely he or she who *resounds through* the closely associated theatrical role and the mask they represented, on which notion Erving Goffman based the social-institutional experience of role theory. In the arts, the word protagonist stemmed from this because, from ancient times, the actor was a person who performed the principal dramatic role.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Gesualdo Bufalino published a dictionary on the characters of novels, defining the archetypes of

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<sup>11</sup> Another example: in the film *Adaptation* 2002 where the role of the author appears to confront the screenwriter who has adapted her novel.

the literary imagination and the characteristics that make characters fascinating and unforgettable in the eyes of readers (Bufalino 1982).

Today, can what was said then be said of the bestsellers involving the last two young-adult generations: children, adolescents, adults and older readers? Above all, what traits emerge in the characters of the latest bestsellers? It is indicative that those who try their hand at analysing the characters of the bestsellers of the 21st century are rare indeed...

Stefano Calabrese provides some types and has described some recurrences of “meta characters”: thus, we have the *smart novel*, the *trans-novel*, the *immersive novel*, the *magical novel*, the *emotional novel*, definitions not closed in upon themselves, but communicating vessels where the watchword is always metalepsis.

In a kind of dialogue with Bufalino, Fabio Stassi published his *Libro dei personaggi letterari*<sup>12</sup> [A Book of Literary Characters], where, starting with the late twentieth century, he traces an imaginary and real pathway, as a reader, featuring up to as many as three hundred of the characters who have been his life’s travelling companions (Stassi 2016).

Likewise, the *Società Italiana delle Letterate* [the Italian Society of Women of Letters] holds seminars on the characters in novels, investigating the creation of female characters by writers and how these are experienced by readers.<sup>13</sup>

In 2013, *Science* published the results of some psychological research carried out by the New School for Research in New York confirming the intuitions that the economist Adam Smith had presented in the 19th century: “reading novels increases the levels of empathy between us and others, improves social perception and makes emotional intelligence much

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<sup>12</sup> He presents the characters in chronological order, from the post-war period to today. They are all first-person narrators. Theirs are confessions – sincere, hilarious or melancholic, but all honest. These are characters that lay their hearts bare. Literary though not imaginary, because if they first came to life in a book and were brought together in another book, their destiny becomes even more powerful, condensed in a gesture, a moment, a detail that reveals their essence forever.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews by Nadia Setti in preparation for the 2011 SIL conference in Genoa. The idea of proposing a questionnaire on the characters was informed due in part to having read “Nove domande sul romanzo” [Nine questions on the novel] (Nuovi argomenti, n. 37, 1959). At the moment, asking contemporary female writers to answer questions regarding the creation of female characters permits us to draw up an extremely significant index of the new figures emerging from and after: see [www.sil.it](http://www.sil.it).

more ready, that is, the ability to understand what others feel by feeling it ourselves. Readers conjure up mental images of the emotions and feelings of literary characters, experiencing a personal, almost physical transport (Kidd and Castano in Calabrese 2015, 31)".

In recent years, the worldwide production of novels has increased by 44%. The high readability of these novels facilitates their diffusion among lower-middle, higher-middle and higher classes of society. There are those who advance the hypothesis that, in the face of economic crises or slow-downs in the global economy, the need for literary fiction to evade and identify with the problems of the fluid society increases (Calabrese 2015). Among these problems we find loss of employment, impoverishment of the family and emotional instability.

Although the issue is underestimated far too often, it is evident that the social construction of reality and of people's identities also takes place through various artistic experiences: from fairy tales to textbooks, from music to drawing, from a museum visit to casual readings, all of which evoke images, sensations, ideas, perceptions concerning their own story, the present conditions of humanity and possible future scenarios.

It may also happen that a fan reader of a novel like *Twilight*, Erika Leonard, aka E.L. James, becomes one of the most read authors of 2012, having been inspired by the plot of vampiric relationships and transposing them into *Fifty Shades of Grey* (Kidd and Castano in Calabrese 2015, 23). "At this point, the reader enters the text immersively and, more than a story, finds a way of reading effects, characters and events that represent *readings of readings*" (Calabrese 2015, 25).

In the case of the bestsellers published between 1998 and 2012, and analysed here, the characters are ordinary men and women, no longer epitomes – "just as the characters of literature draw on reality, so reality has raised some characters up to the rank of witnesses of the truth, reducing their proper name to the status of a common name" (Bufalino 1982) – but extraordinary in their daily lives, heroes and heroines almost by chance, intelligent enough, but rarely brilliant. The function of these characters seems to be, predominantly, that of reassuring average human beings of their misery, rather than raising them up as heroic models of values and choices that never betray others.

There are some exceptions, however, such as the characters in Saviano's *Gomorra* intended to be denounced because "investigation, the story of a tragedy, a mapping of possible happiness are all missing, along with

those who resonate the screams, rewrite the stories, those who find the culprits, those who make reports, those who draw up the bibliographies of testimonies. These gaping voids are filled by theatre, by literature, referring to the entire extent of the void" (Saviano 2009, 195). Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* was an excellent response to Edgar Morin's *L'Esprit du Temps* and to Ogburn when describing the domain of cultural delay in the face of the advance of technology, and people's unpreparedness to address ethical issues, contradictions emerging from the accelerated development of technology compared with reflection and the need for a new humanism. Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, a historical, modern epic novel of political denunciation is another exception. Here the heroine and the female characters are strong, loyal, revolutionary. Then we have Andrea Camilleri's *Montalbano Stories*. Some other bestsellers such as *Chagrin d'école*, *L'Élegance du hérisson*, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, *Va dove ti porta il cuore*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The City*, *El paraíso en la otra esquina*, *The Help*, *L'ombra del vent*, *The Language of Flowers*, create educational, emotional and biographical characters.

Among the best sellers, some well-known Italian writers emerge and, as Serkowska writes, make it possible, perhaps, "to go beyond the vicious circle of nostalgia and postmodernity with its perspective of self-reference, rewriting and infinite cross-textual mirroring games. The return takes place along different but intersecting pathways where it is necessary to talk about experience, rather than the object of representation" (Serkowska 2011, XII).

It is possible here to propose three macro categories: smart (Calabrese 2015), investigating, emotional-educational characters (according to Calabrese's classification).

In respect of metalepsis, these male and female characters act in the present, that is, in the reader's own time or in the very recent past, at least; they reside above all in the USA (31%), France (10%), the United Kingdom (10%) and Italy (10%), and most of the stories are set in domestic and urban environments.

The protagonists are mostly male (56%), youths (41%) rather than adults (36%). The majority of these small-scale heroes and heroines are students, children (33%) and are single (49%), while only 15% of them cohabit or are married. Though they are described physically (38% of normal build, 25% slim, only 5% overweight), none of them seem to possess extraordinary qualities. On the contrary, they appear to be ordinary people

(59%), certainly fascinating in their own way (46%), the clear majority of them of Caucasian origin (87%).

The co-protagonist is, more often than not, a man (46%), an adult (47%), and even though his status may not be stated explicitly 58% of the time, in 15% of the stories he is described as a son, single in 33% of all cases, married in 23% of them. Moreover, he is often a student 10%, a domestic servant (8%), an artist (5%), a householder (5%), a policeman (5%), a scientist (5%). In 59% of the cases he is described physically (normal 38%, overweight 13%, thin 8%) and differs from the protagonist more because of lack of charm than any physical trait; 38% deem him handsome, but he remains an ordinary person (56%), 69% of the time Caucasian, and 8% of the time Mongolian.

The antagonist, on the other hand, assumes a different role, 51% of the time he is a man. Although he/she is frequently older than the protagonists and co-protagonists (49%), they are married 28% and single only 8% of the time. Their profession is usually defined and structured more clearly than that of the other characters: a shopkeeper 39%, an entrepreneur 8%, a professional or policeman 5% of the time, while 13% of the time their work is not mentioned. In 46% of all cases they are described physically (normal 36%, fat 5%), held to be charming 18% of the time, beautiful/handsome at 16%, and ugly at 13%. These too are ordinary people in 41% of all cases, deemed extraordinary only 20% of the time. They are Caucasians in 51% of all cases and of African origin only 5% of the time.

The protagonists, both men and women act in an overbearing manner (50%), though the men appear more autonomous (45%) than the women.

The men (90.5%) are single more frequently than the women (86%).

The male antagonists are dominant in 63.6% of the cases, autonomous only 18.2% of the time. The females are dominant only 13% of the time.

What emerges, however, in a manner that is not immediately evident, therefore consciously or unconsciously, is how many of the roles attributed to women remain anchored in apparently submissive and passive actions only to surface as the machinations of astute co-protagonists or antagonists. We find some excellent exceptions in the protagonists of *Va dove ti porta il cuore* [*The Help, Go Where Your Heart Takes You*] and *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*.

The relative and absolute characters created in twentieth-century novels prevail. Of these Enrico Testa writes that today they depend more on the construction of *relationships* between *people*, than on the characterisation

of single personae. These often have mobile, random identities, which “throw open the area of subjectivity to radical exposure to the other: to simple interlocutors, to the presence of *shades*, to an entire population of those who have vanished” (Testa 2009, 102), giving rise to a Wu Ming-style community: “Identity is a matter of hosting from the very beginning: dependence upon another irreducible, elusive replication meaning that the other has always pulsed within the Same” (Testa 2009, 102). Moreover, the obsessive passion for nothingness that Enrico Testa deals with converses with issues of contemporary sociology when measured against definitions of identity. From symbolic interactionism, to phenomenology, to structural-functionalism and the systemic theory, from the well-known theory of Bauman to Giddens’s essay on the crisis of intimacy, in Italy from Saraceno to Melucci and Sciolla, it remains incontrovertible that the etymological and mythological origin of the word “identity,” “idem,” connotes its tormented destiny in the western world.

With his *L’uomo flessibile [Flexible Man]* (1999), Richard Sennett had already described how the state of the continuous precariousness created by modern capitalism – unbridled liberalism – was impacting upon the way individuals planned and imagined their lives, by intruding upon the stability of life, both public (working, social relations) and private (family emotional, sentimental, friendship).

From this real state of affairs, a fictional reality arose in bestsellers with characters resembling the readers’ own siblings, no longer heroic, mythological figures to imitate or hope for, but *Idems* of western society.

The analysis of the roles of best-seller characters recalls the sociological analysis where Franco Ferrarotti always considered roles as a useful concept capable of mediating between the person as an individual and a social structure (Ferrarotti 1966).

The concept of role belongs to modernity and when representing the fragmentation of the subject in modern society, it is recollective of the central experience of literature, especially that of the nineteenth-century novel. In the 21st century, however, “the authors claim mixing with the characters of their fictions or blending in with the readership, to the extent that readers themselves become authors and give rise to fan-fiction like that of E.L. James, who wrote *Fifty Shades of Grey* as a *Twilight* spin off” (Calabrese 2015, 164). The roles of the characters are confused, therefore, as we have to address both the role of the author and the echo of readers’ requests regarding the definition of novels, thus, of serial characters.

In the social psychology of North America and at the dawn of American sociology, we find scholars such as Cooley and Mead speaking about the *looking-glass self* or the *generalised other*, which we might denote today in the creation of the characters of contemporary novels (which always convey the combined story of the author and the reader), based on images that subjects have of others, and on the ideas that influence their behaviour from childhood (*Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings...*) and which, in turn, were affected by group consciousness. Mead used this concept in social theory when describing how “the individual has experience of himself as such, not directly but only indirectly, based on the particular opinions of other individuals within the same social group (...) so that he becomes the object of himself, just as other individuals are for him or his experience, objects; he becomes an object as such only by assuming the attitudes that other individuals within the same social environment or the same context of experience and behaviour, have towards him” (Mead 1934, 156–157).

According to Bourdieu, social actors are not simple automata who conform to the roles society imposes. On the contrary, they enjoy a certain freedom of action, are creative and unpredictable, and make use of that “practical sense” thanks to which they can adapt to the most disparate situations.

The characters of these bestsellers, even when magical, anthropomorphic or robotic beings Asimov or Bourdieu might have created, are evidence of a new *habitus*, a category into which, in the long run, all things shared by a certain class fall (patterns of behaviour, tastes, ideas, judgments) and which, considering the data of the present research on best sellers, cut across a variety of different lifestyles.

Today, we are faced with a ludic reader of leisure, the primordial *Idem* of the character, the contemporary extra. For this reason, Roland Barthes warns us that we are dealing with an unclear though simultaneously codified field, subject to restraints and constraints. The strength of the paradox lies in its ability to evade the hazards of coherent argumentation: no rigid dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity can exist, since “there is no objective or subjective truth in reading, but only a playful truth. Reading becomes an activity from which all effort evaporates. The freedom of the writable text is its production as a game, when the consumption of reading gives way to the powerful strength of desire” (Barthes 1999, 33).

The polymorphic, mobile *habitat*, deceptively shaped by dominant (male) protagonists, is actually the ambivalent, fictitious result of characters interwoven with the lives of male and female authors/author-readers; it “is not a destiny,” but rather an objectification of the “collective unconscious” expertly constructed by editorial marketing (just think of the collective action of editorial production as described by H. Becker), at the service of the cultural consumer industry, rather than aimed at forming a collective consciousness. It denotes a necessarily continuous lacerating, ambivalent dialogue incapable of providing answers to two contradictory messages with which Western culture, marked by the New Testament, has had to deal from the beginning, and which, if one may dare say so, proposes two conflicting messages: namely, love for the world and escape from the world.

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JÓZEF DULAK<sup>1</sup>

## TRUTH IN SCIENCE AND MEDICINE THE HOPE AND HYPE OF STEM CELL THERAPIES

### Abstract

The article examines the practice of cell therapies, often named as stem cell therapies. For the general public this is recognized as promising treatment for many diseases, offering hope for many people to restore health to themselves or their loved ones. However, despite the enormous potential that this type of treatment holds, it has its limitations. The tension between hope, science, truth and deception can come to the fore especially when someone is fighting for their life. Moral and ethical issues play a key role in such cases, serving as guideposts obscured, however, by information noise.

Keywords: stem cell therapy, science, medicine, communication

We live in a time when science is enjoying unprecedented success. Science has proven that its methodology is correct; it has the power to uncover truths about the world, and it has demonstrated that scientific knowledge can be used in practical situations. Thanks to science, we can travel around the world, flying in planes weighing hundreds of tons. Thanks to science, human beings were able to travel to the Moon and return safely back to Earth. Understanding biological mechanisms has allowed scientists to demonstrate that diseases have a natural origin, enabling scientists to develop effective methods for their diagnosis and treatment. Science has not only allowed us to cure diseases, but also prevent some of them. Thanks to science, and the introduction of vaccines, antibiotics and improved living conditions, the rate of child mortality has dropped significantly. Although,

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of course, things still need to improve in many regions of the world, one can see the significant progress that has been made in the last 50 years.

Humans can fly from continent to continent, and even into space. Humans can treat diseases by acting effectively against disrupted biological processes. This can only be done through science. No religion is effective. No prayers of billions of believers can move a heavy object from the ground; no miracle healing happens because of faith.

However, in a time when everyone is dependent on science and its products, the truth of science is facing attacks from various sides. Paradoxically, despite still underestimating the significance and power of science, people expect miracles to happen, particularly in the field of biomedical science. People expect medicine to cure all diseases. However, concomitantly, there is a common lack of knowledge and misunderstanding of biological processes. Despite the effectiveness of vaccines, the anti-vaccine movement is growing, dispersing fake news about their side effects, including dubious claims that they cause autism. Europeans, in particular, are suspicious about the alleged dangers of plant genetic modification. Sociological pools demonstrate not-so-rare irrational beliefs that “natural” organisms do not contain genes, in contrast to genetically modified ones. Supporters of so-called natural products boost the enormous market of food supplements, claiming that they have miraculous effects on every real (as well as fake) health problem.

People want to live longer, stay young longer, and they want a cure for every disease. People are looking for a miracle and are reluctant to accept the truth. This is because the truth can often be harsh. We still don't have a cure for every disease; many treatments are ineffective, and even effective treatments can cause unpleasant and sometimes dangerous side-effects. People desperately look for hope. This is their right, particularly for severely sick patients or the parents of sick children. They search the internet and look for miracle treatments, and often find... hype.

As in other forms of social activity, it's no different in science and medicine. One can find many who claim to possess the answers to our problems, that they have miracles within arm's reach. Like populist politicians who claim they have the answer to every social problem, like priests offering eternal salvation, there are populist scientists and physicians who claim they have a cure for almost every health problem. They have stem cells. Like populists who claim that everything is very easy to achieve, populist physicians and scientists say that stem cells are the way to treat incurable diseases – particularly,

so-called adult stem cells which, they claim, can be isolated from tissues such as fat, or from the remnants of childbirth, namely the umbilical cord. Moreover, their application appears to be very easy and safe. However, I would like to give some examples of how this actually works.

Stem cells are cells which can self-renew, generating other stem cells by cell division, and which can differentiate into specialized cell types (Blau and Daley 2019). However, there is no one group of stem cells, and different stem cells have different properties. There are cells which are totipotent, which can create a whole organism, and these are zygotes or the first blastomeres being the result of a zygote's cell division. There are pluripotent cells, such as embryonic stem cells, which are derivatives of the inner cell mass of an early embryo (blastocyst) and which can be cultured in the laboratory practically indefinitely. Although pluripotent cells can indeed differentiate into almost every cell type of the human body, except the trophoblast (which contributes to the placenta), they cannot create a whole organism. In our organs, as in bone marrow, we have multipotent stem cells which can differentiate into many cell types but only of one given group. While hematopoietic stem cells from the bone marrow can differentiate into every blood cell type, they cannot form bone. On the other hand, in bone marrow there are skeletal stem cells (named mesenchymal stem cells) which can form chondrocytes, adipose cells and bone – but not blood cells. Finally, we have unipotent stem cells, such as, for example, certain cells in the skin or the satellite cells in our muscles, which can differentiate into the cells of a given tissue: the epidermis or the skeletal muscles, respectively.

Stem cells are very effective and really powerful. From each zygote more than 200 different cell types can be created. A whole human body consists of more than  $10^{12}$  cells. Hematopoietic stem cells (HSCs) in our bone marrow regenerate blood, giving rise to 200 billion red blood cells, 10 billion white blood cells, and 400 billion platelets every day. HSCs can save lives because they can be used to treat blood disorders such as leukemia, anemia or immune deficiencies. They can be harvested from the bone marrow or mobilized to the donor's blood, collected and injected into the patient in need. These treatments are very efficient and have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Of course, as they still need refinement, scientists are still looking for ways to improve methods of HSC mobilization. For example, in our recent study we described new way of HSC mobilization to the blood of experimental mice (Szade et al. 2020).

Of course, before any application in human beings, such an approach has to be carefully tested in order to ensure it is safe and effective.

We have stem cells in different organs of our body. We have stem cells in certain parts of the brain, but not in every region of it. We have stem cells which regenerate our skin. We have stem cells which constantly repair the internal lining (epithelium) of our intestines. We have satellite cells which regenerate our muscles. We have stem cells in the bone marrow, regenerating our blood (HSCs) and skeletal stem cells, which can regenerate our bones. When a child is born, some blood can be collected from the umbilical cord and this umbilical cord blood contains HSCs, as in bone marrow, and can be used for the treatment of blood diseases (but not in the same child!). Stem cells are thus used to regenerate the corneal epithelium of the eye, regenerate blood in hematopoietic diseases or regenerate skin.

Recently, a combination of stem cell therapy with gene therapy has allowed scientists to treat diseases that have until now been incurable, such as severe combined immunodeficiency syndromes (SCIDs) – when a child is born without an immune system and there is a danger of dying from infections that would normally not be harmful. One example of such a SCID is adenosine deaminase immunodeficiency (ADA). The Italian scientists and physicians have developed a method for its treatment, named Strimvelis, which since 2016 has been registered by the European Medicines Agency. Strimvelis combines gene and cell therapy. A sick child's stem cells, which are not able to differentiate efficiently into various blood cells, are isolated from the patient's bone marrow and modified *in vitro* with the correct ADA gene that is missing in the patient. Then these engineered stem cells are reinfused back into the patient in order to restore their immune system. Strimvelis is really safe and effective for patients with ADA-SCID (De Luca et al. 2019)

Skin stem cells can help regenerate our skin. However, they cannot always do it effectively; for example, when there is extensive skin damage due to severe burns. At the same time, in such a case skin stem cells can be isolated from the part of the skin that is not damaged; they can be multiplied in the laboratory and differentiated into epidermal keratinocytes which can then be applied to the damaged areas.

In 2015 the European Medicines Agency registered Holoclar, which is a method used to regenerate a damaged corneal epithelium using a patient's own limbal stem cells. When the cornea is damaged, for example,

by chemicals, it can result in the loss of sight. However, if the limbal stem cells, namely the stem cells which normally regenerate the corneal epithelium, are not fully destroyed, they can be taken from the eye, multiplied in the laboratory, and the obtained cornea epithelium can be injected back into the eye of the patient (De Luca et al. 2019).

The potential of epidermal stem cells to regenerate damaged skin has been recently demonstrated in a joint effort of German physicians and Italian scientists who saved the life of a Syrian boy severely suffering from junctional epidermolysis bullosa (EB), a devastating terminal disease. As this boy does not have the correct laminin 332 gene, he lacks this protein that is required for the proper functioning of the skin. In EB, the skin of patients is severely damaged, as in this boy, who lost almost 60% of his total body protective surface. To save his life, which was threatened by repeated sepsis, the researchers took a piece of undamaged skin, isolated the stem cells, introduced the proper gene into these stem cells and multiplied and then differentiated them, generating skin epidermis, which they applied to the damaged body of the patient. In this way they saved the life of the boy who can now lead a normal life (De Luca et al. 2019).

To summarize, stem cells from the bone marrow which contain HSCs can be used to treat blood diseases. Epidermal stem cells can be used to regenerate skin. Limbal stem cells in the eye can regenerate the corneal epithelium. However, some even claim that HSCs or so-called mesenchymal stem cells can be used to treat any organ imaginable, not only to regenerate the blood, but also to regenerate muscles, the skin, heart, liver and even the nervous system (for references see: Dulak et al. 2015, Langrzyk et al. 2018). Moreover, even at websites such as the American registry of clinical trials<sup>2</sup>, one can find an enormous list of diseases which are claimed be treated with stem cells isolated from the bone marrow or other sources.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of convincing evidence on the application of one type of cell for the treatment of so many unrelated diseases. Although supporters state that there are numerous studies used to prove that these cells are effective, there are also serious concerns over the integrity of this research.

But why does this happen? The simplest answer is that stem cells are considered as a cure-all. The supporters claim that stem cells can be

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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>.

isolated from bone marrow, fat, teeth, menstrual blood or Wharton jelly (the gelatinous substance within the umbilical cord which is discarded after delivery). There are many clinics which claim that cells isolated from such tissues can be used to treat almost anything. There is a growing problem of unregulated, so-called stem cell therapies, which has led to stem cell tourism. This not only includes the United States and Asian countries but is happening in Poland as well. A search online brings up a list of different commercial institutions offering treatments for a host of diseases. These clinics charge sometimes an enormous amount of money for such a “treatment”. Clinic websites list diseases such as cerebral palsy, autism, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, muscular dystrophies or different forms of blindness. They claim they can be treated with cells of the same cell type, isolated from the umbilical cord or cord blood. These cells, coming from unrelated donors, are injected into patients’ blood, spinal cord or the eye in hopes of curing patients (Sipp et al. 2017, Srivastava 2019).

One cell type for every disease. A miraculous treatment for everything. Why is this dubious? Firstly, different diseases have different backgrounds and origins, and many are not linked to cell loss that would require cell replacement with stem cells. As diseases affect different organs, it warrants the question as to why cells are isolated from unrelated organs, with functions that are not well known and not even proven to be stem cells, being used to treat these diseases.

Reports on the effectiveness of such treatments are doubtful. They include so-called medical experiments that are often performed without scientific and medical scrutiny. There is no control group, no placebo. There is a lack of careful monitoring of patients and objective testing to confirm these treatments are effective. There is a lack of independent assessments by professional reviewers. Results are not published in peer-reviewed journals, and if they are, the quality of these papers and journals are often poor. We have to be aware, that as in the traditional press, there are respectable journals and there are tabloids and a lot in between. Moreover, the claims concerning the effectiveness of such commercial treatments are also based on personal, unverified patient statements.

The suggestions that the same cell can be used to treat everything sounds like the Holy Grail, a “natural” miracle treatment for every condition. Looking back, one can find that this was started when the potential of embryonic stem cells (ESC), which indeed can differentiate to many cell types, was recognized, and hope for the treatment of incurable diseases

began to grow. However, reluctance and ethical objections to using ESC, due to the fact that obtaining them requires destroying the embryo, directed interest to adult stem cells, with the belief that they can do the same as ESC. Unfortunately, they cannot, a fact that has been convincingly demonstrated. Perpetuating the claims on the pluripotency or multipotency of adult stem cells indicates also that there is insufficient knowledge and a lack of understanding of biological mechanisms, stem cell properties and their real potential.

Stem cell treatment sounds like a simple solution for everything and everyone. This is like populism or religion. Populism or religions do not need evidence. Populism relies on emotions and beliefs; the same is true for religion. Strange as it may seem, apparently, the problem of populism can also be found in science and medicine. The chaplains of such beliefs have straight and simple messages. They recognize the needs of others, saying that people have the right to try them out, that stem cells have to be applied quickly and that there is no need for prolonged research. They are vocal in making accusations that the rules of registering new drug treatments are dictated by soulless regulatory agencies which prevent the introduction of promising treatments for desperate patients.

Although this may sound surprising, this is the basis of the arguments often used by clinics which offer such unjustified therapies. Populism is reciprocal: there are patients in need and there are those who can fulfill such a need. Physicians who offer these types of treatments, the brave and generous, are eager to fulfill the wishes of ordinary people.

One can ask: where is the problem in this? If stem cells work in some cases, why shouldn't they work in others? Why are we so afraid? Firstly, treatment has to be evidence-based. In modern medicine treatment cannot be offered on the basis of just beliefs, with no support from rigorously performed preclinical and clinical research. We also should react because there are serious side effects that come with this type of cell therapy (Daley 2017, Marks et al. 2017, Mummery et al. 2014). People have lost their sight after being injected with cells isolated from fat; some patients developed a tumor at the site of injection of unknown "stem cells," and some patients have even lost their lives. It is also assumed that many people who make a decision to go ahead with unregistered therapies do not report side effects. Therefore, the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR), the largest professional organization of scientists working on stem cells, have warned about the dangers of unproven stem cell-based intervention

(ISSCR 2016). This was done in 2016 when the first guidelines on this issue were released. Moreover, this was repeated in June 2019 and May 2021 as there are still problems with clinics that offer unjustified therapies. Recently, in spring 2020, a serious warning was issued by the Committee of Advanced Therapies of the European Medicines Agency (EMA 2020) and from the European Academies' Science Advisory Council (EASAC) (EASAC 2020).

At the same time, despite the pessimistic messages and warnings of the risks, there is reasonable optimism. Stem cells have great potential and can be used for therapies – however, they must use real, not fake “stem” cells. Moreover, their application should not be rushed at the expense of basic research and without at least a basic understanding of stem cell properties and the mechanism of their actions. The potential of stem cell therapy is immense and its application extends beyond regenerative medicine. However, even with such promising approaches, the old medical principle, *primum non nocere*, should be considered first of all.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS: NONE

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MONIKA BANAŚ<sup>1</sup>

## TRANS-HUMANISM'S AND POST-HUMANISM'S *DIALECTICS* BETWEEN TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to invite the reader to reflect on the essence of truth and post-truth in two approaches present in humanities and social sciences: trans-humanism and post-humanism. The notions of truth and post-truth, just like those of trans- and post-humanism, do not have a single defining interpretation. This implies disputes about what truth is and what is the role of man as an being, capable of creative activity, and thus of creating other entities and concepts describing them. However, the problem still remains the doubt as to what extent the ability of creative action allows man to know the truth (alternatively, to establish it), and to what extent it leads us astray. Post-truth emerges as a proposition in the face of the impossibility of reaching a consensus on the former. It is similar in the case of trans- and post-humanism, as concepts offering improved, because more up-to-date, approaches to the exploration of the human being himself, the motives of his actions, and his progress. The issues are presented by means of a critical analysis of selected scientific discourses, including definitions and research approaches that are gaining popularity in academia of the so-called Western cultural circle.

Keywords: post-humanism, trans-humanism, truth, post-truth

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## TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH. HUMANS SUSPENDED IN-BETWEEN

Defining truth, almost from the dawn of human history, has been a field of constant dispute. Evidence of this is provided by numerous examples, not only from ancient, but also modern and contemporary philosophy. Due to the limited space of this text, only a few that are mentioned, most characteristic for the epochs in which they were created. Let us begin with the classics.

Aristotle's conception of truth refers to the relation between the cognitive subject and the reality it recognizes. This relationship, conditioned by the dispositions of the cognitive subject to undertake acts of cognition, can result in two states: compatibility or incompatibility of the intellect with the thing being under cognition. Truth is closely correlated with the cognitive process itself, which is not identical for all human individuals. The close relationship between truth and cognition makes the former a multifaceted entity. Depending on the employed dispositions, named by the Stagirite as "senses," "thinking," and "desire," truth reveals different aspects of its essence. Despite its essential multifacetedness, it consists in the agreement between the intellect and the entity/thing (Pride 2013, 12). It is worth emphasizing this feature of truth: congruence, and therefore order, harmony (in the absence of this, we are dealing with falsehood). This conformity occurring in the intellect, manifests itself through spoken judgments, verbalized and formed into sentences. Language therefore plays another key role in the search for truth. Language modifications, especially with regard to the manipulation of meaning, carry serious consequences, "missing" the truth or creating its illusion in the form of the so-called post-truth.

The danger of substituting truth for its absence arises from a number of reasons, including intentional and unintentional ones, when the adjudicating subject does not have sufficient knowledge of the thing. This issue imposes a distinction between two approaches: dianoetic (indirect) and noetic (direct) in arriving at truth (Bubble 2000, 73–74).

"Disinterested love of truth" in Aristotle, according to Władysław Tatkiewicz, became the basis and leaven for the later achievements of the Stagirite, who left a powerful imprint on subsequent generations of scholars, including our contemporaries (Tatkiewicz 1998, 105).

Selected thoughts of the Athenian philosopher, developed and deepened, can be found in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Italian thinker and spiritualist identifies truth with being, noting at the same time that

cognition of being (thing) is preceded by being (thing) itself. Being is the cause of the cognition of truth, which is a universally real property; it is transcendent. St. Thomas identifies two roads to the one and only truth leading through reason and faith. Indispensable in this journey is the intellect in its equally double aspect, as a practical intellect and a speculative intellect (Solecka-Karczewska 2010). Both serve to discover the truth in its ontic (truth about being) and logical dimension (truth about human cognition of that being).

Cognitive realism in the Thomistic conception was combined with cognitive optimism resulting from the intelligibility of things, i.e. the fact that they are cognizable, they allow themselves to be known because they are logical, ordered, and purposeful. If they are not so, they cannot be known because they are disordered, chaotic, unpredictable, in constant, unpredictable variability (instability). The aforementioned cognitive optimism, while holding out the promise of the possibility of knowing things and the truth, is far from treating the cognitive process as easy and simple. The truth about being is not a simple construct. Its complexity results from the fact that substantial being has many accidental entities that require cognition, which again complicates the whole process of arriving at the truth. Aquinas, however, sees “signposts” that help man follow the right path (the path to truth). This results from the Thomasian concept of locating the thing to be known between two intellects, the intellect of the Creator (the cause of things) and the human intellect, which, thanks to the dispositions given from God, is able to find the truth (Krupińska-Sadach 2018, 301–302). It should be noted, however, that in addition to the intellect, man must have the senses necessary in the process of cognition. The complexity of truth requires it. Through the senses we get to know the accidental qualities of a thing, while through the intellect we get to know its essence. The intellect in understanding and inquiring has the ability to understand principles, including those relating to the First Truth – God. From Him, as the First Truth, all other truths arise (Szymura 2018, 13–14, Belch 2006, 4).

The Christian vision of man, truth and God was in Thomas an attempt to combine the two orders of science and religion. *Ratio* and *fides* can also be seen in Immanuel Kant, but here *fides* would correspond to trusting pure reason, for which the prototype of ideal being – *the prototype* – appears as unconditioned, absolutely necessary. Since God understood in this way is present in pure reason, it is impossible to prove his existence through traditional theology. It is also impossible to prove his non-existence. Pure

reason alone is the solution to this dilemma. According to the philosopher, God – the prototype, the prime cause of all other beings – is present in human thought. Reason is the space where “God – Idea” appears, being an ideal comprehended but not cognized (Surzyn 2014). What, then, would a person need such an ideal for? Primarily to be moral, but also as an idea guiding the logical construction of a system of rational concepts. Kant recognized, as did his predecessors, that truth is the correspondence of cognition with the object (Kant 2001, 207). Nevertheless, it is impossible to define or establish truth, because each object, having specific individual features, depending on the disposition and experience of the cognitive subject, will present the truth only concerning it (the object), and, in addition, referring to a specific moment of existence/being in time of the object and the cognitive subject. Truth and error are located in judgments, which are constructed by intellect and reason. Error arises not from reason itself but from its entanglement with the senses, which are also not the source of error, for they only provide material for judgment. The one responsible for the error is the intellectual illusion resulting from presumption – a provisional judgment (Kant 2001, 208–209). To avoid it, a cognitive individual must be aware of his entanglement between the intellect and the senses and determine the sources of the influence of the senses on the intellect. Failure to do so brings persistence in error and building new, also erroneous, judgments on erroneous judgments. Self-recognition, which was postulated by the philosopher, is difficult also in the modern world, which reaches to the illusion of a superior, unconditioned idea, recognizing it (the illusion) as an ideal, model being.

A significant departure from, or even a negation of, the higher of these approaches was the concept of the supreme goal, of man and of values, as expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche. Life as a goal in itself, superior to other goals, individualistic and relative understanding of happiness, reevaluation of values, creation of a new morality based on strength – these are the main messages of the German thinker. As a classical philologist, he was familiar with the metaphors and allegories commonly found in the writings of ancient Greek and Roman authors. From them he drew patterns of interpreting the world, which appeared to him as conventional, illusory, relative, resulting from individual, personal perceptions and interpretations. What was real was what was useful, what served to satisfy the ambitions and aspirations of a strong individual, convinced of his superiority on the basis of such features as domination, egoism, egocentric utilitarianism. The ability

to empathize, pity, care beyond the circle of loved ones, was a trait of weak individuals, lacking the leadership, superior element given to superhumans. The morality of masters should reign over the morality of slaves, only then the world will be properly ordered. Since there are more slaves than masters, the weak morality of the former dominates the world, distorting its proper, desired image (Nietzsche 1999, Tatarkiewicz 1998, 164–168). The revaluation of values correlated with the new, inverted morality was coincident with the complete negation of God. In his philosophy, the mortal Nietzsche “put to death” God, thus negating any objective truth, whose traces were tried to be found by thinkers such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. The replacement of the Christian God by a man with extraordinary qualities of will, pride and strength became a method justifying the construction of concepts and ideologies based on the uncritical apotheosis of egoism and the absolute negation of everything that is weak because it is Christian. The concept of the *Übermensch* opened up to him the possibility, not only of creating, but also establishing new rules.

The presented, necessarily abbreviated, selected concepts of truth, allow us to turn our attention to another phenomenon, post-truth, well “established” in contemporary cultures and societies, not only in the so-called Western civilization circle. This phenomenon has been presented on the example of two significant trends: trans- and post-humanism.

## HUMANISMS

Post-humanism has been present in the discourse of Western civilization since the late 1970s, generating diverse reactions, from extreme criticism to enthusiastic apotheosis (Hassan 1977, 1987). It is often confused with transhumanism, although these are two distinct orders of thought, entailing specific actions in the scientific, political, or cultural spheres. Transhumanism sees the human being as a being in a constant state of becoming someone new, different, better, in transition. At least, this is and should be the goal – the elimination of basic human limitations – physical, biological, moral, ethical, etc. Julian Huxley, one of the pioneers of the trend expressed his hope and belief by writing:

(...) I believe in transhumanism: once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence,

as different from ours as ours is from that of Peking man. It will at last be consciously fulfilling its real destiny (Huxley 1957, 17).

This can happen only on the way of scientific development and technological progress, engaged in the process of improving man, making him stronger, physically and intellectually fit, free from disease and disability, infirmity, old age and perhaps even death. Aubrey de Grey, believes that aging is in fact a disease that should be prevented and even treated, that is, undoing the effects (de Grey 2015). The British scientist is one of many representatives of transhumanism as the right path in human evolution. An evolution aimed at the self-creation of humanity. A similar position is taken by Nick Bostrom, a Swedish philosopher, one of the most active promoters of transhumanism in the 21st century. In an essay on transhumanist values, he points out the possibilities and still present limitations of achieving the goal. According to Bostrom, it is a matter of time when humanity will solve the above challenges through biotechnology, nanotechnology, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence (Bostrom 2005).

One example of a practical, and apparently successful, use of transhumanist postulates is Kevin Warwick, who specializes in biomedical engineering, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. Described as one of the first cyborgs, he has used his body for experiments in BCI, the creation of the Brain-Computer Interface (BCI). The Cyborg Project, started in 1998 and continued in subsequent years, was to see how well the human body would accept subcutaneously implanted micro-transmitters (the FRID technique) capable of sending and receiving signals from electronic devices in the laboratory, responsible for room temperature, opening and closing doors, turning lights on and off, etc. The positive results of the experiment made it possible to apply the above solutions in the case of people with damaged nerve connections, people who are partially or completely paralyzed (e.g. the cases of Jesse Sullivan, Claudia Mitchell, Cameron Clapp).

Two decades later, the method of implanting implants concerns completely functional people. Services offered by companies such as the UK's BioTeq or Sweden's Bioxac deal with the commercial embedding of chips containing access codes for payment cards, bank accounts, medical IDs, electronic devices, etc. The rapidly growing number of purchasers, interested in improving their functioning in the increasingly cyberneticized world, forces the need for market regulation of this type of goods and

services. In the case of the European Union, the issue has been addressed, among others, in a 2018 document commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) (document *The Use of Chip Implants for Workers*). The document points out the broad potential of this type of practice, however, with a high risk of uncontrolled and unauthorized use of data, including data on health status, type of insurance, data covered by professional secrecy, etc.

The so-called leakage of sensitive data, despite the current GDPR (The General Data Protection Regulation) is not uncommon, as evidenced by the cases of services and entities like Gmail, Facebook, Sony Pictures, Adobe, eBay, Heartland Payment Systems, UniCredit, (PZN Magazine, Cyber-Defence24 2019). Even more so, it is arguable that access to data stored in personal microchips is more vulnerable to surveillance.

Legal issues are important, as are moral and ethical questions. British philosopher, Max More in defining transhumanism juxtaposes it in a triad with humanism and post-humanism. He sees these three orders as inter-related, based on trust in human reason, hope in the human capacity for unlimited development and progress, and above all, freedom from God as:

(...) a primitive notion invented by primitive people, people only just beginning to step out of ignorance and unconsciousness, people only just beginning to step out of ignorance and unconsciousness. God was an oppressive concept, a more powerful being than we, but made in the image of our crude self-conceptions (More 1996).

The hope for man, then, is man himself by unleashing his own intellectual and organizational potential. More's appeal resounds even more emphatically in the conclusion of the essay *Transhumanism. Towards a Futurist Philosophy*, in which the author writes:

Humanity is a temporary stage along the evolutionary pathway. We are not the zenith of nature's development. It is time for us to consciously take charge of ourselves and to accelerate our progress. No more gods, no more faith, no more timid holding back. Let us blast out of our old forms, our ignorance, our weakness, and our mortality. The future is ours. (More 1996)

More's message, especially the last sentences of the passage cited above, reverses the order of thinking about human beings as unlimited, nonweak, and immortal. Transhumanism, More argues, is a path to

a posthuman form of humanity: "Transhumanism is a class of philosophies that seek to guide us toward a posthuman condition." (More 1996).

Transhumanism, composed of many strands, has according to More a leading version, extropianism, emphasizing goals such as self-transformation, dynamic optimism boundless expansion, spontaneous order and intelligent technology. Thus defined, the horizon of the self-creating, human-in-transition subject is to lead to freedom in the full sense of the word, happiness understood as joy, longevity determined by the will of the individual, and total dedication to reason, logic, science and critical thinking.

Heterogeneous understandings of trans- and post-humanism can be seen in many writings of contemporary authors. Added to this are issues related to the uneven interpretation of the ideas or postulates contained in these publications. For example, post-humanism is commonly associated with the end of humanity as such. Especially reading the Polish translation of Francis Fukuyama's book, *The End of Man. The Consequences of Biotechnological Revolution* invites us to do so (Fukuyama 2004). Meanwhile, the title of the original does not indicate the end at all, but rather the beginning, and not of someone, but of something: *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (Fukuyama 2002). It can be assumed that the purpose of the above mentioned modification of the translation of the title, was strictly marketing publicity of the issues and a reference to another publication of this author about the end of history: *The End of History and The Last Man* (Fukuyama 2006). The ominous-sounding title of the Polish edition of *Our Posthuman Future...* loses its force in the context of Fukuyama's own revision of the conclusions contained in *The End of History*. Leaving aside the aforementioned publications, the end of man does not have to come in the foreseeable future unless he himself contributes to it. Paradoxically, hope in such a context may lie in post-humanism.

The prefix *post* points to the state after, and in the word post-humanism to something that comes after the ideological and intellectual current which chose man as the main object of consideration, placing him in the center, according to the Renaissance and later Enlightenment traditions. The eighteenth-century fascination with the human mind, the belief in its unlimited development, and the belief in the growing power of man as both author and creator, further strengthened the anthropocentric view of man.

The need for a critical analysis of humanism, based on the Enlightenment tradition, was raised at the end of the 1970s by Edward Said (Said

1978). He pointed to phenomena such as colonialism, its associated physical and symbolic violence, and the multi-generational destruction of colonized societies. These were derivatives of secular humanism. Thus, to simplify, humanism failed; the human being at its center did as well. This took on particular expression in totalitarian systems. Alexander Solzhenitsyn saw in secular humanism the beginning of Marxism, socialism and communism. He expressed this indirectly in the following words:

If, as humanism declared, man was born only for happiness – then why would he be born for death? But from the very fact that he is bodily condemned to death, his earthly task is, apparently, more spiritual: it does not consist in delighting in everyday life and the best ways of acquiring goods and then joyfully consuming them, but in the constant performance of a difficult duty, so that the whole path of life becomes a path of moral perfection (translated by MB after Przebinda 1995, 130).

Rejecting the contested part of the heritage of humanism, posthumanists propose a modified set of concepts concerning man – not his end, but a new stage in his development.

Development and progress imply passing through stages, each of which is better than the previous one. Post-humanism, then, would mean not dehumanizing human beings but restoring them to their proper place. This issue is analyzed in detail by Ann Weinstone in *Avatar Bodies: A Tantra for Post-humanism*, who emphasizes the posthuman autonomy of beings linked by mutual relations according to the egalitarian principle, as well as the principle of freedom of existence and self-determination. Also relevant here is the principle of creation, including self-creation. (Weinstone 2004, 10–11). Post-humanism, denying the main assumptions of humanism about the human supremacy over everything, the unlimited potential of human thought and the resulting right to omnistate (in the sense of ruling and creating), proposes to see humans as one of many equal beings – entitled to exist. This non-anthropocentric (or post-anthropocentric) view of reality presupposes a shift in focus from man to what lies beyond him. And beyond himself there are many inanimate and animate entities, the latter of which, in some cases, are characterized by intelligence and an advanced disposition to feel and communicate mental states (highly developed mammals, some species of birds or cephalopods like octopuses).

Symbolic for humanism, the drawing of Vitruvian man, dictating proper proportions in classical architecture, provides the message that the

proper measure is man. Thus, man was not only placed at the center, but became the center. Post-humanism in its various variants, more or less orthodox, rejects this position, and as Francesca Ferrando points out, it locates man “alongside” other entities, animate and inanimate, making them all interdependent existences. Hence it is impossible to treat these entities separately, but always in the context of multilateral relations. Importantly, relationships that mutually condition individual entities (Ferrando 2013, 32).

Katherine Hayles, considering the potential embodied in the concepts that make up post-humanism, sees in them threats, but sees many more opportunities for humans as well, especially in the context of human-artificial intelligence relations. Man has a consciousness that follows completely different paths than the hypothetical consciousness of artificial intelligent entities (Hayles 1999, 283–284). Thus, the threat, or as Hayles puts it, “terror,” from artificial intelligence in the broadest sense of the term, in order to marginalize the human being, should not be exaggerated. The fact that modern man makes use of highly advanced technological solutions that involve so-called artificial intelligence (e.g., in medicine – assisting in surgeries, diagnosing diseases, developing the composition of medicines, personalization of treatment or gene editing) is evidence that humans have already become posthuman.

Drawing attention to the advantages and wide potential contained in trans- and post-humanistic concepts of perceiving human and non-human reality, combined with a non-anthropocentric view of the world, can provide inspiration for the gradual shedding of man’s greatest vices. Among them are: pride, greed, laziness, lack of restraint, egoism, self-centeredness, lack of respect for non-human beings such as animals.

## CUL DE SACS

The concepts of trans- and post-humanism quoted above emphasize the ambition of homo sapiens to create and “make” not only himself but also other non-human beings. Man in the light of these approaches becomes a creator. However, one can look the other way at the mentioned orders. A human being in the process of change, in-transition, and a human being who is able to get rid of the egocentric view, who sees the non-selfish value of non-human entities (animals, plants, animate and inanimate nature), as a post-human being can offer himself and the surrounding environment

much more than he has done so far. By including non-human beings in his sphere of care, he can strengthen and enlarge his own abilities, not only in the emotional sphere, but also in the aesthetic and ethical spheres. All of them, especially the last one, are formed through culture promoting values such as empathy, cooperation, dialogue, openness. These values are induced in an individual through upbringing, education and training (*Bildung*). Neglecting these areas, especially when it comes to quality and availability (universality), leads to thoughtlessness, automaticity of choices and pretended responsibility. An individual, community or society acting in this way is reluctant to make the effort connected with reflection, thoughtful choice or responsibility for the effects of their decisions. Why? Because they have not been prepared, taught, and practiced.

Bruce Thornton, analysing the phenomenon of still present evil, despite common education, progress of knowledge and science, points to a kind of self-deception to which man succumbs, putting his hope in his own abilities. The author of *Plagues of the Mind: The New Epidemic of False Knowledge*, emphasizes an astonishing feature of man, who, with persistence, repeats his efforts based on the same assumption – his own limitlessness. Attempts to create an ideal social, political, and economic system, to eradicate injustice, misery, disease, war, and unhappiness, have not yielded the expected results (Thornton 1999). Currently, in the 20s of the 21st century, numerous armed conflicts resulting in suffering and death, are a telling proof of human weakness and inability to control our own instincts, based on primitive emotions. Emotions, especially the negative ones, provide the ground for post-truth, which is an attractive alternative for man disappointed by reason (Thornton 1999, Maddalena and Gili 2020). Post-truth removes facts and their rational, logical analysis to the side, replacing them with free interpretation resulting from the “mood” of the expressing subject. This “mood” is correlated with a certain amount of knowledge that the subject possesses, to which he does not necessarily have to refer. Recalling Dorothy Sayers’ words about the danger of the erosion of education (Sayers 1947), we ourselves become recipients and producers of post-truth.

The following excerpts from *The Lost Tools of Learning* are a kind of diagnosis of the state of affairs:

(...) Have you ever, in listening to a debate among adult and presumably responsible people, been fretted by the extraordinary inability of the average

debater to speak to the question, or to meet and refute the arguments of speakers on the other side? Or have you ever pondered upon the extremely high incidence of irrelevant matter which crops up at committee meetings, and upon the very great rarity of persons capable of acting as chairmen of committees? And when you think of this, and think that most of our public affairs are settled by debates and committees, have you ever felt a certain sinking of the heart?

(...) we often succeed in teaching our pupils "subjects," we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything, except the art of learning (Sayers 1947).

Dorothy Sayers, drew attention to another important issue, namely language, used imprecisely and all too often disorderly:

(...) Have you ever followed a discussion in the newspapers or elsewhere and noticed how frequently writers fail to define the terms they use? Or how often, if one man does define his terms, another will assume in his reply that he was using the terms in precisely the opposite sense to that in which he has already defined them? Have you ever been faintly troubled by the amount of slipshod syntax going about? And, if so, are you troubled because it is inelegant or because it may lead to dangerous misunderstanding? (Sayers 1947).

Through language and the notions established in it, man rebuilds the world, also in the aspect of fundamental notions such as truth. Carelessness about language, about its precision and, above all, about its correct use, leads into areas imitating truth, reflecting it in an impaired mirror. Post-truth as a result of linguistic carelessness, semantic disorder, emotions and imagination, offers seemingly attractive solutions, "easier" because simplified, not requiring thorough knowledge from the recipient. This should be seen as the strengthening of post-truth as one of the elements of contemporary communication, not only in the media sphere, but also in areas such as politics or science. The postmodern motto, taken from Nietzsche, that truth is "a moving army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms," that "truths are illusions," "metaphors that have worn out and lost their sensuous power of expression" (Nietzsche 1993, 189), encourages new paths and new goals. The post-truth man has again come to trust himself and his "new" unveiling as an in-transition being who has left behind what is human.

The Nietzschean vision of man wandering in the darkness of existence, however, has its opposition in the concepts of the philosophers cited at the beginning of this paper, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, who emphasized one way for man and one way to truth. Also for Aristotle, a pagan, truth is one and results from the compatibility (going further: harmony) of an entity and a cognizing subject. Similarly, Kant recognizes the fundamental role of the prototype, absolutely necessary for the formation of rational concepts, essential in the process of cognition and identification of truth.

The postmodern humanities and social sciences, proposing various concepts of interpreting and forming our world, offer many different ways. Many of them are a *cul de sac*, with the guiding principle of post-truth. The same may apply to post- and transhumanism as collections of attractive but also conflicting ideas. Assuming that the world is based on binary oppositions, by choosing the principle of truth, a path without a dead-end can be chosen.

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## EMOTIVE SOURCES OF POST-TRUTH

### Abstract

The first part of this paper briefly presents the phenomenon of post-truth, which is then confronted with emotivism, a position of 20th-century ethics or meta-ethics that ascribes an emotive and evocative meaning to ethical judgements, rather than a descriptive one. The second part shows briefly the theories of two main representatives of this view, namely A.J. Ayer and Charles Stevenson. The third part focuses on the objections to emotivism, primarily presented by Alasdair MacIntyre. Finally, the influence of emotivism on post-truth is discussed.

Keywords: post-truth, emotivism, Ayer, Stevenson, MacIntyre

### INTRODUCTION

Those who have investigated the phenomenon of post-truth point to its numerous sources, placing them all in the second half of the 20th century. However, it seems that the origin of post-truth should be sought in the 1930s and 1940s. That is when emotivism appeared: the view claiming that there is no objective truth in ethics. This text will be devoted to the characteristics and criticism of emotivism, as well as its relationship to post-truth.

### 1. POST-TRUTH

Post-truth as a phenomenon has been defined relatively recently. It is generally accepted that the term first appeared in the text of Steve Tesich, an American dramatist of Serbian background, who wrote:

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We are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only drool about in their dreams. All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary, that we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can denude truth of any significance. In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world.<sup>2</sup>

Post-truth is defined as a phenomenon in which objective facts have a lesser influence on public opinion and personal convictions. Post-truth, according to Mathew d’Ancona, is “the triumph of the visceral over the rational, the deceptively simple over the honestly complex” (d’Ancona 2017, 20).<sup>3</sup> Post-truth is first of all an emotional phenomenon. It concerns – as d’Ancona stresses – our attitude to truth, rather than truth itself (d’Ancona 2017, 130). Contemporary man has made himself immune to truth – non-truth speaks to him increasingly more frequently and more strongly. Objective facts have less impact on people than emotions since facts require analysis and reflection, and then their interpretation. Emotions take possession of us and somehow decide for us. We control facts, while emotions control us. Facts have ceased to depend on reality. A fact is what is recognised as a fact by the media or opinion-forming centres.

Ralph Keyes shows lies as a constitutive element of post-truth. He claims that in the post-truth era, the borders between truth and lies, honesty and dishonesty, fiction and nonfiction have been blurred. Deceiving others becomes something of “leisure activity” (Keyes 2004, 12). As he further notes, there is a great temptation and a slight penalty for “fictionalized stories” about one’s life. Keyes talks about the routinization of dishonesty, “Most of us lie and are lied to on the regular basis” (Keyes 2004, 11)<sup>4</sup>: “What concerns me is the loss of a stigma attached to telling lies, and a widespread acceptance of the fact that lies can be told with impunity.” (Keyes 2004, 13). As he emphasizes, “Circumstances that condone

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kreitner. 2016, November 30. Post-Truth and Its Consequences: What a 25-Year-Old Essay Tells Us About the Current Moment, *The Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/post-truth-and-its-consequences-what-a-25-year-old-essay-tells-us-about-the-current-moment/>.

<sup>3</sup> Post-truth is “priority accorded to emotion over evidence” and “to trigger emotions, not to win an evidence-based debate”. (d’Ancona, 2017, 66, 121).

<sup>4</sup> In some research, it has been, proved that on average we lie 13 times a week (Keyes 2004, p. 12).

dishonesty have risen while those that nurture honesty are in decline” (Keyes 2004, 19).

People lie for various reasons: to beautify their lives, not wanting to hurt someone, to get a better job or win voters’ support. People accept lies, among other things, for fear that if we condemn them, someone will also accuse us of lying once. People are not without guilt, and feeling guilty does not allow them to stand up for the truth. However, people do not see the absurdity of this way of thinking. In reducing it to absurdity, people would have to say that, for example, a judge issuing a verdict has no right to do so because he lies in his/her private life, and many a time also in public. In such a situation, no one would have the right to condemn anyone (“let him who is without sin, cast the first stone”).

In wanting to hide their helplessness against lies, while still having a sense of discomfort, people try to tame and trivialise them by employing euphemisms. Therefore, a lie is a “pulled truth,” “indulgence in honesty,” “passing away from the truth,” “colouring reality,” etc.; a liar is someone who “has no access to the truth at the moment” (Keyes 2004, 18,19, 162).

Some scholars claim that the source of post-truth is postmodernism and its criticism of getting to know objective truth,<sup>5</sup> pop culture or development of new technologies, especially the Internet. Keyes says that the reason why post-truth is being spread is:

the growing influence of lie-tolerant mentors such as therapists, lawyers, and politicians; postmodern intellectual trends in higher education; the increased emphasis on “storytelling” throughout society; the impact of electronic media, with their indifference to veracity; baby-boomer alt.ethics; and the growing amount of time we spend interacting anonymously online (Keyes 2004, 83).

Keyes also includes the weakening of interpersonal relationships as factors affecting the spread of post-truth: “The ideal is to combine a strong sense of connectedness with a robust sense of right and wrong. We have the worst of both worlds: a declining sense of community and eroding ethics” (Keyes 2004, 37). As d’Ancona notes, “all succesful societies rely upon

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<sup>5</sup> d’Ancona portrays postmodernism as a source of post-truth, writing that the era of post-truth has “a basis in the postmodern philosophy of the late twentieth century...” (d’Ancona, 2017, 91).

a relatively high degree of honesty to preserve order, uphold the law, hold the powerful to account and generate prosperity” (d’Ancona 2017, 36).

Let us add that post-truth is also associated with the philosophy of activism. The contemporary world is a world of activists, people who are active, not contemplating.<sup>6</sup> The life of a philosopher compared with the life of a traveller, leader or celebrity is considered boring and uninteresting. (How many people have read a biography of Kant and how many have read biographies of David Beckham or John F. Kennedy?).<sup>7</sup> Contemporary man must be active and stimulated. While truth is the object of contemplation, post-truth is meant to be an incentive for action.<sup>8</sup> To do this, it must be attractive – so it must appeal to one’s emotions, not to one’s intellect.

Post-truth also feeds on man’s natural drive towards novelty. Man always wants something new and abandons what is known and familiar. When truth is not enough, post-truth appears. Post-truth makes life more attractive. Since one of the threats to contemporary man is boredom, he does everything to get rid of boredom. Post-truth makes it easy for him. How many times do we lie without being forced to do so? “It’s no longer assumed” – Keyes observes – “that truth telling is even our default setting” (Keyes 2004, 10).

In addition to the above-mentioned factors underlying post-truth, one more element not discussed in the publications concerning this phenomenon should be mentioned. It seems that the origin of the phenomenon of post-truth can be traced back to the 1930s and 1940s. It was then that emotivism appeared as a meta-ethical theory, whose supporters believed

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<sup>6</sup> Pragmatism also had a significant impact on the concept of truth resp. post-truth. According to pragmatists, a theory is true if it works, is useful or socially practical. Truth is action; any judgment that is to be considered true must have practical consequences. These consequences must be useful. Truth must be useful. Thus, if utility is the ultimate criterion of truth and if truth itself ceases to be useful, according to neopragmatic assumptions, then post-truth can try to satisfy this utilitarian criterion. Truth is no longer an end in itself, or even epistemic. According to pragmatists, thinking is for action, not cognition. Acquiring knowledge thus becomes a practical and not a theoretical activity; it ceases to be contemplative and gains an active character. The subject is no longer an observer, but becomes a participant in the knowledge-forming process.

<sup>7</sup> “The most insistent self-embellishment occurs among those who combine a shaky self-image with great powers of imagination. They use their creativity to feed a hungry ego” (Keyes 2004, 64).

<sup>8</sup> Let us note that the tendency to marginalize contemplation also occurs in contemporary art where contemplation has been replaced by interaction.

that ethical judgments did not describe anything, did not refer to any reality external to the subject involved, but merely expressed or evoked emotions. In my view, therefore, it is emotivism that should be seen as one of the main sources of post-truth.

## 2. EMOTIVISM

It seems that contemporary Western societies have been prepared for post-truth. Not only has it not surprised them, but they have accepted it as something natural and necessary. The ground for contemporary post-truth has been prepared, among others, by emotivism with its concept of the emotive meaning of moral judgments. Thus, ethical decline as a result of accepting dishonesty<sup>9</sup> is a consequence of the re-evaluation of ethical judgments by emotivists.

### 2.1. ALFRED J. AYER'S CONCEPTION

The essence of emotivism was captured by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, writing in 1923:

But another use of the word is often asserted to occur, of which some at least of those which we have cited are supposed to be degenerations, where "good" is alleged to stand for a unique, unanalysable concept. This concept, it is said, is the subject-matter of Ethics. 1 This peculiar ethical use of "good" is, we suggest, a purely emotive use. When so used the word stands for nothing whatever, and has no symbolic function. Thus, when we so use it in the sentence, "This is good," we merely refer to tins, and the addition of "is good" makes no difference whatever to our reference. When on the other hand, we say "This is red," the addition of "is red" to "this" does symbolize an extension of our reference, namely, to some other red thing. But "is good" has no comparable symbolic function; it serves only as an emotive sign expressing our attitude to this, and perhaps evoking similar attitudes in other persons, or inciting them to actions of one kind or another (Ogden, Richards 1923, 125).

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<sup>9</sup> As Keyes notes, "Few of us want to think of ourselves as being unethical, let alone admit that to others, so we devise alternative approaches to morality. Think of them as alt.ethics. This term refers to ethical systems in which dissembling is considered okay, not necessarily wrong, therefore not really 'dishonest' in the negative sense of the word" (Keyes 2004, 16).

The fundamental intuitions lying at the basis of emotivism were shown by A.J. Ayer in 1936, in his work entitled *Language, Truth and Logic*, that he published at the age of 26.<sup>10</sup> In this work, especially in its sixth chapter entitled “Critique of Ethics and Theology,” Ayer criticised the contemporary theories of the meaning of ethical judgements.

Indeed, he maintains that basic ethical concepts are not analysed and that moral judgments do not matter in the literal sense; they are merely expressions of emotion and as such they cannot be true or false. They are therefore not subject to argument (Ayer 1978, 136).

Ayer rejects subjectivism claiming that a thing is good and an act is right when they are widely approved. Thus, it is not contradictory to maintain that, that some act is not right although is universally approved; thus, the act is good (Ayer 1978, 138).

He also rejects utilitarianism, arguing that “good” cannot mean “pleasant” or “desirable” (Ayer 1978, 139). Ayer concludes that sentences that contain normative ethical symbols cannot be translated into sentences expressing psychological states or any empirical statements. He emphasises that only normative, not descriptive ethical symbols are indefinable.

For example, when we say “X is bad” it could mean a judgement concerning a certain conduct or a judgement saying some kind of behaviour is unacceptable to a given community. In the latter case, the term “bad” would have a descriptive character (Ayer 1978, 140).

Ayer also rejects intuitionism, believing that the truth of intuition cannot be verified in any way (Ayer 1978, 141). Agreeing with intuitionists that ethical terms are non-analysable he explains this fact by claiming that these are mere pseudo-concepts:

The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, “You acted wrongly in stealing that money,” I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, “You stole that money.” In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, “You stole that money,” in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks. (...) If now I generalize my previous statement and say, “Stealing money is wrong,” I produce a sentence that has

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<sup>10</sup> Later, Ayer admitted that Ogden and Richards had paid attention to the emotive use of ethical terms before him and that he owed his conception to them (Ayer 1987, 26).

no factual meaning – that is, expresses no proposition that can be either true or false” (Ayer 1978, 142). (...) “I am merely expressing certain moral sentiments, like the collocations “Go!” – “Is this true?” And “Uff!” “You lie” – does not make sense (quoted in Hudson 1970, 111).

Therefore, if we say that a certain behaviour is right or wrong, we do not present any factual sentence, or even statement, about our state of mind. We only express our moral sentiments (Ayer 1978, 142). Ethical judgments, however, are not a description of the subjective states of the subject, but an expression of these states. Thus, it makes no sense to ask, in Ayer’s opinion, who is right if there is a difference of opinion as “right” can only refer to judgements stating something about certain objects, and not to express emotions about these objects.

The fact that moral judgments are the subject of consideration does not mean that they are disputes about values, but are, according to Ayer, about facts. When we criticise someone’s moral opinion, we refer to facts that in our opinion someone has had to overlook (motives, effects, circumstances) (Ayer 1978, 147). It is assumed here, as Ayer writes, that both our opponent and ourselves share the same moral views, resulting from similar living conditions or moral education. If there is an insurmountable difference in moral views, despite agreeing on the facts, Ayer believes that the discussion should be stopped.

As ethical judgments are not only used to express emotions, but also to arouse emotions, they have both expressive and evocative functions. Ayer emphasises that they also stimulate actions. They are certain orders, as “It is your duty to tell the truth” (Ayer 1978, 147). Moral judgments, thus influencing actions, are not only, or mainly, of a descriptive character. They have a dynamic character. For example, a statement “X is wrong” cannot involve (logically) the question: “Should I do it?” By stating that something is right or wrong, we commit ourselves to taking certain actions, doing what is right and refraining from what is wrong (Hudson 1970, 112).

## 2.2. CHARLES STEVENSON’S CONCEPTION

The American philosopher Charles Stevenson can be considered the founder of emotivism. He aims to explore what people actually do with language in everyday life. Stevenson believes that there are three issues to be clarified in ethics. Firstly, the fact that there is disagreement in ethics; secondly,

the magnetic force of ethical terms and thirdly, the insufficiency of scientific and empirical methods in ethics.

According to Stevenson disagreement has two meanings. The first one concerns disagreement in belief and the other disagreement in attitude (Stevenson 1963, 70–71).<sup>11</sup> Thus disagreement concerns beliefs or attitudes. In disagreement with respect to beliefs there is a dispute in which contrary beliefs cannot be all true, while including attitudes concerning interests that cannot all be jointly satisfied (Stevenson 1963, 70–71). Disagreement with respect to attitudes plays a decisive role in ethical arguments.

Beliefs concern facts, while attitudes refer to the evaluation of these facts. According to Stevenson, ethical judgments express attitudes, but do not describe them. To define this distinction, Stevenson refers to two patterns of analysis of the sentence “This is good.” In the first pattern it means “I approve of this; do so as well;” in the second pattern, the sentence conveys the meaning, “I approve of this and wish you would do so.” Stevenson opts for the first pattern, rejecting the second one as being descriptive (Hudson 1970, 117), since only the first pattern can explain moral conflicts.<sup>12</sup> As Stevenson stresses, conflicts between beliefs and attitudes have an empirical, and not a logical character. This means that agreement in beliefs and attitudes is empirical, not logical. Attitudes, according to Stevenson, are often dependent on resources of knowledge. Changing attitudes can therefore be a consequence of changing beliefs. However, the ethical dispute is not about changing beliefs, but about changing attitudes.

Beliefs are treated instrumentally here; they are useful insofar as they can change attitudes. To influence a change of attitude, one must provide the other side with reasons that would convince them to change their attitude. The dispute in ethics ends when disagreement in attitudes disappears, even if there is disagreement in beliefs. “Since attitudes” – Stevenson writes – “are often functions of beliefs, an agreement in belief may lead people, as a matter of psychological fact, to agree in attitude” (Stevenson 1963, 74). From a logical point of view, disagreement in respect to attitudes can exist even if there is complete agreement in beliefs. Thus, in

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<sup>11</sup> Examples of attitudes, according to Stevenson, can be love and hatred, praise and reprimand (Stevenson 1963, 71).

<sup>12</sup> If someone says that he wants someone else to do A, and this other person says that he does not want to do so, then there is no dispute. The first person describes his “want,” whereas the other describes his “want.”

placing attitudes at the centre of ethics, Stevenson seems to replace logic with psychology.

Stevenson thinks that ethical terms are “magnetic.” This means that in saying “X is good” I do not only express my attitude (approval in this case), but I evoke a similar attitude in others. Therefore, it is not just about expressing attitudes, but about influencing others. This influence is possible thanks to the “dispositional tendency” of ethical terms. According to Stevenson, this tendency can be called the meaning of an ethical term.

Stevenson defines emotive meaning as “a meaning in which the response (from the hearer’s point of view) or the stimulus (from the speaker’s point of view) is a range of emotions”, while “The emotive meaning of a word is the power that the word acquires on account of its history in emotional situations, to evoke or directly express attitudes, as distinct from describing or designating them” (Stevenson 1944, 59).

In Stevenson’s view, moral judgements have both a descriptive and emotive meaning. For example, although “democracy” has now an unambiguously positive emotive meaning, its descriptive meaning was different some time ago (socialist democracies versus Western democracies).

The two kinds of meaning can differ in three ways. First, emotive meaning may depend on descriptive meaning; secondly, these meanings can be independent of each other; thirdly, emotive meaning may be quasi-dependent on descriptive meaning (for example, the emotive meaning of the word “pig” in the sentence, “This man is a pig” is not directly dependent on the definition of the word “pig” but on what it suggests when applied metaphorically to a man).

Stevenson introduces the so-called persuasive definition:

Persuasive definitions are possible only where the emotive meaning of a word is strong and its descriptive, in a measure, vague. The former condition must be fulfilled, if the persuasive definition is to result in any significant redirection of attitude; the latter must be fulfilled to allow room for the maneuver of persuasive definition to take place at all (quoted in Hudson 1970, 128).

Stevenson’s example is as follows: two people, A and B, argue whether C is a person of culture. A regards C as not a person of culture, stressing that C is not well educated, uses grammatically incorrect sentences and obvious literary references. B, concedes that C has all these defects, claims that C is a person of culture since he possesses an imagination that is richer than educated people and is original (Hudson 1970, 211). This

definition, according to Stevenson, is only possible if the emotive meaning of the term is strong and the descriptive one is blurred (as is the case with the term “culture”). In such cases, as Stevenson emphasises that we speak of the “true” or “real” meaning of the term (“real democracy”, “real culture”), where these words have persuasive force.

Stevenson believes that the distinction between truth and falsehood does not apply to emotive meaning. According to him, the original purpose of the language of ethics is to influence others. That is why in ethics we are not dealing with real argumentation and the presentation of reasons to defend some thesis. The reasons themselves are persuasive. This means that persuading others to accept your reasons is to influence them, the purpose being to change attitudes. These reasons appeal to emotions because they have the greatest impact on changing attitudes. Therefore, the reasons are not rational or logical, but psychological.

Regarding the third issue raised by Stevenson, he notes that scientific methods of are insufficient in ethics. Science is about facts while ethics is about attitudes. The dispute in science ends when facts are agreed upon, in ethics when attitudes are agreed upon: “Hence scientific methods are conclusive in ending arguments about values only to the extent that their success in obtaining agreement in belief will in turn lead to agreement in attitude” (Stevenson 1963, 74). Stevenson claims that while scientific methods and rational argumentation may be useful in ethics, they may turn out to be insufficient to resolve disputes in this field. Moreover, normative ethics, Stevenson states, is not a branch of any science (Stevenson 1963, 75).<sup>13</sup>

### 3. OBJECTIONS TO EMOTIVISM<sup>14</sup>

Emotivism was subsequently thoroughly criticised, the main objection being the theory of meaning. It was pointed out that moral terms could be used unintentionally to exert any influence on others, when, for example, we want to agree on our attitudes or clarify them. On the other hand, as emphasised, one can also influence or express your emotions without using

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<sup>13</sup> In this respect, ethics is reminiscent of sophism whose followers used various types of knowledge in order to convince others of their position.

<sup>14</sup> M. Rembierz, an expert in Polish philosophy, remarks that none of the eminent Polish philosophers were seduced by emotivism.

moral terms. For example, one can evoke emotions by saying, “There’s a bomb on the plane.” Attention was also paid to the fact that in sentences containing ethical terms referring to the past, it is the descriptive rather than the emotive meaning that prevails.

Objections to emotivism were formulated, among others, by Richard Brandt in the 1950s (Brandt 1950, 305–318). In his view, emotivism is unable to explain why people, in changing their ethical views, consider their previous views as wrong, and not simply different (Brandt 1950, 386). Changing views is not a matter of taste – “I used to like chocolate ice creams and today I don’t like them anymore” – but it concerns their truthfulness. Brandt also questions Stevenson’s thesis about the “magnetic” influence of ethical terms. Their evocative impact seems doubtful in the case of statements about the past or those in which ethical terms are used in a natural way, e.g. such sentences as “If this situation is morally bad, it solves the matter” or “It must be right or wrong, so let’s think about it and decide what it is.” According to Brandt, ethical terms are not used as such to express attitudes. Sometimes it happens that although one says a certain action is wrong, one is still willing to do it. Then our attitude does not correspond to our belief, as an attitude does not express a belief.

Alasdair MacIntyre formulated other objections to emotivism. Firstly, he believed that emotivists would refrain from describing emotions as expressed in moral judgments, limiting themselves to stating that these feelings were of an approving character. This should be considered as moral approval, i.e. one that is expressed by means of moral judgment. We are, therefore, dealing with a vicious circle. A moral judgment is defined as one that expresses approval, which in turn is referred to as moral, i.e. expressed in moral judgement (MacIntyre 2007, 13). This objection is related to Ayer’s conception,<sup>15</sup> which – according to MacIntyre – cannot show what the difference between moral and nonmoral sentiments concerns:

To say that moral judgments express a sentiment or feeling is vacuous and unhelpful. Of course they do. But what sentiment or feeling? We can find no useful definition of moral sentiment, except as that sentiment which is bound

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<sup>15</sup> MacIntyre also accuses Ayer of incorrectly including moral and theological judgments in the same category. “(...) statements about the intentions and deeds of an omnipotent being and judgments about duty or about what is good do not obviously belong together (MacIntyre 2000).

up with moral judgment. What it is that makes moral judgment and sentiment distinctive, what entitles them to the appellation 'moral,' what their relation is to other kinds of judgment and sentiment — to none of these questions do such theories return an answer (MacIntyre 1965, 15–16).

The second objection relates to the fact that emotivists identify terms concerning personal preferences with evaluative terms. MacIntyre argues that this identification is incorrect since the persuasive force of terms concerning preferences depends on who says them and to whom they are addressed, while this is not the case in the case of evaluative terms it is not as they do not depend on the context (MacIntyre 2007, 13).

Thirdly, MacIntyre points out that expressing feelings and emotions is not a function of the meaning of ethical judgments, but a matter of their use. He criticises emotivists for mixing up the meaning and usage of ethical terms, and that they do not “attend sufficiently to the distinction between the meaning of a statement which remains constant between different uses, and the variety of uses to which one and the same statement can be put” (MacIntyre 2000). Moreover, he states that: “The expression of feeling or attitude is characteristically a function not of the meaning of sentences, but of their use on particular occasions” (MacIntyre 2007, 13). The meaning of the sentence shouted by an upset teacher, “Seven times seven equals forty-nine!” is not the emotion behind it for, as MacIntyre notes, “(...) the use of this sentence to express feelings or attitudes has nothing whatsoever to do with its meaning” (MacIntyre 2007, 13). This also concerns the statement “This is bad,” as it does not mean “I don’t like it; you shouldn’t accept it either!” The former, which Stevenson himself pointed out, has a kind of prestige that the latter does not have. According to MacIntyre, this prestige derives from a reference to an objective and impersonal standard (MacIntyre 2007, 19). Indeed, as MacIntyre concludes “What makes certain statements guides to, or directives of, action is not that they have any meaning over and above a factual or descriptive one” (MacIntyre 2000).

The fourth objection to emotivism formulated by MacIntyre relates to the impossibility of rational resolution of disputes in ethics. Thus, he writes:

For presumably we can use emotive words to commend any class of actions whatsoever. Moreover, if Stevenson is right, evaluative disagreement may always be interminable. There is no limit to the possibilities of disagreement, and there is and can be no set of procedures for the resolution of disagreements.

It is not surprising that this should be a consequence of Stevenson's position, since he himself initially laid it down as one of the prerequisites for a successful theory that it should provide for disagreement to be interminable (MacIntyre 2000).

The above objections to emotivism, along with others, have resulted in it no longer counting as a significant position in meta-ethics. However, it has exerted a significant influence on the psyche of contemporary man.

## CONCLUSION

In criticizing emotivism, MacIntyre also points to its great impact on contemporary man, whose attitude he describes as an emotive self. Such a self "finds no limits set to that on which it may pass judgment for such limits could only derive from rational criteria for evaluation and as we have seen the emotivist self lacks any such criteria" (MacIntyre 2007, 31). He stresses that "The unrecognized philosophical power of emotivism is one clue to its cultural power" (MacIntyre 2007, 20). He also notes that "people now think, talk and act as if emotivism were true, no matter what their avowed theoretical standpoint may be. Emotivism has become embodied in our culture" (MacIntyre 2007, 22). Since emotivism has not been completely refuted (MacIntyre 2007, 21), MacIntyre has suggested:

that we live in a specifically emotivist culture, and if this is so we ought presumably to discover that a wide variety of our concepts and modes of behavior – and not only our explicitly moral debates and judgments – presuppose the truth of emotivism, if not at the level of self-conscious theorizing, at least in everyday practice (MacIntyre 2007, 22).

One could therefore say that although emotivism has failed as a theory of meaning, it has survived as a theory of usage, one which echoes in the contemporary emotive attitude, as well as the phenomenon of post-truth. Emotivism, despite its declaration of neutrality, has clearly influenced attitudes in ethics. It seems that although there is no logical connection between the emotive theory of meaning and ethical relativism, there is an empirical relationship between them. Undoubtedly, an attitude that accepts relativism and post-truth has emotive roots.

Emotivism declared that demands for objectivity and impersonality cannot be met and that there were no rational justifications for “any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist and hence that there are no such standards” (MacIntyre 2007, 19).

In the context of post-truth MacIntyre’s remark is correct as the key to the social content of emotivism is “that emotivism entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations” (MacIntyre 2007, 23). In his view, the blurring of this difference is a work of emotivism. The manipulation lies in treating other people instrumentally. “[...]to treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my purposes by adducing whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion. (...)” (MacIntyre 2007, 24). Then rationality and logic are replaced by irrational persuasion. We are exactly dealing with the same mechanism in the case of post-truth as its “users” treat its recipients as means to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, at the root of post-truth lies Stevenson’s assumption concerning the magnetic force of ethical terms thanks to which one can influence emotions. Emotivism has attributed causative power to ethical judgements. Judgements were meant to express emotions that in turn were meant to stimulate actions. Post-truth seems to act in a similar way: by appealing to emotions and falsifying reality, it is aimed at making reality more attractive and thus draw the listener or reader into it. Thus, truth no longer depends on facts but on feelings.

What also connects emotivism with post-truth is the replacement of truth as a value by psychological effectiveness (MacIntyre 2007, 30). “There is a risk” – as d’Ancona writes – “that an ever-greater proportion of judgements and decisions will be banished to the realm of feeling, that the quest for truth will become a branch of emotional psychology, without moorings or foundations” (d’Ancona 2017, 34). In turn, Keyes notes that “Ethical issues become ones of emotional health” (Keyes 2004, 85). Emotivistic persuasive reasons are similar to manipulative post-truth for which facts are considered good if they are useful. Emotivism makes us insensitive to truth, denying its existence as a correlate of rationality in the sphere of ethics.

What emotivism has made us realise in the context of post-truth is the fact that truth based only on rationality is no longer attractive. In this regard, some argue that today truth requires a more emotional system of

transmission. “Today’s truth-teller must speak” – d’Ancona writes – “to head and heart alike” (d’Ancona 2017, 131). This can be interpreted as a kind of victory of emotivism.

To conclude, it seems that one of the elements that can reduce the influence of post-truth on the life contemporary man and, at the same time, make him sensitive to truth is the rejection of not only the emotive theory (which has already been achieved), but also the emotive attitude. Can this be done by appealing only to reason? As long as nobody wants to be considered a liar, there is hope of regaining the truth, including the truth proclaiming that the assertion that post-truth supposedly exists must be considered false.

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KSENIA O. PROSYUKOVA<sup>1</sup>

## THE ETHICS OF THE SYRIAN MIGRATION CRISIS

### Abstract

The Syrian migration crisis is one of the biggest social crises of the modern era. This is evidenced by the geographical spread of the consequences, the number of refugees in each of the host countries and other bare statistics. In the context of this crisis, the governments of the host countries are making efforts to solve many problems related to the political status of refugees, their psychological adaptation to new surroundings, economic challenges for the host countries, along with issues connected with the integration and socialization of migrants. However, not many of us think about the ethical side of the migration process. Moreover, sometimes such aspects as the violation of human rights, confrontation between the ethical principles of Islam and the secular culture of Europe, and confrontation between Christian and Islamic values are simply ignored. Nevertheless, all these “inconvenient” topics are breeding grounds for concentrating misunderstandings and developing zero tolerance towards migrants, and which have an impact on the overall outcome. The migration crisis is not a temporary “inconvenience,” not a desperate measure, it is a process of transformation of European society. We consider this process as a social evolution that can be in the best interest of all participants. However, this process is impossible without reaching a compromise on ethical issues. This article is devoted to examining the ethical dilemma of the migration crisis and finding ways of solving it.

Keywords: ethics, migration, Syria, refugees, crisis, ethical problems, migrants

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Few people have ever thought how stressful forced migration is for an individual. On a scale from 0 to 10, psychologists estimate the level of stress for a migrant at around 9, i.e. almost the maximum level. In order to illustrate

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this indicator more clearly, it makes sense to add that this is the same level of stress experienced by a person who has lost a family member or finds out about a fatal medical diagnosis. In both such cases, society is ready to react – there are psychological aid programs, a code of ethics used by medical specialists in working with patients who have learned about a fatal diagnosis, as well as unspoken ethical principles accepted by members of society that somehow clearly regulate behavior patterns in communication, enabling us to show empathy, provide support and assistance. In the case of migrants, and especially forced migrants (refugees), the situation is completely different. In the process of numerous interviews that we conducted at different stages of this study, mainly related to analyzing the process of adaptation of Syrian refugees to a new social environment, we were able to identify the prevailing views regarding migrants that exist in society as:

- migrants are burden for the economy;
- migrants create risks for the social well-being of the country;
- migrants are the major factor that increases the crime rate, etc.

On the positive side, the general perception of migrants is not limited to only negative connotations: some of the respondents mentioned the potential migrants create for the development of new industries; the productive effect of the exchange of cultures; the emergence of new directions in art, etc. In general, however, these concerned evaluative judgments of the host society (in this context we consider the inhabitants of Europe as members of the “host community;” thereafter, there is potential for further specific research of a number of countries that have accepted the largest number of refugees).

The aim of this study is to analyze the ethical component of the migration issue. To achieve this aim, we identified four key objectives, namely:

1. to provide a definition of ethics in the context of cross-cultural interaction of migrants and members of the host society.
2. to identify the key markers of the image of a migrant as part of an associative experiment based on a series of detailed interviews.
3. to consider the key factors affecting the formation of the image of a migrant in the minds of members of the host society, as well as the emergence of prejudices and stereotypes.
4. to formulate an ethical dilemma and suggest possible ways to resolve it.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

At the first stage of our research, we considered the existing definitions of ethics, examined the existing approaches to detailing ethical knowledge, as well as types of ethics, all of which allowed us to propose a definition of ethics in the context of the migration crisis through the application of the analytic-synthetic method.

At the second stage, we conducted an associative experiment with the purpose of determining the key characteristics of the image of migrants in modern society. In total, 124 volunteers, namely adult respondents living in different countries who, according to the UN data, had experienced the effects of the migration crisis, took part in the experiment. The experiment was conditionally divided into two stages: at the first stage, the respondents had to offer associations that instantly appeared when they perceived auditory (by ear) information (the words “migrant,” “refugee,” “Syrian,” “female migrant,” “refugee child,” “migrants,” “refugees,” “Syrians”) and visual information (sound-off television reports on migrants, photographs from magazines and newspapers without text). At the second stage, a series of detailed interviews with respondents made it possible to determine the presence/absence of personal experience of interaction with migrants, as well as the resources for obtaining basic information about the situation concerning migrants in their country.

At the third stage of the study, we analyzed 37 sources (popular newspapers and magazines in different countries of the EU and the Middle East), selected by random sampling, for the publication of materials that could contribute to the negative stereotyping of the image of migrants. The indicator of the frequency of publication of materials in the media was also taken into account (what percentage of articles of all materials published about migrants contains evaluative judgments that can form a negative image of a migrant in society).

At the fourth stage, we presented the concept of the “ethical dilemma” existing in the context of the migration crisis, and suggested possible ways to resolve ethical contradictions.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. DEFINITION OF ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MIGRATION CRISIS

In philosophy, the perception of ethics is reduced to the concept of virtue itself (Bartlett et al. 2012, 27). In the modern sense of the term, ethics is a philosophical school of thought that studies morality as one of the most important aspects of the life both of an individual and society. If morality is an existing specific phenomenon of social life, then ethics as a science theoretically substantiates a certain moral system by studying morality, its essence, nature and structure, the laws of occurrence and development, and its place in the system of other social relations.

Historically, the object of ethics has changed significantly. Since it developed as a school for educating the individual, teaching them virtues, it was, and still is considered (by religious ideologists) as a person's exhortation for the fulfillment of divine covenants that ensure the immortality of that person. It is characterized as a doctrine of incontestable duty and the ways of its fulfillment, as well as a source of knowledge on the formation of a "new man" — a selfless developer of an absolutely just society, etc. (Lippmann 1921, 78). Ethics as a science not only studies, generalizes and systematizes the principles and norms of morality that are applicable by society, but also contributes to the development of such moral ideas that meet historical needs to the maximum extent, thereby contributing to the development of society and the individual as a member of this society. Ethics, as a science, serves the social and economic progress of society and the adoption of the principles of humanism and justice in it.

The word "ethics" was formed by Aristotle from the word "ethos," which had several meanings in ancient times. Ethos in its first meaning is a habitat, a dwelling, an animal den. Later, it began to denote the stable nature of a certain phenomenon, a custom, just a habit, temper or character (Bartlett et al. 2012, 67–69).

It is important to see two major connotative meanings of the word ethos, preserved at the present time:

- the first meaning of ethos is a qualitative characteristic of society, namely the mores, habits, customs inherent in a particular ethnos, or the nature of a nation, predetermined by the "place" constituting its habitat. This is the definition of ethos as characterized by cultural anthropology and ethnography. In this sense, we can talk about European, Russian, Japanese ethos, and so on;

- the second meaning of the word *ethos* – the character and fate of an individual – was developed in traditional ethics. Its object is the individual him/herself, their individual moral problems and values, their rationality and ability to solve any problems independently (Bartlett et al. 2012, 67–69).

In general, ethics represents a combination of different types:

- professional ethics, as a set of certain principles and rules that are observed by specialists from the same professional field in relation to each other; a kind of solidarity and unconditional support. As examples of professional ethics, we can list business ethics, medical ethics, ethics of translators, lawyers, etc.;
- applied ethics, namely a set of principles, norms and rules that perform, on the basis of normative ethics, the practical function of teaching people proper behavior in specific situations and in certain areas of their life. As examples of ethical problems that fall under the definition of applied ethics, we can list euthanasia, the issue of gay marriage, the right to abortion, the use of the death penalty as a form of capital punishment, etc. (Habermas 1983, 126).

However, more and more frequently scholars insist that there is a need for a detailed examination of the concept of “applied ethics” in such areas of philosophy as:

- environmental ethics as norms of individual behavior in relation to the environment;
- civil ethics as norms of behavior of an individual in relation to society;
- situational ethics, which often comes down to the concept of “etiquette,” namely the norms and traditions of behavior depending on the communicative situation and aspects of the social environment;
- social ethics, which considers concepts such as social institutions, social morality, social justice, social responsibility, philanthropy, patriotism, cosmopolitanism, social trust, etc.

As we can see, none of the existing concepts of ethics fully complies with ethics in the context of the migration issue. On the one hand, ethical principles governing the perception and interaction of “aliens” with the members of the “host society” combine aspects of civil ethics (statement “a migrant is (not) a citizen of a country, and therefore can (not) have proper patriotic feelings about my state, remain indifferent to its problems, make efforts to create a common good and act in the interests and for the

development of the state) and social ethics (such statements as “an alien can (not) be trusted,” “an alien should (not) have access to social welfare [education, medicine, social assistance, etc.]”).

Therefore, our present understanding of ethics in the context of the socialization of migrants should be reviewed and supplemented. Another problem is the perception of socialization as a process that is more often perceived as a mechanism of achieving conformity and adaptation of an individual to the norms, requirements and views of society. This ultimately contradicts the actual concept of “socialization,” which includes not only the process of assimilation of norms, rules of behavior, values, knowledge and skills, but also the process of integration of the individual by achieving harmony in new conditions and a sense of comfort in the process of communication with members of the new society, gaining confidence that, as a member of this society, he or she is needed, required and has equal opportunities for self-development.

Thus, considering ethics in the context of migration issues, we can define this as a set of norms, principles and rules of behavior within the interaction of an individual and society in a new social and cultural environment, as well as with members of the same (or other) “alien” culture.

### 3.2. STEREOTYPING AND THE IMAGE OF “A MIGRANT” (ASSOCIATIVE EXPERIMENT)

The formation of stereotypes and prejudices is a protective function of our psyche, which in the process of evolution was supposed to protect society from the harmful effects of any alien culture; a mechanism that helps one to form an idea based on already existing beliefs and ideas that all members of the same society have about an object. To consider the process of formation of stereotypes from the point of view of existing theories of cross-cultural communication, we should review several different ways that stereotypes are formed:

- Stereotypes that are absorbed in the process of enculturation. In any culture, there are stereotypes regarding other cultures. First of all, stereotypes are formed about groups of people representative of this culture with whom they interact and/or are in mostly conflict (or have been in the past). Such stereotypes are passed down from generation to generation, from parents to children;
- Stereotypes that are formed in the process of communication with significant others: relatives, friends, teachers, etc.;

- Stereotypes that arise as a result of personal contacts with individual representatives of an alien culture;
- The media also has an enormous impact on emergence of stereotypes (to be considered further). Most people identify television, press and radio as authoritative sources of information that shape social perception of a particular culture (McGarty 2002, 47).

At the present stage of social development, we are increasingly confronted with the statement “stereotyping (emergence of stereotypes) is a negative process that forces attribution (of certain qualities that are not directly presented in the current communicative situation and never occurred at the previous cases of contact), thereby depriving the participants in the communication process of freedom of communication and impartiality, creating barriers and obstacles to communication.

In fact, most experts in the field of cross-cultural communication hold the opinion that it is necessary to separate “stereotypes” and “prejudices.” Prejudice as the setting of a biased and hostile attitude towards something/somebody without sufficient grounds is, of course, a factor that can potentially create obstacles for the successful communication between members of different social or cultural groups. Moreover, prejudices become an indirect cause of estrangement and even hatred. However, stereotypes constitute only a set of basic knowledge about a cultural or social group, which (as a rule) is generally not negative and, on the whole, reflects some common features of the members of the same group. The existence of stereotypes itself does not become an obstacle for the development of successful communication. It makes more sense to analyze the process of managing stereotypes, which is a three-stage process, namely: the awareness of stereotypes – the deactivation of negative stereotypes – the actualization of positive stereotypes.

As part of our study, one of the key tasks we identified as the need to analyze the existing “image of a migrant.” By “image” we considered a certain general stereotypical idea of migrants (and refugees) among members of the host culture. In the context of “stereotype awareness” we carried out one of the most effective experiments of our analysis, which was an associative experiment. This experiment was only the first attempt to analyze the “image of a migrant” and has huge potential for further development. At the first stage, we selected 124 volunteers who agreed to take part in the experiment. These 124 individuals were adults with different background from different countries – students, professors, housewives,

etc. We asked them to give instant associations for a word “migrant” – we did not indicate anything else – sex, ethnicity, age. Thus, we got such answers as “man” (92), “criminal” (87), “someone who doesn’t speak my language” (78), “Arab” (76), “terrorist” (54), “Islamist” (50), “different” (49), “African” (46), “guest” (34), and so on. This is a simple example of what we feel about migration: we see migrants as a threat to our safety, our principles, the civil order, our culture and traditions.

Furthermore, we asked our respondents to imagine a “female refugee” or “a minor refugee” and got much softer answers with the expression of empathy: “poor” (101), “mother” (100), “homeless” (98), “beggar” (96), “Arab” (65), “different” (43), etc.

The associative experiment vividly demonstrates that the depersonalized concept of “migrant” creates clearly negative associations in the minds of the members of the host society. However, as soon as the concept is supplemented with more information (gender, age, profession), negative associations are leveled, the associative field shifts to softer wording. Therefore, if we understand what affects the formation of a negative associative field of the concept of “a migrant,” we can then figure out which components of the stereotype can be deactivated and which can be activated in order to ensure communication and the successful integration of migrants into their new environment.

### 3.3. KEY FACTORS AFFECTING FORMATION OF COLLECTIVE IMAGE OF “A MIGRANT”

There are numerous factors that contribute to stereotyping and affect the formation of a collective image of “a migrant.” Nearly all of them come down to two categories, namely “sensory experience” (personal communication with members of a group, perception of cultural objects (cinema, literature), historical memory) and “social commissioning.” And if the first category is quite difficult to regulate, and the processes of formation of stereotypes are very chaotic and often quite personalized, then the second category is much more interesting to researchers, and the very concept of “social commissioning” needs to be clarified.

Generally speaking, “social commissioning” refers to a social need that is relevant to society as a whole. It can be related to performance of intellectual work, for example, in the field of art or culture, taking into account the ideological orientation of the official policy of the state (Meteley 2010). We can refer art to the so-called provider of social attitudes: the Russian

writer Maxim Gorky was one of those who mentioned the “educational potential of literature.” Although today we would probably discuss the major potential of cinema, the dominant role in formation of social stereotypes, of course, is assigned to the media. For this reason, in the framework of the undertaken analysis, we decided to study what impact media has had on formation of the collective image of “a migrant” in recent years.

Turkey was among those countries that hosted the largest community of Syrians displaced by the ongoing conflict: in August 2015 the Turkish Ministry of Interior Affairs stated that 1,905,000 had already arrived. According to a report that examined 177 news articles, only three cited Syrian refugees’ opinions. The Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet*, for example, published eight articles during a year that related refugees to social tension, rent increases and rising unemployment. The articles mostly addressed the refugee question as a security issue, talking about measures against public-order disruption. In most cases refugees were identified with crime, sex work and begging. The media, while seemingly asking citizens to “tolerate” these “visitors,” failed to cover the issue from a rights-based perspective (Moving Stories 2015).

We can also address the UK with the same issue: as part of global media coverage of the tragic events that united hundreds of migrants who drowned off the coast of Italy, *The Sun* columnist Katie Hopkins wrote: “I don’t care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don’t care... these migrants are like cockroaches... they are built to survive a nuclear bomb. They are survivors.” *The Daily Express* some months before that published 22 negative front pages stories about asylum seekers and refugees in a single 31-day period (Moving Stories 2015).

Another country where migration is not just a newspaper story, but the sad reality, is Lebanon which has the most refugees, with every third person being a Syrian refugee. In January 2018, the Lebanese daily newspaper *Annahar* published scorching criticism by Hussein Hazoury who said Hamra Street, Beirut’s one-time Champs Elysées, had changed color from “hamra” (red) to “sawda” (black) with the unregulated influx of (dark-skinned) Syrians. He complained that the street had lost its charm, that the Syrian presence had changed Hamra’s demography, and that restaurant owners were decrying the proliferation of cheap Syrian labor and competition from Syrian eateries. Dina Moukalled, a Lebanese reporter says: “Media usually deal with refugees as a block and not as individual stories.

There is some good coverage, but that does not represent the mainstream media” (Moving Stories 2015).

As we can see, despite the general ideology of tolerance, the media nevertheless actively forms a negative image of a “migrant,” which inevitably leads to the actualization of a negative stereotype, which afterwards creates obstacles for positive communication between migrants and members of the host society, as well as the successful integration of migrants into their new environment.

#### 3.4. “ETHICAL DILEMMAS” AND THE MIGRATION ISSUE

As a part of a psychological experiment, we proceed to the ethical component of the migration crisis. In the course of numerous interviews that we conducted at the stages of analyzing the process of integrating refugees into a new educational environment, we came to the conclusion that key ethical problems arise due to the basic beliefs that exist in society and are formed on the basis of stereotypical ideas about migrants, that are being actualized, among others, by the media:

- We treat migrants and refugees as a “temporary phenomenon,” a kind of “inconvenience” that disrupts the usual course of things, becoming a threat to our values, traditions and self-identification. It makes sense, therefore, to perceive migration as a process of global social change, one of the stages of globalization, the social evolution, which is also facilitated by economic and political transformations: the definition of “borders” between countries is being erased, economic and political unions and alliances are appearing, contributing to rapprochement of countries, cultural interaction creates potential for the development of new, related areas in science and art. When the situation in Syria (and other crisis regions) becomes stable, most of the current migrants and refugees will not return home (as evidenced by statistics – most of the labor migrants from Turkey settled in Germany, although initially the engagement of Turkish specialists was seen as a temporary solution ).
- The existing programs for integration and adaptation of refugees and migrants are based on the idea of introducing migrants to the culture of the host country, its norms and rules of behavior, traditions and customs, thereby adapting the migrants themselves, changing them in accordance with our expectations and ideas. A counter-process of

adaptation of the members of the host society to changing reality could be a more productive tactic. The position “a foreign culture does not threaten my identity, does not aim to destroy my values and views, but, on the contrary, creates the potential for discovering my own culture in the process of cultural exchange” contributes to greater openness, understanding and communication.

- The above-mentioned associative experiment proved that a negative association was mainly formed when a respondent heard the plural form of the word “migrant” (migrants). When we consider migration as something impersonal, we form the negative attitudes of the members of the host society. This group often associate migrants as a group with danger, risks to their normal life style, the cause of crime. In the media, all information about migrants is more often presented in the form of statistical summaries, where we do not notice the people behind figures and percentages. At the same time, many of our respondents noted that there was a person (a friend, a neighbor, a colleague) in their immediate circle, who is a migrant or refugee, who is in a good relationship with them, and such individual does not seem to be “an alien,” “not like everyone else,” “dangerous” to them.

Thus, in order to resolve the “ethical dilemma” in the context of the migration crisis, we must focus on three key statements: the “constancy” of migrants as active members of society, the rejection of the mononational and monocultural paradigm of society and the development of an individualized approach and deactivation of group stereotypes concerning migrants.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research allowed us to draw to the following conclusions:

- the concept of “ethics” in relation to the issue of migrants needs to be clarified: ethics (in the context of the migration context) is a set of norms, principles and rules of behavior and interaction of an individual and society in a new social and cultural environment, as well as the interaction of an individual with members of the same or a different “alien” group;
- the associative experiment clearly demonstrated that such impersonal, neutral lexical units as “migrant” and its plural form “migrants,”

“refugee” and “refugees” provoke mainly negative associations (criminal, alien, terrorist, Islamist, etc.), while visual images of a female refugee, refugee children, migrant families form clearly neutral associations (Syrians, Arabs) or provoke empathy (family, beggars, poor, homeless). Although in interviews, respondents also noted that migrants as a phenomenon create a sense of danger, insecurity and anxiety, the vast majority of respondents (113 out of 124) admitted that they are personally acquainted with migrants and refugees (neighbors, colleagues, friends), whose company they enjoyed and never refer any previously mentioned associations to them.

- in the course of interviews we found out that the main information source about the situation with migrants was mass media. We analyzed the major newspapers – *Hürriyet*, *The Sun*, *The Daily Express*, *Annahar*, etc., and came to the conclusion that two-thirds of all materials are either strictly formal (statistics) or contain evaluative judgments, which indirectly affects the formation of negative social stereotypes about migrants and refugees and creates obstacles for the successful integration and adaptation of migrants and refugees into their new social environment.
- as part of the psychological experiment, we suggested the so-called “ethical dilemma” in the context of the migration issue and proposed ways to resolve this dilemma, namely: 1. The perception of migrants as a “constant” of modern society, rather than temporary “inconvenience;” 2. The rejection of the mononational and monocultural paradigm of society with the vector to a multi-ethnic and multicultural society, as well as; 3. The development of an individualized approach to migrants and the deactivation of group stereotypes about migrants.

We suggest that the following problems deserve more attention in further research:

- the issue of the ethics in migration, as a section of applied ethics, which can and should be presented in the form of basic ethical principles;
- the continuation of the associative experiment and a series of interviews with the aim of analyzing the experience of each country (regional case-study) according to the given criteria;
- the potential of art (both visual and non-visual) for the establishment of positive stereotypes regarding migrants.

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EDMONDO GRASSI<sup>1</sup>

## THE FORGERY OF DEEFAKE AND THE “ADVENT” OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

### Abstract

The concept of politics changes its semantic value according to the historical period and the cultural changes affecting the social fabric. In classical literature, there was no distinction between politics and society or politics and ethics, since the first indicated the collective space in which cultural, social, economic relations of human life developed that were differentiated from other living forms. To date, with the advent of digitalization and artificial intelligence, we have a concrete assessment of how politics has acquired a new perspective and is changing to adapt to new technologies and its uses: on the one hand, we are experiencing the propagation of debate, confrontation, and information accessible at any time. On the other hand, it has become an instrument for the annihilation of rivals and subjugation of those who consider any data received from the Internet as truthful, exploiting the media and digital technologies, until it pervades the social structure, making even nonsense seem credible. The purpose of this contribution, therefore, is to outline theoretically the contours and contemporary phenomena that relate, through a dialogical relationship, with the use of deepfake techniques and artificial intelligence technology, the concepts of politics – in its dimension of the relationship of collective power – and of social communication.

Keywords: communication, artificial intelligence, deepfake, politics, society

### NOTES ON MORALITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH POLITICS

Morality is an objective practice that implies the involvement of values and models of behavior on the basis of which a subject chooses to interconnect with society, deciding according to their own sense of cultural belonging

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the ethical principles that will define them. These elements originate from the representation of social reality and political representation, through which the individual experiences their own participatory action and identity formation within the collective organization to which he or she belongs, stating that "it is not, therefore, only to have a part, in the sense of constituting, holding or controlling, and influencing political power, but also and above all of being part, being active subjects of political power, since sovereignty always rests, in principle, with the people"<sup>2</sup> (Cedroni 1987: 33) Conducting a sociological discourse involving the concepts of ethics and morals, in the contemporary world, is complex due to the intrinsic mutability within the body of society and its material reproductions (Tognonato 2018).

Kant, in *Appendix I* of his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, affirms that morality itself is a tool that the social individual uses in its political applications and that the figure of the moral politician must be strengthened. He or she is the one who is able to place morality at the center of their choices first of all, which must never be subordinated to political needs, combining the latter with collective values, arguing that "Although the saying, 'Honesty is the best policy' expresses a theory which, alas, is often contradicted in practice, yet the likewise theoretical maxim, 'Honesty is better than any policy,' is exalted high above every possible objection, is indeed the necessary condition of all politics."<sup>3</sup> (Kant 2004: 82–83).

Ever since the Sophoclean tragedy of *Antigone*, political power, through the corruption of customs and traditions, has tried to stain the ethical principles of being guided by the concepts of freedom, truth and equality, even when placing a simple handful of earth on a lifeless body – a gesture of non-violent protest – may represent an affront to a personalized policy. Just as Machiavelli asserted that Cosimo de' Medici could not govern Florence according to the dictates of collective morality, Jean Paul Sarte declares in *Dirty Hands* that those who carry out political activities cannot help but get their hands dirty with mud or blood.

Therefore, those who play a political role will often be "forced" to corrupt their moral consistency even when it comes to manifesting the truth of the facts according to the definition proposed by Benjamin Constant, who asserted that affirming the principle of truth is one of a person's moral

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<sup>2</sup> Translation by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Translation from: I. Kant. *Perpetual Peace*, retrieved from: A Project Gutenberg eBook.

duties “but only towards those who have the right to the truth. Now no one has the right to a truth that harms others”<sup>4</sup> (Constant 2008:29).

Norberto Bobbio, through his criticism and reflection on the issues of personal rights, produces a central analysis on the relationship between ethics and politics, in which elements emerge that can give rise to modes of justification to bridge the gap that exists between common morality and political conduct, between ethical norms and the development of the institutional powers that govern society (Bobbio 1997). Bobbio outlined a parable of political choices, firstly, according to the theme of justification, at the moment when the need arises to give greater clarity to acts that are located on the border of common ethics; secondly, derogation, when a policy violates rules and customs for the implementation of a hypothetical superior good; thirdly, special ethics, in which there is a momentary or selective reformulation of the rules in order to face a political commitment; and, finally, the superiority of politics, in which the subject holding power can, thanks to his or her status, decide which ethics is best at a given time or context. Democratic states by their very nature live in a cyclical march of transformation, requiring continuous remodeling (Bove-ro 2014). Moreover, it is not desirable to place the ethical question itself at the center of the debate but the discussion of its evolution with respect to changes in a society where change is synonymous with culture, and that it is necessary, in other words, to discuss the morality of respective behavior.

For example, the debate on ethics linked to new technologies and the concepts of data sharing, freedom of information and the use and understanding of these tools is fundamental in order to conceive the flows of the evolution of the identity of the subject, their ability to analysis and, more importantly, its critical and processing information tools that grow at exponential speeds and in volumes that are not possible to be conceived by human perception. The discussion thus finds its focus of interest in the areas of lawfulness or illegality concerning the way in which the data of each individual user are recorded, stored, absorbed and processed by the artificial intelligence systems of the companies that are used daily either directly or indirectly, and while being conscious or unconscious of digital devices. A problem therefore exists that sees the exercise of the freedom of the social individual to live in their own environment – one which is now unique

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<sup>4</sup> Translation by the author.

and without borders between analogue and digital – and to act socially in full possession of their rights which collides, unavoidably, with a lack of awareness and the uncertainty of how one's digital information is retained and processed by third parties, and how there are no principles or rules to observe or apply in this regard. Often, however, these questions do not find space in the daily life of the user themselves who assigns, grants, distributes portions of their own self throughout the Internet: be it information, data, views, images, up to the transfer of every part of their body and own thoughts, which are almost reproducible by artificial technologies.

## ON DEEPPFAKE, ROBOT MAYORS AND A.I.

The foundations of contemporary society rest on the use of images (Meyrowitz 1993, Thompson 1998, Luhmann 2000), their immediate diffusion and sharing that reflect back at each other from every point of the planet, having canceled the boundaries of space and time thanks to the use of the Internet. This same society that discovers information at a given moment, engages in collective sharing and conducting debates between cultures in a direct manner, is the very same one that, however, does not understand the value of written communication, the reflective exchange of ideas, the thoughtfulness in the use of words and the capacity that the intellect could offer to an increasingly accurate, broad and multi-faceted examination. Indeed, too often the images used according to today's social and communicational parameters do not help, since they are elements of the negative simplification of a message that undergoes an emphasis devoid of content, as happens in politics – understood as the good order of society – which places substance in the background, preferring just form and its manipulation (Mattioli 2013).

Here, one should consider the first great example of the rapid spread of misinformation (Wardle, Derakhshan 2017) – meaning the disclosure of information, facts, news that is untrue but without malicious intent – namely the radio broadcast of the adaptation of the science fiction novel *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells, which took place in 1938. In this case, a section of the American population already provided proof of their blind belief that aliens were invading the United States, just because the radio – the medium that dominated in those years – had literally transmitted its message to every individual who heard it. Although the intent

was to create entertainment, the result was that the broadcast took the form of a bulletin giving information on the event: thus, listeners believed it was real news. From this example, which is not “fake news” – a term and concept that has gone viral since 2016<sup>5</sup> – it emerges how in reality, the social individual is easily manipulated through the media, and how in the contemporary world it is even easier to seduce the population through spreading totally false news (Silverman, Singer-Vine 2016), such as the Pope’s endorsement of Donald Trump, which was published during the US presidential election campaign, or the famous “Pizzagate” conspiracy theory (Derkhshan 2017).

In order to define the concept of fake news (Caplan et al. 2018, Lazer et al. 2018, Barthel et al. 2016, Qayyum et al. 2019), it could be argued that this comprises “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers” (Alcott, Gentzkow 2017). They are manufactured news, without foundation, which cannot be subjected to a possible immediate factual confirmation, but which are published according to the style of journalistic articles, following specific editing, tracing news of the moment, inculcating in the reader a sense of doubt that also manifests itself in their ability to discern true from false.

With the advent of the Internet, information strategies have met, mixed and merged. Being a cultural technology, it embodies both the communication structures aimed at the masses, those used for interpersonal relationships and, even more, has managed to become more and more rooted in the subject’s everyday life. A greater acceleration of an intimate, emotional, individual nature also became possible thanks to the advent of artificial intelligence (Grassi 2020), which has been able to combine the macro needs of postmodern society and capitalism based both on control and on data collection (Zuboff 2018, Fry 2019), with the micro-drives of the subject, grafting onto the latter an immanent extension of their body, but even more so for their needs, dreams and desires (Lemov 2015, Finn 2018, Grassi 2018). The advent of artificial intelligences is impacting the management of common freedoms with significant changes to such freedoms in private and public life, those of the individual and of the community, seeking more and more in the artificialization of the self and in one’s

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<sup>5</sup> Sarlin B. (2018, January 14). *‘Fake news’ went viral in 2016. This expert studied who clicked*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/fake-news-went-viral-2016-expert-studied-who-clicked-n836581>.

relationship with machines, places, subjects, and reflexes for interacting with the other self. These changes can become new bridges towards aspects of the human being as yet not investigated, towards a new ontological protrusion where *technē* is no longer a function of *physis*, but produces it, becoming what we could define as *techne-naturans*: a technological praxis that is born of nature and which is expressed in its fusion. The hidden complexity of technology and, therefore, of reality indicates the need to rethink the relationship between the tangibility of the natural and its digitized and mechanized representations. After all, it must be recognized that the natural and the artificial are synonymous with the actions of the social individual.

The expression of complexity that is combined with the spontaneity and immediacy of technology and its applications can be experienced by analyzing the deepfake technique. This is a technique, based on artificial intelligence and deep learning – a process through which an artificial intelligence algorithm is able to improve its performance – which allows one to create hyper-realistic videos in which it is possible to manipulate faces, movements, and the words of the photographed subject. One may also produce an exchange of faces between two subjects, through the superimposition or processing of images and videos that will create a fake video, in which the subject performs actions or expresses opinions that have never been implemented or externalized, but appear authentic (Chawla 2019). Thanks to the advancement of machine learning and neural networks, artificial intelligence takes advantage of the network of interconnected nodes that perform a series of calculations/exercises to improve their performance and, after adequate training, are applied in order to achieve the initial goal for which it was programmed, namely: manipulate a given face and adapt it to appear on the body of another (at least in this case).

The first public dissemination of this technique dates back to December 2017, when a Reddit user by the nickname *deepfakes*<sup>6</sup> released a video of fake pornographic material in which the face of actress Gal Gadot was manipulated to appear on the body of a hardcore movie actress, demonstrating that great programming skills do not seem to be needed for its application. A video of this magnitude can have repercussions that can be placed between revenge-porn, the discrediting of a political opponent,

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<sup>6</sup> This is the combination of the terms "deep," deriving from deep learning, and "fake," to indicate the mendacious nature of the material produced.

the implementation of personal threats or the production of propaganda based on falsehood with terrorist intentions. This results in undermining the trust of the user who comes across such artificial material and producing a deception that can negatively affect both the life of the manipulated subject and of those who, while viewing (Patrini et al. 2018), are taken in by the malicious uses of artificial intelligence (Brundage et al. 2018).

In November 2017, a group of researchers from the University of Washington<sup>7</sup> developed an algorithm capable of synchronizing an audio clip with the video movement present in a video, thus tricking the viewer into believing that the person is actually making such statements: “the actor” selected for the video was Barack Obama<sup>8</sup> who discusses terrorism, labor and health reforms and topics that are politically relevant to the US population. In this case, the artificial intelligence converts the audio data into the lip movements to be reproduced, inserting them within the face of the selected person. The working group chose the figure of the former president because the algorithm, trained through deeplearning, would have been able to collect video data existing on the Internet in huge quantities. They took 14 hours of Obama’s speeches to train the algorithm and create their own model of “Fake Obama,” before using neural artificial intelligence to model the shape of Obama’s mouth and map their own model onto footage and videos. Prof. Kemelmacher-Shlizerman states that “realistic audio-to-video conversion has practical applications like improving video conferencing for meetings, as well as futuristic ones such as being able to hold a conversation with a historical figure in virtual reality by creating visuals just from audio.”<sup>9</sup> Huge progress has been made thanks to the application of generative adversarial networks (GANs) in order to pit two artificial intelligence algorithms against each other, one creating the fake imagery and the other evaluating its efforts, thereby teaching the synthesis engine to create the best fakes. The team of scientists and programmers are inclined

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<sup>7</sup> For further information: Langston, J. (2017, November 11). Lip-syncing Obama: New tools turn audio clips into realistic video, *University of Washington*. Retrieved from: <https://www.washington.edu/news/2017/07/11/lip-syncing-obama-new-tools-turn-audio-clips-into-realistic-video/>.

<sup>8</sup> BuzzFeed. (2018, April 17). You Won’t Believe What Obama Says In This Video!, *BuzzfeedVideo*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQ54GDm1eL0>.

<sup>9</sup> Langston, J. (2017, November 11). Lip-syncing Obama: New tools turn audio clips into realistic video, *University of Washington*. Retrieved from: <https://www.washington.edu/news/2017/07/11/lip-syncing-obama-new-tools-turn-audio-clips-into-realistic-video/>

to emphasize that this technique could also become useful in being able to declare whether a movie is real or not, by reversing the creation process.

Another case is that relating to the artist Bill Posters who, in 2019, produced a deepfake video in which Mark Zuckerberg declares that Facebook "owns" its users: the more you share, the more you participate in "the Big F's" social network, the more the fake Zuckerberg has rights over the people who use his social network. This video was created as a provocative response to the choice of the American social-media tycoon refusal to remove a doctored video of the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi.<sup>10</sup> In another artistic discrediting project, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson<sup>11</sup> is seen supporting opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn in his bid to hold the same post as himself. The intention behind this is to bring to the attention of public opinion the lack of regulations regarding data and the possibility of exploiting the information circulating on the net through creative processes that constitute environments for debate and confrontation on political issues that affect everything in life: the extent of technological power, the holding of data, the manipulation of data but, most of all, presenting the user with disinformation.

Since then, deepfake technology has become easy to use, and can be produced through the Impressions app – currently available for iOS – which simplifies each step as much as possible, making the production of video montages a realistic goal for any smartphone owner. In addition, thanks to an algorithm created by a group of engineers from Stanford University, it is claimed that editing a video will be like working and correcting a written text.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, the task of researchers in any scientific field should move according to the vision of Mills and the sociological imagination, that is, to train scientists, educators, individuals who are moved by the democratically shared principles of truth and objectivity, justice and values.

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<sup>10</sup> Pelosi videos manipulated to make her appear drunk are being shared on social media, (2019, May 24). *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=93&v=sDOo5nDJwgA&feature=emb\\_title&ab\\_channel=WashingtonPost](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=93&v=sDOo5nDJwgA&feature=emb_title&ab_channel=WashingtonPost).

<sup>11</sup> Altman, D., Posters, B., Future Advocacy. (2019, November 13). DeepFake Boris Johnson, *Darren Altman youtube channel*. Retrieved from: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHbF-4anWbE&ab\\_channel=DarrenAltman](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHbF-4anWbE&ab_channel=DarrenAltman).

<sup>12</sup> Myers, A. (2019, June 5). Stanford engineers make editing video as easy as editing text, *Stanford News*. Retrieved from: <https://news.stanford.edu/2019/06/05/edit-video-editing-text/>.

(Mills 2014). The task of the social researcher is to be able to discuss the practical actions of an event, connecting them to a theoretical structure with the aim of hypothesizing and verifying future scenarios, especially from the point of view that social problems are always problems deriving from social constructs. While technology is an active element in the relational progression of the development of the individual and their connections with the surrounding environment.

Through new technologies, human beings interface with new relational sequences, without being able to understand their true extent and the change of existential paradigm in which they are now immersed. They become a co-subject together with the artificial medium, which acts by nullifying the level of direct consciousness, letting the unconscious nature of mechanics change the perception of the medium, of one's level of attention and the degree of sharing of one's choices.

In this environment, the processes of cultural and ethical change, transmission and conservation are undergoing constant modifications. How is artificial intelligence affecting the spread of and change in shared values in society? What are the moral visions of the next generation? The social construction of this myth<sup>13</sup> – artificial intelligence – which became science went through three fundamental steps: firstly, the vision in which the cognitive abilities of the individual could be reproduced by a machine; secondly, the design of machines that could collaborate with the individual in their cognitive activities; and thirdly, the birth of computers that can be used by individuals. To these three steps, a fourth stage must be added, namely that of the machine that acts autonomously, albeit under the supervision of a person; and a fifth stage, namely that of the machine that acts with the help of another machine, thus expelling the human being from its cognitive and logical processes. The issue is that it is currently unclear what the best policy is for the implementation and diffusion of artificial intelligence in decision-making contexts. In addition, what is already happening is a descent into the field of artificial intelligence, not only in the political discourse but also the elections of some countries.

In Japan, in the spring of 2018, Michihito Matsuda was nominated as future mayor, upholding the principles of “fairness and change” during his election campaign, securing thousands of votes in the city of Tama, not far

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<sup>13</sup> For a study on myth and artificial intelligence, consult: Grassi, E. (2020). *Etica e intelligenza artificiale. Questioni aperte*, Roma: Aracne.

from Tokyo: in fact, he was a robot equipped with artificial intelligence. "Artificial intelligence will change Tama City," he said in political debates, outlining an unorthodox political vision. To combat the aging of the Japanese population, the android expounded the need for a change that could only happen if social policies were foreseen through which artificial intelligence entities would be left free to collect the data of the city – therefore of all residents – in order to create new socially shared guidelines. This electoral speech reached many citizens, causing Michihito Matsuda to secure 4,000 votes, and thereby third place. However, Matsuda was only the face, the simulacrum, the robot fronting the campaign, with the human counterparts being represented by Tetsuzo Matsumoto, vice-president of Softbank, and Norio Murakami, former CEO of Google Japan.<sup>14</sup>

Another case of "artificial" elections occurred during the 2018 presidential elections in Russia, as among the candidates there, was a figure presented only by the name of Alisa. His election campaign was based on slogans such as "the president who knows you best," managing to garner thousands of votes. Once again, Alisa was not a human being, but an artificial intelligence system.<sup>15</sup>

It is relevant to note how these technologies have also had a strong impact on the development of new communication channels in order to establish another type of contact and exchange between political leaders and citizens: in 2014 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Turkey, broadcasted a hologram of himself to speak simultaneously to several groups of thousands of people for an election rally in the city of Izmir. Unable to be physically present there, he recorded his message on a green screen, to then be projected with a full figure image of his body at a height of 3 meters.

What happened in the scenarios described above reflects the way in which politics is changing, welcoming the technological changes of a new era. Investments in the education of citizens, the sharing of strategic plans for public policies, personal security, labor reforms, as well as concerning

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<sup>14</sup> Elections of the City Council for an AI for Tama City, <https://www.ai-mayor.com>, last accessed on 6 October 2021. In this case, the site being in Japanese, the writer used Google's intelligent algorithm for the English translation, in order to consult the site and the structure of the electoral campaign.

<sup>15</sup> Alisa 2018, <https://alisa2018.ru/>, last consultation on 27 September 2019. As in the previous note, the translation was entrusted to the algorithm, but it needed revision by the writer to make it more correct.

the social impacts of artificial intelligence on the community should be among the primary objectives for the inclusion of automation in a person's life. This will succeed in creating a new artificial ecosystem in which it will be possible to benefit from the potential of the technologies of the future. Indeed, the growing automation of governance is no longer science fiction, but a reality we are just beginning to understand.

In the processes of automation of knowledge, artificial intelligences are demonstrating computational abilities unthinkable for a human being, becoming fundamental allies to develop new cognitive and exploratory processes in order to understand the life of the social individual and the future functions to which they will be called to respond to an increasingly interconnected global system. In the next decade, it will be emphasized that the mechanical intelligence of an algorithm will increasingly need the emotional, ethical and intimate reflections of the human being, even if artificial intelligences prove they know how to perform increasingly complex tasks: a human presence in the governance will always be needed.

## ITINERARIES OF REFLECTION

Technological scenarios call on human beings once again to pay attention to ethical processes that involve social and humanistic issues in reflections on future government decisions regarding the management of individual and social freedoms, exposing more and more to public debate the route that displays the intersection between politics and automation, having to discuss the type of world in which we want to live. The impact that technology is having on the individual no longer plays the role of a tool that improves the actions of the subject, but becomes part of the subject itself. This can be potentially dangerous – if not controlled and controllable – due to the power of psychological coercion that images, audio data and video processing can exercise, thus capable of undermining the credibility of everyone (Wolpert 2019).

In contemporary times, the list of policies in national strategies regarding the development, inclusion and release of artificial intelligence is by no means exhaustive (Grassi 2020): governments should make the employment sector more flexible and reshape it according to the great global changes – as in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic; by sharing international training and updating projects for employees and, above all,

citizens; increasing funding for the digitization of public services and incentives for the digitization of daily practices. However, as the current global increase in inequality, polarization and complexity reveals, with or without widespread AI-based automation, governments around the world should take steps to ensure that the benefits of new advanced technologies are widely shared by each individual.

Negative aspects and hostile uses of technology could lead to the production of:

- videos in which a public figure commits illicit acts, indulges in insulting, xenophobic, homophobic, misogynistic utterances – or compromises his moral and political integrity by becoming colluded with mafia associations or illicit trafficking;
- videos in which socially influential people try to influence users with messages driven by political, economic, ethical purposes of a dubious nature, exploiting their fame and influence that these subjects exert on the masses;
- material aimed at revenge, such as revenge porn, wanting to discredit a colleague, an ex-partner or an acquaintance, making him appear in situations considered to be in bad taste or those socially considered indecent;
- simulate terrorist acts, coups d'état, announcements of reprisals with the aim of stirring up subdued civilians, allocation of armaments or international clashes.

In consideration of the above, there are some elements that should engender sociological and philosophical reflection on the progress of these technologies:

- Education; being able to plan and disseminate educational projects that are aimed at forming a personal and social awareness of greater depth regarding the use of digital technologies and the amount of data that is poured into the Internet; namely, those that are aimed at the ability to analyze and perceive truth within the real context in which one lives, considering the Internet itself and the technology that is part of this organic structure.
- Storytelling; considering artificial intelligence as a new element and narrative actor in the life of the subject, being able to evaluate – even if partially – the multiplicity of elements that surround it, also considering the evolution of smart cities and home automation. A.I. presents itself as an active social actor able to tell its own vision

of the existence of human beings, as if it were the plot of a video-documented story.

- Political discussions; what is currently happening with data and its manipulation is the result of unregulated freedom in the world of the internet and in the release of personal information. This should be stemmed by effective education in understanding the medium, regulating its use and policies to limit the production of illicit acts.
- Preventing loss of trust; through the production of fake news and deepfakes, the user will have more and more doubts about which information is true, undermining their ability to analyze and understand; this will more easily spill over to sources from family, friends or colleagues, in turn discrediting accredited newspapers or scientific sources based on academic and research; moreover, the discrediting of a subject and revenge porn are current issues that deserve centrality in collective awareness and in the production of active regulations that are able to protect users.
- Individual-machine integration; in bringing more and more AI within the life of the individual there will be a need for the production of an ethics framework that protects the parties but that encourages collaboration between human beings and an artificially intelligent algorithm. In this way, by training and educating the A.I., it will be possible to create intelligent agents capable of detecting fake content and technologically solving what a person is currently unable to do.
- Network of relationships between citizens, institutions and information sources in order to improve, strengthen and expand mutual exchange relationships aimed at disseminating information, knowledge, education and culture.

Artificial intelligence and the person, big data and privacy, machine learning and prejudices, biometrics and control, automation and rights, are aspects that allow one to reflect on the great inventions of this century, along with unlimited knowledge, constant information, ever faster diagnosis, instant communication, increased security, home automation and assistance.

Although the concept of artificial intelligence seems to acquire a changing value and meaning for each individual, what cannot be denied is the impact it is having on social relationships. The algorithms become a reflection of the users who consult them, acquiring their own specificity depending on the individual with whom they are confronted and from

whom one learns, in part, the dynamics of the surrounding environment. It is a technology that is producing evident collective changes, evolutionary progress in every field, restructuring human interconnections in time and space, becoming nodes of resolution for part of the daily problems of the artificial citizen.

As things stand at the moment, a perfect, impartial, *super partes* algorithm cannot be programmed, except in the world of the imagination, since being creatures of human origin, they will also learn its defects from human beings. Probably, the writing of algorithmic strings should not focus on the dream of creating a perfect machine, but one with which a person can conduct a dialogue when it makes a mistake, and to educate it in order to learn from it.

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SEWERYN KRZYŻEWSKI<sup>1</sup>

## INSTRUMENTALIZATION AS A SIN OF UNTRUTH

*Whoever has been cheated  
turns into an object.*

M. Bakhtin

*But where have we strayed to? We are questioning concerning technology, and we have arrived now at alétheia, at revealing. What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer: everything. For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing.*

M. Heidegger

### Abstract

The reconstructions, analyses and discussions concerning various broadly understood instrumentalized objects available in the subject literature allow one to distinguish and identify at least two interrelated forms of instrumentalization – a weak and a strong form. The former consists of using a particular object for fulfilling an aim in its unspecific functions. Thus, it can be treated as opposite to the phenomenon of functional fixation. The essence of the latter is a change in the position of the instrumentalized object, both in the ontological and axiological order – one which is a degrading change. It is this form of instrumentalization which allows the possibility of its reinterpretation in the categories of a sin of untruth. Such reinterpretation makes use of the multitude of forms of truth and their interrelationships, as well as of the distinction between a “great and small truth.” Thus, the heuristic value of the rhetoric of sin used here enables one to emphasise some important factual aspects. Firstly, referring to many possible dimensions in which instrumentalization can be subjected to evaluation, sin will be treated here metaphorically (due to taking into account all dimensions together) and literally (in order to highlight in consequence its moral, conscious and intended character). Secondly, this rhetoric can reflect

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the complex structure of instrumentalization, expressed in the categories of a sin committed “in thought, word, deed and omission,” of a light or heavy nature, with violation carried out on the nature of the instrumentalized object as its extreme form. Thirdly, rhetoric allows one to understand the perpetrator of instrumentalization’s activation of disguising, justifying or even absolving his activities. Fourthly, this results in seeking out the psychological mechanism of “being led into temptation.” Its complex character can be clearly seen in many cases, especially in the case of political instrumentalization of religion, where, on the one hand, the profanation of religion takes place, while on the other, the legitimisation, ennoblement or even sacralisation of politics occurs.

Keywords: destitute time, instrumentalization, self-assertion, sin of untruth, strong form of instrumentalization, technology, truth of being, weak form of instrumentalization

## INTRODUCTION

The rhetoric of sin used in the title of this study is meant to emphasise the constitutive moment of instrumentalization, i.e. a violation committed on the nature of an object used as a means to achieve an intended goal (purpose, end). I will use these categories interchangeably – as appropriate to the context. It should be stressed that this concerns rhetoric and not metaphors, as sin is to be understood here literally and not metaphorically. This sin is the sin of untruth, which is guided by the two essays of Martin Heidegger used in this text, namely: *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977) and *What Are Poets For?* (1971). These works should be read in the context of his concept of ontological truth. In this context, it does not seem completely absurd to reach also for Mikhail Bakhtin’s thesis, referring to the category of epistemological truth – in his view, a lie turns a deceived man into an object. It is therefore also a sin against his nature and, finally, his truth.

The part of the first of Heidegger’s texts (*The Question Concerning Technology*) quoted above as one of the mottos of this paper, not only justifies the use of this rhetoric, but also determines the structure of these considerations. These will actually constitute a presentation of Heidegger’s argument for the very strong “everything” used here, regarding the relationship between technology and truth (*alétheia*). It seems that the relationship between technology and truth cannot be expressed more strongly than this motto does. As it turns out, this “everything” concerns relationships with

the truth of a strongly and weakly understood concept of instrumentalization. Although this distinction is present in the subject literature, it does not use these characteristic epithets. Political science talks about the necessity of making instrumental decisions and then their implementation in a situation where there are no “ready-made” connections regarding (intended) goals and methods, or the means of their implementation, focusing mainly on their rationality/irrationality (Borkowska-Nowak 2012). There is a phrase “means-end readiness” in neobehaviorism, a distinction that can also be found in everyday language and everyday life: although we know what we want to achieve, we need to decide on the ways or means – a kind of *instrumentarium* – that must be used to achieve the intended goal.

This does not always have to mean the case of a nefarious or unworthy, even sinful “use” of what constitutes this *instrumentarium*, contrary to its nature – mainly an ontic state – and axiological position. In the extreme case, there does not always have to be a violation of the nature of the object. In other words, it is not always the sin of untruth that is committed by “thought, speech, deed and neglect.” This “not always” suggests the usefulness, and maybe even the need to reach for heuristic values regarding the analysis of these two forms of instrumentalization, using Heidegger’s two texts. It is impossible to overestimate even the possibility of showing, thanks to such a comparative analysis, or more precisely, a contrastive analysis, the specific nature of the strong form of instrumentalization in order to display the sinful nature in all its doubtful splendour.

The comparative analysis of two forms of instrumentalization set out here imposes a three-part structure on the text. Firstly, I will use Heidegger’s first text to present the weak form of instrumentalization, focusing on its relationship with the truth. The second text will then serve to show its strong form, also with a focus on its relationship with the truth. For understandable reasons, everything that is not directly related to the title question must remain aside; it is a pity that there will be no room for such beautiful things as the role of poetry, specifically that of Rainer Maria Rilke. In the third part I will show the heuristic values that are proper to the rhetoric of sin used in the conceptualization of the strong form of instrumentalization. Of course, here I will not develop the problems by Heidegger just signalled and not further developed in this context – for example:

- the origin of causality problem (Heidegger 1977, 308);
- the problem of the usefulness/uselessness of religion in explaining the position and role;

- of the human and non-human, i.e. the instrumental factor (Heidegger 1977, 302);
- the problem of an actor or agent who directs a challenge to man before man challenges nature (Heidegger 1977, 299);
- in the problem regarding the distribution of emphases in the understanding of causality – it seems that this idea can be best expressed by distinguishing between effective control and cognitive control, in which there is nothing of agency (Heidegger 1977, 304).

More important than the answers to them is the fact that these questions were asked at all, as without them all the analyses are somewhat suspended in a vacuum. I hope, therefore, that the whole text will provide sufficient justification for the multitude of quotes and their length, concerning the language analyses dictated by Heidegger, mainly etymological, in the field of Greek and German. Although he compared Plato's dynamics of meanings of the category of "idea" with his own actions regarding the category of "enframing," he kept his distance from them. In addition, Heidegger himself, wrote that: "(...) the use of the word *Gestell* as the name for the essence of modern technology, which we are venturing, is almost harmless" (Heidegger 1977, 301).

Thus, these categories allow us to capture such moments and threads that have been absent up to now in the conducted analyses, and which turn out to be particularly important.

In Heidegger's texts, I will try to look for arguments both for the general approach to instrumentalization in terms of the sin of untruth, and for examining its possible internal differentiation, and thus the possibility of distinguishing some of its forms. Therefore, it can be said that the former is a general goal, while the latter is a specific objective.

## 1. WEAK FORM OF INSTRUMENTALIZATION – RECONSTRUCTION OF SELECTED TOPICS HEIDEGGER'S *THE QUESTION CONCERNING TECHNOLOGY*

Heidegger's starting point for his analysis of technology is a naive or then contemporary view of it: "The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology." (Heidegger

1977, 288). The author thus distinguishes two topics – instrumental and anthropological. Within this first topic, two parts can be clearly distinguished – one concerning technology *per se* and the other concerning modern technology. Modern technology should be analysed separately, as in Heidegger's view this first proposition can raise doubts as to the scope of its validity due to its too strong links with the tradition of Greek thought and not be adequate to the approach of modern technology. In this context, a separate analysis of modern technology can serve as a kind of test of the overall validity of the view expressed here.

The possibility of such analyses by Heidegger seems to be confirmed by the structure of relevant arguments. Both in the first part, concerning technology *per se*, and in the second part, concerning modern technology, we first deal with the presented definition, followed by the presentation of various forms of the analysed technology, in order that the same disturbing question is finally posed. Indeed, this question appears for the first time in the form of "Where have we strayed to?", or do we only think that we have strayed? In a moment, it will turn out that what looked like a straying was actually discovery. The second time this question appears in a slightly weaker form, namely "Where are we?". We receive an answer to these questions – in the first case, one so strong that the stronger "everything" is gone, and in the second, one slightly weaker, indicating the starting point. Finally, we receive a justification for this response – one which is strong in the first case, and slightly weaker in the second.

1.1. Although this initial contemporary definition is generally considered correct, Heidegger himself has reservations about such an assessment due to the ambiguous connections between correctness and grasping the essence of things. This is because, according to Heidegger, instrumentality is based on various types of causal relationships, including the "means-end" relationship. As long as we do not know the essence of causality and the essence of instrumentality, one's sense of validity of the initial contemporary understanding may prove to be unfounded. Therefore, Heidegger's natural and expected development of the issue of causality is best summarised in a register of the categories he subsequently introduced, a commentary on their interrelationships and how they relate to the four types of causes proposed by Aristotle (Heidegger 1977, 290–294). Indeed, they are simply used to articulate them.

Here are some examples:

The modes of occasioning the four causes, are at play, then, within bringing-forth. Through bringing-forth the growing things of nature as well as whatever is completed through the crafts and the arts come at any given time to their appearance.

But how does bringing-forth happen, be it in nature or in handwork and art? What is the bringing-forth in which the fourfold way of occasioning plays? Occasioning has to do with the presencing [*Anwesen*] of that which at any given time comes to appearance in bringing-forth. Bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment. Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *alétheia* for revealing. The Roman translate this with *veritas*. We say “truth” and usually understand it as correctness of representation. (...)

For every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing. Bringing-forth, indeed, gathers within itself the four modes of occasioning – causality – and rules them throughout. Within its domain belong end and means as well as instrumentality. Instrumentality is considered to be the fundamental characteristic of technology. If we inquire step by step into what technology, represented as means, actually is, the we shall arrive at revealing (...).

Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth (Heidegger 1977, 293–294).

This long quote seems to summarise and confirm perfectly Heidegger’s understanding of the aforementioned categories for the articulation of causation. It also shows this direction of reflection, which at some point seems to arouse surprise and even anxiety. Therefore, it shows:

- how the fundamental question arises, namely “What does the essence of technology have to do with discovery?”;
- what is the strongest possible answer to it? (“everything”);
- what are the reasons for this answer?

This type of approach was confirmed by other Heidegger’s analyses referring to the special relationship between *techne* and *episteme* present in the Greek tradition (to Plato). These were then treated as different

forms of widely understood cognition, namely understanding, insight or discernment.

1.2. The starting point for a separate analysis of modern technology is the posing of an explicit question and an immediately given answer promising to show unambiguously the novel nature of this technology: “What is modern technology? It too is a revealing. Only when we allow our attention to rest on this fundamental characteristic does that which is new in modern technology show itself to us” (Heidegger 1977, 298). Heidegger’s further argumentation focuses on the precise presentation of this novel nature: “The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth” (Heidegger 1977, 297). The context of this view and further arguments concerning the relationship between modern technology and natural sciences seem to justify talking about this challenge as somehow laying charges against nature. This can occur in various forms. Heidegger has two sets of these forms. One set includes unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about (Heidegger 1977, 298). In the second set, they are placed in the categories of setting upon, ordering, and standing-reserve (Heidegger 1977, 299). To this must be added another category with a highlighted position in both sets: “The essence of modern technology shows itself in what we call enframing” (Heidegger 1977, 305). These all have two characteristic qualities, namely regulation and protection: “Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the revealing that challenges” (Heidegger 1977, 298). Although the distinguished position of this item is associated with the fact that this characteristic is the essence of modern technology, it is, paradoxically, nothing technological in itself. It leads to two forms – producing and presenting – which are ways of discovering truth: “Both are ways of revealing, of *alétheia*.” (Heidegger 1977, 302).

In this context Heidegger’s question: “What kind of unconcealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which results from this setting upon that challenges?” (Heidegger 1977, 298) must naturally appear. Equally natural is another question and its answer, namely: “Where do we find ourselves if now we think one step further regarding what enframing itself actually is? It is nothing technological, nothing on the order of machine. It is the way in which the real reveals itself (...)” (Heidegger 1977, 305).

1.3. The subject of anthropology in Heidegger's analyses is focused on the extraordinary complexity of the man-technology relationship and, ultimately, on the unconcealedness of truth. This dialectical complexity can already be seen in the very structure of the argument – subsequent statements correspond to these particular “buts,” while the contradiction of these theses and antitheses refutes the final synthesis.

This dialectic is already visible in the first question and the answer to it. The starting point for these analyses is the question:

Who accomplishes the challenging setting-upon through which what we call the real is revealed as standing reserve? Obviously, man. (...) But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws. (...) Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged (...). Yet precisely because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, i.e. into the process of ordering (...) as a way of revealing (Heidegger 1977, 299–300).

The next question concerns the circumstances, conditions, measures and ways all this occurs:

Where and how does this revealing happen if it is no mere handiwork of man? We need not look far. (...) Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to mediating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, he finds himself everywhere already brought into the unconcealed. The unconcealment of the unconcealed has already come to pass whenever it calls man forth into the modes of revealing allotted to him. (...) Modern technology, as a revealing which orders, is thus no mere human doing. Therefore we must take the challenging, which (...) gathers man into ordering. (...) We now name that challenging claim which gathers man thither to order the self-revealing as (...) “*Ge-stell*” [enframing] (Heidegger 1977, 300–301).

And further on, Heidegger describes what technology is not:

This work is therefore neither only a human activity nor a mere means within such activity. The merely instrumental, merely anthropological definition of technology is therefore in principle untenable. And it may not be rounded out by being referred back to some metaphysical or religious explanation that undergirds it (Heidegger 1977, 302).

At this point I have to return to a passage already quoted, which talked about this special relationship of man with technology and truth, for Heidegger to ask once again:

Does such revealing happen somewhere beyond all human doing? No. But neither does it happen exclusively in man, or definitively *through* man. (...) Always the unconcealment of that which is goes upon a way of revealing. Always the destining of revealing holds complete sway over man. But that destining is never a fate that compels. For man becomes truly free only insofar as he (...) becomes one who listens, though not one who simply obeys (Heidegger 1977, 305–306).

And then on to a final conclusion:

But when we consider the essence of technology we experience enframing as a destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the open space of destining, a destining that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology or, what comes to the same, to rebel helplessly against it and curse it as the work of the devil. Quite to the contrary, when we once open ourselves expressly to the *essence* of technology we find ourselves taken into a freeing claim (Heidegger 1977, 307).

More specifically, Heidegger states that there are two possibilities, namely:

(...) the possibility of pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked, that man might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primally to the essence of what is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence the requisite belonging to revealing. (...) The destining of revealing is as such, in every one of its modes, and therefore necessarily, *danger* (Heidegger 1977, 307).

Therefore, the human situation in relation to technology is complicated by the fact that mortal danger belongs to the essence of technology:

The actual threat has already afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. Thus where enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense (Heidegger 1977, 309).

All of these complex human relationships with technology are summarised in the following statement: “(...) we consider, finally, that the coming to presence of the essence of technology (...) needs and uses man (...)

one who is needed and used for the safekeeping of the essence of truth.” (Heidegger 1977, 314). Indeed, an excerpt from Rilke’s letter of November 13, 1925 seems to be the affecting and thrilling concretisation of these: “(...) our task is to impress this preliminary, transient earth upon ourselves with so much suffering and so passionately that its nature rises up again ‘invisibly’ within us” (Heidegger 1977, 130).

Coping with this danger reconstructs the characteristic syllogism:

“To save” is to fetch something home into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its genuine appearing. If the essence of technology, enframing, is the extreme danger (...) The essence of technology must harbor in itself the growth of the saving power (Heidegger 1977, 310).

This syllogism clearly shows that the focus on the essence of technology can be associated not only with fears, but also hopes, as its premises suggests.

The excerpts analysed above show that within the framework of the general approach to instrumentalization, it is possible to distinguish its form, which does not necessarily and/or does not always come down to denial of the truth of being, carried out in the mode of “violation.” By limiting himself “only” to the use of an object in a function not specific to it, he gives it (at least sometimes) a creative character. Distinguishing this form of instrumentalization seems to be at the same time an affirmative answer to the question concerning the implementation of the specific objective.

## 2. STRONG FORM OF INSTRUMENTALIZATION – RECONSTRUCTION OF SELECTED TOPICS HEIDEGGER’S *WHAT ARE POETS FOR?*

The title of this section not only suggests, but also explicitly imposes the need to recall and paraphrase the above-quoted motto: Where have we gone wrong? Where are we? We ask the question about instrumentalization, and we have reached the vanity of time, the role of poetry and poets in destitute time. What connects instrumentalization with destitute time? The answer is “everything.” The first signals of this relationship can be found on the introductory pages of this essay. Heidegger wrote:

The time remains destitute not only because God is dead, but because mortals are hardly aware and capable even of their own mortality. Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their own nature.

(...) The time is destitute because it lacks the unconcealedness of the nature of pain, death, and love. This destitution is itself destitute because that realm of being withdraws within which pain and death and love belong together. (...) That realm is the truth of particular beings (...) (Heidegger, 1971, 96–98).

These statements remain valid not only in relation to human nature, love, pain and death, but also to the nature of virtually all things and their relationships. Similarly, mortals will be able to exit destitute time when they find their way to their nature and the relationships between them. In this way, both their nature and their relationships become – because they must become – the subject of ontological analyses. Without these analyses, this way out or break out is simply impossible. This is the summary of excerpts of Heidegger's ontology that are significant for all further analysis. It contains categories in which comparative analysis will be conducted, on the one hand, on the world of things, plants and animals, and, on the other, the world of human beings – their status and functioning, within which their specific nature is associated with different degrees of consciousness:

Like all beings, we are in being only by being ventured in the venture of Being. But because, as the beings who will, we go with the venture, we are more venturesome and thus sooner exposed to danger. When man entrenches himself in purposeful self-assertion, and by means of absolute objectification installs himself in the parting against the Open, then he himself promotes his own unshieldedness (Heidegger 1971, 119–120).

It is with these degrees of consciousness, and more precisely with the increase of consciousness in man, that the difference between them is associated:

(...) that the animal's degree of consciousness set it into the world without the animal's placing the world over against itself at every moment (as we do); the animal is *in* the world; we stand *before it* by virtue of that peculiar turn and intensification which our consciousness has taken. (...) that belongs to representation that Nature is brought before man. Man places before himself the world as the whole of everything objective, and he places himself before the world. Man sets up the world toward himself, and delivers Nature over to himself. We must think of this placing-here, in its broad and multifarious

nature. Where Nature is not satisfactory to man's representation, he reframes or disposes it. (...) By multifarious producing, the world is brought to stand and into position. The Open becomes an object, and is thus twisted around toward the human being (Heidegger 1971, 108–110).

Heidegger's further reasoning comes to instrumentalization in a few steps. The first of these introduces the category of self-assertion termed as willing:

Over against the world as the object, man stations himself and sets himself up as the one who deliberately pushes through all this producing.

To put something before ourselves, propose it, in such a way that what has been proposed, having first been represented, determines all the modes of production in every respect, is a basic characteristic of the attitude which we know as willing. The willing of which we are speaking here is production, placing-here, and this in the sense of objectification purposely putting itself through, asserting itself. (...)

The willing of which we speak here is the putting-through, the self-assertion, whose purpose has already posited the world as the whole of producible objects. This willing determines the nature of modern man, (...). By such willing, modern man turns out to be the being who, in all relations to all that is, and thus in his relation to himself as well, rises up as the producer who puts through, carries out, his own self and establishes this uprising as the absolute rule. The whole objective inventory in terms of which the world appears is given over to, commended to, and thus subjected to the command of self-assertive production. Willing has in it the character of command (...) (Heidegger 1971, 110–111).

The next steps are focused on the consequences of this desire in the environment and the world. The first concerns more or less direct consequences:

Correspondingly, human willing too can be in the mode of self-assertion only by forcing everything under its dominion from the start, even before it can survey it. To such a willing, everything, beforehand and thus subsequently, turns irresistibly into material for self-assertive production. The earth and its atmosphere become raw material. Man becomes human material, which is disposed of with a view to proposed goals. The unconditioned establishment of the unconditional self-assertion by which the world is purposefully made over according to the frame of mind of man's command is a process that emerges from the hidden nature of technology (Heidegger 1971, 111).

The second step, however, concerns further consequences:

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly, and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of man and thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers (Heidegger 1971, 114–115).

And now quite specifically, Heidegger declares: “Self-assertive man, whether or not he knows and wills it as an individual, is the functionary of technology” (Heidegger 1971, 116).

Finally, he describes the human condition in the world as follows:

Self-willing man everywhere reckons with things and men as with objects. What is so reckoned becomes merchandise. Everything is constantly changed about into new orders. The parting against the pure draft establishes itself within the unstilled agitation of the constantly balancing balance. By its objectification of the world, the parting, contrary to its own intention, promotes inconstancy. Thus ventured into the unshielded, man moves within the medium of “businesses” and “exchanges.” Self-assertive man lives by staking his will. He lives essentially by risking his nature in the vibration of money and the currency of values. At this constant trader and middleman, man is the “merchant.” He weighs and measures constantly, yet does not know the real weight of things. Nor does he ever know what in himself is truly weighty and preponderant (Heidegger 1971, 135).

As a consequence, Heidegger then tells us:

What has long since been threatening man with death, and indeed with the death of his own nature, is the unconditional character of mere willing in the sense of purposeful self-assertion in everything. (...)

It is not only the totality of this willing that is dangerous, but willing itself, in the form of self-assertion within a world that is admitted only as will. (...) But above all, technology itself prevents any experience of its nature. (...) The danger consists in the threat that assaults man’s nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils. This danger is *the* danger (Heidegger 1971, 116–117).

The seriousness of this threat or danger naturally directs one's attention towards seeking rescue. The reconstruction of its course, conditions that would have to be met, and significant mechanisms in this respect all go in different directions. At the very beginning of the essay it is said:

Long is the time because even terror, taken by itself as a ground for turning, is powerless as long as there is no turn with mortal men. But there is a turn with mortals, when these find the way to their own nature. That nature lies in this, that mortals reach into the abyss sooner than the heavenly powers. Mortals, when we think of their nature, remain closer to that absence because they are touched by presence, the ancient name of Being (Heidegger 1971, 93).

Later, there are further significant moments in this respect: "The salvation must come from where there is a turn with mortals in their nature. Are there mortals who reach sooner into the abyss of the destitute and its destituteness?" (Heidegger 1971, 118). It is characteristic that certain partial questions are formulated, while sometimes answers are formulated and the conditions included therein: "Can there, however, be a heightening of this willing beyond the absolute of purposeful self-assertion? No." (Heidegger 1971, 119). The most interesting question seems to be formulated at a high level of generality and announcing the answer at the level of generality appropriate for ontology:

(...) what is there still to be dared that would be still more daring than Life, which is itself the daring venture, so that it would be more daring than the Being of beings? In every case and in every respect, what is dared must be such that it concerns every being in as much as it is a being. Of such a kind is Being, and in this way, that it is not one particular kind among others, but the mode of all beings as such.

If Being is what is unique to beings, by what can Being still be surpassed? Only by itself, only by its own, and indeed by expressly entering into its own. Then Being would be the unique which wholly surpasses itself (the *transcendens* pure and simple). But this surpassing, this transcending does not go up and over into something else: it comes up to its own self and back into the nature of its truth. Being itself traverses this going over and is itself its dimension (Heidegger 1971, 131).

The analysis of the excerpts cited above proves that apart from the poorly understood concept of instrumentalization (understood as a creative attitude to an object), its strong form can also be distinguished. Indeed,

this is what it can (and even should) be understood as in terms of denying the truth of being. Thus, once again, the question about the implementation of the specific goal of the discussed considerations can be answered in the affirmative.

### 3. HEURISTIC VALUE OF THE RHETORIC OF SIN

The title of this paper calls for a new look at the otherwise (apparently?) well-known phenomenon of instrumentalization in its two forms in context, as well as from the perspective of two of Heidegger's texts. As a result, instrumentalization, and more specifically its strong form, appears as the outcome of reinterpretation. It is therefore appropriate to look first at the reinterpretation itself undertaken here, and then at its result. I will do this by using two distinctions commonly used in scientific studies (from the "meta" level), and then I will take a closer look at instrumentalization from the perspective of cognitive science, and more precisely its subject matter, i.e. cognition. This is because instrumentalization – in both its strong and weak forms – has been included as a specific way of cognition.

A meta-theoretical reflection on the reinterpretation procedure itself and its result in terms of immanent and transcendent criticism can show whether this procedure was performed in accordance with the rules of art, and thus whether it was, as it was supposed to be, a reinterpretation (from the position of immanent criticism). This is because gaining a new approach to instrumentalization is no better procedure than reinterpreting it (from the position of transcendent criticism). It seems to me that what I have done here complies with the essence of reinterpretation.

While formulating the question concerning the status and value of this operation in terms of the context of discovery and justification, one should check whether this new look at instrumentalization and its reinterpretation is "merely" a discovery. This is because it has turned out here that even an accidental reading of Heidegger's texts meant that instrumentalization can be described differently (a new possibility was discovered in this respect), or whether it not only "merely" discovered, but also justified enough that it can no longer give rise to any doubts as to its value. In other words – is this reinterpretation merely acceptable in discovering, within which "anything goes," or does it require additional, special justifications? Although in this study

I would like to stay within the order of discovery as it seemed important to confirm the value of this discovery, it was possible to “spot” these two forms of instrumentalization in Heidegger’s texts and to identify them clearly.

In the analysis and assessment of the reinterpretation presented here and its result, carried out at the subject level, one must start from the distinction in cognitive science between cognitive behaviour and effective behaviour and – by analogy – cognitive control and effective (behavioural) control and ask if the adopted rhetoric of sin allows us to describe the strong form of instrumentalization as a procedure that allows one to know something about an instrumentalized object, or as its mere use. The same applies to the weak form of instrumentalization, although it is not clear at this time what the negative (non-sin) would be, but also some positive and appropriate rhetoric.

Therefore, the question is: does the rhetoric of sin allow us to treat strongly understood instrumentalization as learning about an instrumentalized object, and not only as unworthy of using it in a non-specific function? One way or the other, the answer is complicated by two factors. Firstly, it is known that cognition is provided not only by cognitive behaviour but also by effective behaviour (as a result of changes in reality). Secondly, it is not known whether instrumentalization must be performed first in speech and thought, and then in deed, or just neglect, that is, “ignorance” or “disrespect” in all the meanings of these words – that is also thought, speech and deed. This complexity is also confirmed by the fact that, like some cases of weakly understood instrumentalization, they can be treated as creativity (they have then primarily a cognitive sense), and by analogy, some cases of strongly understood instrumentalization – the sin – can provide cognition. In some of its concretisations, strongly understood instrumentalization is the discovery of the possibility of using an object in a non-specific function. As an example of this specific form of instrumentalization, military reconnaissance can be used. In this case, we are dealing with the fulfilment of all conditions of instrumentalization in the strong sense of the term: non-specific use of a battle as reconnaissance and the unworthy using of scouts. Whoever sends scouts into battle counts on this, and maybe even assumes that none of them will survive, even doing so to learn a lot about the enemy.

The example given is a sign of the special complexity of our situation in which we analyse, including comparative and contrasting analysis, these two forms of instrumentalization – weak and strong. This leads to the

need to treat cases precisely, which collectively is called “blessed guilt;” although – as it turns out – not only such. There are also so-called situations without a solution – both prudent and ethical (Chyrowicz 2008). In analysing them, there is a thread of two/many effects, as well as their diverse position and importance – if we consider them due to an agent trying to get out of a dead end. When we try to analyse cases of blessed guilt using the multi-effect category, the question immediately arises whether this refers to the whole situation in which this blessed guilt takes place, or only to some of them (and which ones?). This in turn makes it possible to make the subject of analysis – otherwise clear – all cases that are located in the central area of the continuum, one pole being weak instrumentalization and the other being strong instrumentalization. By way of example, one can ask whether the category of “consuming religion” terms any actions as instrumentalization at all. Furthermore, if it is really instrumentalization, is it just a weak or already a strong form, and even whether there is only a danger that it can transform into strong form of instrumentalization (not even knowing when this occurs). Another interesting example is Pascal’s triangle, which I will not discuss in detail here, as it would go beyond the scope of these considerations. With some objections, however, I have decided to mention as an example a very special case of instrumentalization. This concerns the cook described in the classic Polish novel, *Pan Tadeusz*, who instrumentalized a rapier by using it as a spit. Although, she was described as “godless” just because she made a spit of a rapier, which has always been more than a weapon of war for its owner, it was, of course, never considered something divine. This case is interesting in the context of these considerations, that the sin of ungodliness attributed to the cook was practically absent.

At this point, I would like to interrupt these general considerations and get to the specifics, in the context of which the analysed cases are much clearer and may even appear to be completely unambiguous. However, I will limit myself only to their indication. These include the following matters:

- the circumstances in which instrumentalization takes place (weak, strong or maybe none at all);
- the motivation behind the decisions of the agent of instrumentalizing activities (weak, strong or maybe none at all?);
- the presence of masking activities on the one hand, and, on the other hand, justifying instrumentalizing activities (weak, strong or maybe none at all).

The last point requires a brief comment. The type of activity is significant for its assessment – concealment confirms that the agent knows that he is doing wrong more strongly than justification, because justifying the agent implies that there are some “mitigating circumstances.” These are significant for assessing the agent’s activity in terms of “what led him into temptation and in which direction.”

Finally, let me return to the level of general consideration, even at the risk of stating the obvious. Whether instrumentalization took place at all, whether it was its strong or weak form, also depends largely on “matter” or the area of activity, which fundamentally determines whether sin occurred, whether it was venial, serious or even mortal, but does not go as far as so-called situational ethics.

I think that in the end I can show that one can successfully defend, or at least try to defend, the statement that the adopted rhetoric of sin allows us to see sharper, more clearly in delight, to use the expression of Jan Błoński – the truth of the subject; first of all, an instrumentalized object, and perhaps also itself as an instrumentalizing subject (maybe without delight?). Let me add to the great figures and words already mentioned in different places here the figure and words of Thomas à Kempis. I will do this for the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden, and through him for his teacher, Kazimierz Twardowski, who quoted Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ* in the last sentence of his inaugural lecture at the University of Lviv by saying: “The whole world will not make him proud whom truth has subjected to itself” (Kempis).

In placing a strong form of instrumentalization in the foreground of these considerations, one characterised in terms of a denial of the truth of being and that of a kind of violence against it, I see in the above-analysed excerpts of Heidegger’s texts a suggestion, or even encouragement to adopt the rhetoric of sin in order to describe it.

## CONCLUSIONS

In attempting to make a concise and comprehensive assessment of the results of the above-mentioned analyses of excerpts of Heidegger’s texts, and to answer the question whether the intended research goal has been achieved, I allow myself to answer in the affirmative. Thus, it is possible to perceive instrumentalization in terms of the denial of the truth of being,

to distinguish at least two forms of instrumentalization, and, additionally, to use the rhetoric of sin for this purpose. Finally, in allowing myself a slightly playful tone, I cannot help but feel that the texts I have chosen for analysis were written especially for me...

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DOMINIK STOSIK<sup>1</sup>

## IT'S NOT AT WHAT YOU LOOK THAT MATTERS, IT'S WHAT YOU SEE

### Abstract

One of the important themes in the literature on truth is its connection to meaning, or more generally, to language. As Einstein once stated, reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one. Therefore, truth, as an element inextricably connected to the subjectively perceived reality of each individual, is dependent on the form of communication and the skills used in conversation. The following essay does not focus on the issue in the study of truth itself but instead portrays and deeply analyses each step of a study of a conversation between a surgeon and a patient drawing upon concepts of communication theory and neuroplasticity. Indeed, it shows at each step and juncture of the ongoing conversation, both how the truth may be misconceived and how slight changes in communication techniques contribute to the transmission of truth in the sense of an unimpeded flow of information.

Keywords: truth, communication, health, subjectivity

As someday we will all become a memory for some other people, let us try our best to become a good one. Just imagine the short glimpse of what a hospitalized patient actually sees and hears from their doctor during consultations and visits and what they then keep as a memory when left alone afterwards. We often lose sight of the perspective other people have on life, and that this perspective might differ from ours. In looking through a biographical lens, maybe we need to remove this from time to time long enough to see things more clearly. Imagine the reality a patient faces. When a patient is hospitalized, their whole life suddenly changes. They

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find themselves in new surroundings where there is noise, bright lights and a lot of new people. And where there is worry and concern.

The reality of a hospitalized patient is completely different from the reality of the physician who is treating them. Imagine the gaping chasm between the perspective of a doctor and that of a patient. In their worry, the patient might be constantly gravitating towards the past or the future, neither of which exists, philosophically speaking. At the same time, thinking about one usually causes depression, while considering the other causes anxiety. Perhaps due to this observation there should be a greater focus on teaching communication. With this in mind, let me tell you the story of my clinical internship at a surgery ward in a German hospital and a surgeon who was gifted with a unique skill in communication.

It was that kind of late summer where the morning cold actually felt good, because one could literally sense the upcoming sunny day in the air. As the night is always darkest just before the dawn, the morning is always coldest when one has to ride their bicycle to their internship at the hospital. As reality is created by the mind, we can change our reality by changing our mind and by doing so we can ride our bike to work and skip that morning coffee. What I am trying to say here is that it's not at what you look that matters, it's what you see. We will return to this thought later, but allow me now to present you with a truly incomparable level of communication between a surgeon and their patient. It is important to emphasize at this point that this did not constitute either an instruction, a statement of medical information, or a conversation – it was simply an act of active listening.

As chance would have it, one day this particular surgeon came up to me asking if I could help them. There was a patient who barely spoke German, but as she spoke Polish, I, speaking both Polish and German, took on the task of translation. The best aspect of this situation was that by translating simultaneously I literally felt what the surgeon was doing in each particular situation and how the patient reacted. The patient was duly admitted to the hospital for further diagnosis. However, it was clear from the outset that there was no surgery necessary, at least in terms of physical surgery. There was something else, however, which that particular patient needed, namely surgery on her thoughts and her way of thinking.

As it turned out, her disease was caused by complications after a stroke she had suffered. The inability of muscles to move is one of the most common disabilities resulting from stroke. In fact, as many as 9 out

of 10 stroke survivors have some degree of paralysis immediately following a stroke. However, continued physiotherapy and treatment can help stroke survivors regain voluntary movement, even years after their stroke.

What this patient needed to do was to exercise the muscles of the right-hand side of her body which were badly affected. Her son was a young man in his twenties who, having been unable to get a college education, instead had to work as a male nurse to support the family financially. Apart from this, the surgeon went the extra mile in even consulting a social worker in the hospital and figured out that there was even a physical rehabilitation program that would have been covered by the patient's insurance. So why didn't the patient just do it? Sometimes it turns out that we can be our own worst enemies.

In five years of medical school I observed that in communication, some people only wait until the other person has barely finished their sentence so they can start speaking, as if the content of the spoken word was not important enough to wait until the speaker has finished their sentence. I have always appreciated the words of Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy, who said the reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen more and talk less.

Let me try to paraphrase the conversation between the surgeon and the patient in order to show you how simple were the techniques the surgeon used to help the woman to help herself.

"You know that you can improve your situation and the situation of your son?" he said. "Yes, but it's so hard," she replied. Knowing this was hard, the first thing he did was mimic her content. This was a kind of active listening, which is actually not very difficult. Therefore, he listened to the words she spoke and he repeated them. There is no magic behind this: "Yes, but it's so hard," he said. Although under no circumstance do I want to trivialize her situation, it was actually not that hard to get help and start physiotherapy. The problem, however, was something else. I am still wondering how the surgeon knew this already, but let us keep moving. By repeating her words, he had not seemed to evaluate, prove, advise on or interpret what she had said. Further on in the conversation he rephrased her content; as she once again said "Yes, but it's so hard," he replied "You are facing problems in how to approach the whole thing." Even though this was emphatic listening and still was limited to verbal communication, something important happened here, namely he introduced meaning into his own words. Neuroanatomically speaking, he was thinking about

what she said, mostly with the left side of his brain, that is the reasoning, logical side.

As the conversation continued, the right side of his brain came into operation. The surgeon started to reflect feeling by answering “Yes, but it’s so hard” with the words “You are feeling really frustrated.” Now he was not paying as much attention to what she was saying as the way she felt about what she was saying. Although I myself have always had significant difficulties in social interaction and nonverbal communication, even I could see that there was something going on. Without hesitation he summed the situation up masterfully by stating: “You are really frustrated about your situation and how to approach it because of your lack of language skills.” Thus, frustration is the feeling, while the whole anxiety concerning how and where to start with physiotherapy was the content. Both sides of the brain are being used to understand both sides of her communication. Now what happened? This surgeon did not try to indoctrinate his patient, make her feel bad, or lecture her. No, he truly, genuinely did seek to understand, as he rephrased her content and reflected the feeling of the patient. What he did was give that particular patient psychological air with which to breathe, thereby helping her work through her feelings and thoughts.

This surgeon was passionate about this case because he saw the potential benefit she and her son could enjoy if they only tackled the problem. In fact, he was mad, revealing this not in front of the patient, but when we talked about this case before and afterwards. This was expressed more in a frustrated way, that things like this happen all the time, but shouldn’t. However, what had happened to that mother during that conversation was that she experienced a growth in confidence, because there was finally someone who had a sincere desire to really listen and understand what she was going through.

“You know that you can improve your situation and the situation of your son?”

“Yes, but it’s so hard.” (Perhaps she meant “I want to talk to you and to get your attention,” perhaps her hospitalization was, as in so many cases, a cry for help.)

“You are really frustrated about your situation and how to approach it because of your lack of language skills.”

“I am, to be honest, I just don’t know where to start. I always wanted it to be otherwise, but so many things happened. I see my son’s working

for the both of us, my husband left us, I had a stroke, I can't speak proper German."

"You are overwhelmed, you've been struck down by the hand of fate many times, you don't know where to start and instead of doing something you do nothing" (Although this was probably somewhat a leading statement, in this case a little provocation might help to get things moving.) Besides, it's all too natural when emotions come into play. There is an assumption in the collective mind in terms of heroic deeds taking place on the battlefield, in a shipwreck or similar crisis. However, everyday living requires courage too. I'm talking small steps. When people are overwhelmed or experience failure they tend to stand still, instead of doing something they just do nothing. A good piece of advice would be to think in the following way. Any time you act can be wrong. Any decision you make can turn out to be the wrong one. A step in the wrong direction is better than becoming petrified. Once you are moving you can correct your course as you go.

I know what you're thinking. You might think that it's too sad that everything is crystal clear in theory, but so hard in practice. But do you know what's really sad? The ending of the movie *Titanic*, I'd say. Now, let's get out of my head and back into the conversation between the surgeon and the mother.

"I tried to learn German, but then I had a stroke and I can't do my job anymore."

"You've had a hard time and are not happy with the circumstances, you wish they were better. But since you don't work, don't you have time to learn German now?" (Again, a little provocative, but hey, as they say, the end justifies the means.) She smiled quietly. "But it's too late now" she continued.

This, in fact, is not true. The current state of research in neuroplasticity states that neurons that fire together wire together, and neurons that fire apart wire apart. This basically means that neurons in brain maps develop strong connections to one another when they are activated at the same moment in time. I am talking about habits and deliberate decisions we choose every day. Think of these patterns and habits as a trail or path beaten in the woods. The more it is used the better a path it becomes. Same applies to our brain. Use it or lose it.

At this point the surgeon did something really impressive. The conversation seemed to be stuck, but he managed to move it on by using a little

trick. As placebo studies have shown, some individuals responded well to surgery despite not receiving a substance given to other patients. In fact, they did just as well as the average patient who did receive it. The differences among patients in terms of diet, age or blood pressure simply could not explain this effect. There are, however, theories about “rapid healers.” What these people have in common is one easily recognizable characteristic, namely they were optimistic, positive thinkers who not only expected to get well in a hurry, but invariably had some compelling reason or need to recover quickly. They had something to look forward to and not only something to live for, but something to get well for.

“Think of your son,” he said. Silence and a deep sigh from her followed. See how all the well-meaning advice in the world won’t help if we’re not even addressing the real problem. Although the son was not the real problem and we’re probably only halfway through the conversation, what I want to say is that we will never get to the core of the problem if we are so caught up in our own paradigms. We need to take off our subjective glasses long enough to see the world from another point of view. As I experienced that particular situation, I realized there were a lot of unpleasant things that had accumulated over time during the life of that mother and made it more and more difficult to find motivation to start finally with physiotherapy. There were a lot of obstacles and, as so often in life, we tend to wait for the right time and the right circumstances to start. There is no right time and I am afraid there never will be. There is only now. It is different, however, concerning circumstances. While we have absolute no influence on time, we have indirect influence over our circumstances. Think of it as of training your heart, which is a muscle you cannot exercise directly as you would probably do with your biceps by lifting weights. No, you need to increase your heart rate on a regular basis for a certain amount of time and by doing so you will eventually strengthen it.

Although we are eager to improve our circumstances, we are not willing to improve ourselves. We blame our circumstances, not knowing that we are the only author of them. This all just observation, neither good nor bad, but just that. What I realized during that conversation was that while we could not directly choose our circumstances, we could choose our thoughts, and so indirectly, but surely, we could shape our circumstances. This is what I meant in the beginning when I said that reality is created by the mind. Although we can change our reality by changing our mind, sometimes we just need some help from outside.

She continued speaking in a way as if she understood that the future was not as hopeless as she may have thought. The surgeon achieved a shift in perspective. Maybe it won't get as good as it was, but it might become different, which sometimes can be even better than it was before. I felt that her opening up was mainly caused by the particular approach this surgeon had taken during this conversation. During my medical studies I was present at a lot of medical interviews and I experienced that doctors often give a lot of advice in the manner of "You should do this, you should do that." Patient informed, job done, next patient. However, you may have a different attitude if you were only able to see how this attempt at real listening and real understanding changed the process. As I am writing so much about perspectives I will try to do my best at the end of this essay to find possible explanations for the reasons why doctor-patient communication often comes off so badly and try to present ideas on how to fix it. But for now let us get back to the conversation with the surgeon, who was not actually the treating physician. This whole idea had come out of his own initiative, which I consider a truly altruistic act, reminding me of the words of Hippocrates who once said thousands of years ago that it is far more important to know what person the disease has than what disease the person has.

"What should I do?" she asked. "I saw you smoking the other day, I don't think that will be very helpful along the way." Again, he did not tell her what she should do but made her think.

By seeking first to understand, this surgeon had just turned a transactional opportunity into a transformational opportunity. Instead of interacting on a superficial, get-the-job-done level of communication, he had created a situation in which he could now have a transforming impact, not only on his patient, but also on the doctor-patient relationship. By really seeking to understand, he had empowered his patient to open up, layer by layer, and to get to the real issue. Now doctor and patient were on the same side of the table looking at the problem, instead of on opposite sides looking across at each other. Consequently, the patient found herself seeking her doctor's knowledge and experience and asking for advice.

Even as the surgeon began to counsel her, however, he needed to be sensitive to his patient's way of communicating. As long as the response was logical, the surgeon could ask questions effectively and give advice. However, the moment the response became emotional, he needed to go back to emphatic listening: "I reduced smoking to 5 cigarettes a day," she said.

“That is a good start,” he answered before continuing “but will you do me a favor and speak with the social worker? I can come later, we can meet with your son. What do you think?”

“I’ve already tried and checked out all those forms some time ago. It takes so much effort and time. My son tried to help me, but this officialese is so hard, especially in a foreign language.” Sensing emotion in this reply, the surgeon moved back to employing empathy. “I understand that you have tried and failed, and that must feel really bad, but let us try again, I will do my best to help you.” The problem with failure is that when we experience failure, we tend to think we are failures, but that is not true. The problem lies more in the field of self-acceptance. She probably realized that she had made a mistake, and probably thought of this in a negative way. But if we realize that these negatives belong to us – but ARE not us – it makes things a lot easier. People tend to shy away from healthy self-acceptance because they insist on identifying themselves with their mistakes. You may have made a mistake, but this does not mean that you are a mistake. “Do you think I will get on that physiotherapy program and get well again?” she asked.

He just nodded and probably knew already that she had just made a huge step forward considering the fact she was asking a question which implied a possible positive outcome.

She was at once more open and logical. Now the surgeon had another opportunity to influence and transform. Sometimes transformation requires no outside counsel. Often when people are really given the chance to open up, they unravel their own problems and the solution becomes clear to them in the process. But at other times, as in this case, they need additional perspectives and help. What I learned from this conversation is that the key is to seek out the welfare of the individual patient genuinely, to listen actively, to let the person get to the problem and the solution at their own pace and in their own time. In case you are wondering how it all ended, I can tell you that the story came to a positive conclusion.

Let us now take some time to look at the possible explanations why this experience left a lasting impression on me, because to be honest, shouldn’t that be the least we should expect?

I won’t go into detail concerning my ideas for changes in the part of the medical system which deals with time and money, but instead want to focus on the interpersonal aspect and reflections on psychology and purpose. We all know that there is always too little time and, to be honest,

I think there never will be enough. As there will always be something to do, this more concerns time management I think. But let us start with that particular surgeon, who probably was in good control of his ego. Since pleasure is the most superficial form of satisfaction in life, and therefore the easiest to obtain, it is, ironically, also the easiest to lose. This just means that it's not all about you. I didn't get the impression he wanted to be the best in the world. He just did his job and nothing more. Although these were small deeds, they were effective. This was purpose in its purest form. We need more compassion. Can compassion be taught? I don't know. If it can, let's find a way and teach it. Whoever has compassion can be brave. We also need physicians with humility. Whoever possesses humility can afford to be generous. Is there a way to teach it? If there is, what are we waiting for? The right moment? We've had that already. Active listening is a forgotten skill that actually can be taught. Let's teach it. I was lucky in the way that I literally translated every sentence the surgeon said and every word the patient answered. Therefore, I was being actively taught what this surgeon was doing. Of course, while it's not the best idea to teach students communication skills by making translators out of them, I'm sure there is a simpler method. Please find it and teach us. My advice would also be to first seek to understand. Seeking first to understand involves a very deep shift in one's paradigm. We typically seek first to be understood. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply. They're either speaking or preparing to speak. They're filtering everything through their own paradigms, reading their own autobiography into other people's lives. Probably the best you could do would be just to listen, without judging or preaching or reading your own biography into what someone says. Just listen and seek to understand. Let the patient feel your concern for them, your acceptance of them as a person.

In fact, did you know that communications experts estimate that only ten percent of our communication is represented by the words we say? Or that the sounds we make represent another thirty percent and our body language accounts for sixty percent? While in your emphatic listening, you listen with your ears, you also, and more importantly, listen with your eyes and your heart. You also listen to sound, to reason. You listen for conduct [behavior?]. You use both your right and left brain. You feel, you intuit and you sense. Researchers on neuroplasticity claim that we see with our brains, not with our eyes. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said that is only

with the heart that one can see correctly, that what is essential is invisible to the eye. Although they are probably all right, the problem is something else. Again, it's not what we look at, it's what we see. Whether we see it with our brain, our heart or our eyes actually doesn't really matter. We also should remind ourselves more often that we are the ones in control of what we choose. We make choices every day. Since we have seen that the most basic skill is just active listening and this really does not require a lot of effort to do, why don't we choose to do it more often? I can tell you. It is because when something is easy to do, it is also easy not to do. Skills can be taught, learned but it's up to us to make habits out of them. Some of us are more gifted with interpersonal communication skills than others but that's no excuse. In the words of Batman: "It's not who we are underneath, but what we do that defines us." As I stated at the beginning, as someday we will all become a memory for some other people, let us try our best to become a good one.

DARIUSZ JURUŚ<sup>1</sup>

**REVIEW: MICHAEL PATRICK LYNCH,  
*TRUE TO LIFE: WHY TRUTH MATTERS.*  
TRANS. D. MISZTAŁ, LODZ UNIVERSITY PRESS,  
ŁÓDŹ 2020, PP. 491.**

The author was prompted to write this book by, as he puts it, his fear of the slide of Western democracies towards an attitude of post-truth (p. 12). Lynch, contrary to the currently common attitudes in the humanities and even partly in the sciences, defends objective truth. The central argument of Lynch's book is that truth is important and that it is necessary to understand all those errors that lead to the denial of the validity of truth. One such error is to confuse truth with certainty and to treat it as a metaphysical mystery. The simple example Lynch refers to shows that truth can exist independently of certainty. For we do not know whether the number of stars in the universe is even or odd. So here we have no certainty about objective truth (p. 17).

The motto of the introduction can be the following sentence: "If something is true, it does not mean that you will believe in it; and if you believe in something, it does not mean that it is true" (p. 17).

In the book, Lynch defends four theses: (i) truth is objective; (ii) it is good to believe what is true; (iii) truth is a valuable goal of inquiry; (iv) truth is worth worrying about for its own sake (p. 31). According to Lynch, the point of having an idea of truth is to be able to distinguish between correct and incorrect judgments (p. 415).

Lynch criticizes the views of opponents of objective truth in turn: that truth is not valid because it is not attainable, that it is relative, and that falsehood is often more useful than truth.

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To acknowledge the existence of objective truth, Lynch encourages us to recognize a simple truth: there are some things that we simply will never know and some things that we think we know, though it is otherwise (p. 39). Lynch maintains, in keeping with the classical definition of truth, that “true beliefs are those that paint the world as it is” (p. 45). Truth in Lynch’s view is also good because it is better to believe something that is true than something that is false. Besides, truth is also a valuable goal of our pursuits. For it is good to pursue the truth. Truth, as Lynch writes, is worth worrying about for its own sake (p. 52). For it has a normative dimension. It is more like love than money (p. 56). Lynch convinces us that truth is not indifferent, that we would rather live with true than false beliefs, even in cases where both have the same instrumental value. Truth has both normative and non-normative value, according to Lynch. “When we describe an act as courageous,” Lynch writes, “then we are both describing and valuing it” (p. 64). The same is true of truth; when we say that something is true, we are not just stating a fact, we are valuing that belief.

However, Lynch warns us against beliefs that harm truth and give weapons to its critics. These include such claims as: there is only One Truth, only “pure” reason has access to the truth, the truth is mysterious, only certain people can know the truth, and we should pursue the truth at all costs (p. 65).

In spite of critics (Rorty, Davidson) who claim that truth as unattainable cannot be the goal of human pursuit, Lynch argues that truth, though not easy, is nevertheless attainable. Lynch rejects the thesis that the truth of a belief is verified by contact with facts “in themselves.” “We identify,” Lynch writes, “what is true and what is false indirectly by recognizing, as one might put it, signs of truth and falsity—that is, by recognizing what is justified and what is not” (p. 81). Thus, one can know that something is true without being certain that this belief is correct. On the other hand, man seeks certainty, which gives him a sense of security. Therefore, he seeks truth. However, Lynch warns against those who think they have possessed absolute truth. For this is dogmatism, which leads, in contrast to objectivity, to intolerance. For Lynch emphasizes that objectivism about truth leads to tolerance. “If truth is objective,” Lynch states, “then we must always be open to the possibility of being wrong” (p. 98).

In addition to its epistemic dimension, truth also has a normative dimension, for, as Lynch writes, “being true is what makes a claim good to believe” (p. 156).

Lynch criticizes both the pragmatic and coherence definitions of truth. The former is unable to explain what makes beliefs pragmatically justified, while the latter cannot deal with the question of what determines the truthfulness of the fact that one system is coherent and another, not. (p. 177, 186). Lynch also indicts the version of pragmatism (neo-pragmatism) represented by R. Rorty and argues, criticizing Rorty, that justified beliefs and true beliefs are not the same thing, and that truth is not contextual, i.e., relative to a given community (pp. 187-197).

Lynch also criticizes naturalism in its reductionist form, maintaining that truth cannot be reduced to some physical property. For if this were the case, truth would cease to be a value to be pursued (p. 204). Lynch also rejects the verificationism that underlies naturalism, holding that “verifiability is not necessary for truth in general” (p. 214). For we are unable to verify, for example, the following statements: “On the same day as today, but 15,000 years ago, it rained in this place,” or “At this moment there are an even number of stars in the universe” (p. 213). “Truth,” Lynch writes, “cannot be reduced to verification because verification must be explained in terms of truth” (p. 216). The question arises: how does one verify the very claim that all claims must be verifiable?

Lynch, significantly, does not see truth only in its epistemic dimension. He links it to happiness. For he claims that having true beliefs – about what we care about – is also part of happiness (p. 333). He also adds that “the truth about what we care about is itself worthy of being cared about for its own sake” (p. 334). According to Lynch, one should care about truth because it is a constitutive good that includes honesty, authenticity, and self-respect (p. 374). Truth is simply something important to living a good life.

Lynch argues that truth is important not only in private life but also in political life. Contrary to what Rorty says, Lynch argues that objective truth is central to liberal democracy (p. 413). At its core is respect for each individual. Liberalism also requires rights, the idea of which must be founded on the idea of objective truth. For what is at stake are not political rights but fundamental rights.

According to Lynch, objective truth is therefore important for epistemic, moral and political reasons. We simply cannot do without objective truth.

It is sad, however, that in defending truth today we must add the adjective “objective.” In the time of Aristotle, Kant or Husserl this was not necessary.

This volume of *Intercultural Relations* offers our readers a collection of articles focused on the tension between truth and post-truth growing for at least several decades. This troubled relationship has been presented from several perspectives of humanities, social- and natural sciences which allows us to emphasize the multitude of areas in which man, in his individual and collective existence, tries to name and recognize the objects and phenomena that shape him. The examples analysed in the particular papers show how difficult it is.

