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Critical Thinking in the „Post-Truth" Era

Annotation: The aim of the present essay is mainly to deconstruct the contemporary turn of post-truth politics by examining the various phenomena to the point where post-truth's *Weltanschauung* challenges the boundaries between *veritas* and *fake news*' reduction as an intellectual *voyage* into/of the voiceless cultivation of emotional policy in view to destroy an establishing worldly tradition of critical thinking reclaiming a transformative appraisal of new „datum" to believe and to develop the notion of the rationality which likewisely has constructed the multileveled responsibility of truth toward the generations of humanity to come. In our research we wish to interrogate the inner and outward faces of post-truth phenomena, their fakes and acts of simulating truth.
Keywords: critical thought, post-truth, illusion of knowledge, critical discourse studies, conspiracy theories.

Myślenie krytyczne w erze „postprawdy"
Streszczenie: Celem niniejszego eseju jest przede wszystkim dekonstrukcja roli krytycznego myślenia we współczesnej idei *post-prawdy* poprzez zbadanie różnych fenomenów dotyczącej danego zjawiska. Horyzont światopoglądowy (*Weltanschauung*), oceniając granice między prawdą a fałszywą redukcją treści wiadomości w zakresie kultywacji polityki emocjonalnej, ma na celu odnalezienie możliwości transformacyjnej oceny nowej „bazy danych", aby uwierzyć i podobnie pokazać metodę *post-prawdy*, która przyjmuje istnienie jednej irracjonalnej metody w społeczeństwie. Stąd w niniejszej pracy Autor zastanawia się, czy zjawisko *post-prawdy* jest wiarygodną i systematyczną propozycją krytyczną na uzasadnienie norm społecznych. Czy stosowanie warunków tejże *post-prawdy* pozwala na bezbłędność w podejmowaniu decyzji w różnorodnych sytuacjach moralnych? W tych badaniach celem jest przeanalizowanie wewnętrznego i zewnętrznego oblicza zjawisk post-prawdy, ich podróbki oraz aktów symulowania prawdy.
Słowa kluczowe: myśl krytyczna, post-prawda, iluzja wiedzy, krytyczne badania dyskursu, teorie spiskowe.

Критическое мышление в эпоху «пост-правды»

Аннотация: Целью данного эссе является, прежде всего, деконструкция роли критического мышления в современной идее пост-правды путем изучения различных явлений, связанных с данным явлением. Мировоззренческий горизонт (Weltanschauung), оценивая границы между правдой и ложным сокращением содержания сообщений в области культивирования эмоциональной политики, направлен на то, чтобы найти возможность трансформационной оценки новой «базы данных», чтобы поверить и аналогичным образом показать метод пост-правды, который принимает существование одного иррационального метода. в обществе. Поэтому в этой статье автор занимается вопросом: является ли феномен пост-правды надежным и систематическим критическим предложением для обоснования социальных норм? Позволяет ли применение условий этой пост-правды безошибочно принимать решения в различных моральных ситуациях? В этих исследованиях цель состоит в том, чтобы проанализировать внутреннее и внешнее лицо явлений пост-правды, их подделок и актов симуляции истины.

Ключевые слова: критическое мышление, пост-правда, иллюзия знания, исследования критического дискурса, теории заговора.

The unheard-of „post"-cultural challenges

One of the most difficult challenges facing humanity at the beginning of the 21st century is closely linked with the development of information technology and its impact that affected human consciousness. This apparently complex alterations shift not only the way we perceive and transmit information, communicate and share thoughts, beliefs, feelings, ideas, but rather define the logic-based theories of decisions-choice-making, applied, in particular, in the areas of political entities. We can say that this historical interpretation represents a high point of future rigor in approaching the imperative of the world that passes through and between pre--established liberal democratic values and a new culture with a prefix „post". We all struggle at times to come up with the circle of notions employed in neologisms „post-humanity", „post-truth", „post-morality", which entail the publicly extensional usage of such concepts as „post-freedom", and „post-democracy". All of these rhetorical reversals deeply affected the recent political events such as UK's Brexit, identically discussed the results of the presidential election compains in the United States and Ukraine, by suggesting the easiness to manipulate the mass public's opinions and beliefs[1].

The expansion of totalitarian ideologies in the twentieth century extends our standpoint at such experience where human being has been inclined to spoil its own consciousness and objective interpretation of reality by the influence of cause--and-effect narratives imposed on them. Otherwisely, we observe the expansion of information technologies which, in a particular way, contribute to the dissemination of what is called the „post-truth". The term „post-truth" unfolds the process of thinking the things, situations and other phenomena of reality from the point of

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[1] L. McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, The Mit Press, Cambridge-Massachussetts 2018, p. 11-15.

the inverse nullified-ness of facts. The vocabulary fashion of the mentioned term of the year appears in November 2016, where the „Oxford Dictionary web page defines *post-truth* as an adjective 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'"[2]. Above all, the „Oxford Dictionaries explains, '*Post-truth* has gone from being a peripheral term to being a mainstay in political commentary, now being used by major publications without the need for clarification or definition in their headlines'. There is nothing post-truth about the word *post-truth*. In its current usage, *post-truth* signifies a state in which language lacks any reference to facts, truths, and realities. When language has no reference to facts, truths or realities, it becomes a purely strategic medium. In a post-truth communication landscape, people (especially politicians) say whatever might work in a given situation, whatever might generate the desired result, without any regard to the truth value or facticity of statements"[3].

The essential feature of human behavior relies on the conviction that individuals are guided in their everydayness no longer by cultivation of the personal reflections or research of rational arguments, but they are under the pression of emotionally-superficial perceptions of information. The objective truth, however, betrays its background, whereas the main dominant atmosphere of society is nourished by „spiritual-less-ness" and radical distrust of government and political institutions.

Reinserting the (Post)-Philosophy into fake responsibility

There are a lot of examples in which people accuse philosophy, in particular postmodern philosopher's attempts, to annihilate the reality of truth, what, finally proves the diversity of truthfulnesses and emphasizes how „Truth Game" can be used to falsify and manipulate the context and interpretation of every possible truth. As a result of „Truth Game's" exclusion from the sphere of philosophical debates, we observe the weakness for human senses to distinguish objectively between true or semi-true narratives and subjectively false narratives. Consequently, in order to extend a mechanism for meaning construction, the binary opposition began to lose its value. The epistemological relativism was acceptable alternative ways within the circle of *elite*, but shortly after, it became widespread and prevalent turn in mental environment of mass consciousness, influencing public opinion by the processes of informatization and medialization, penetrating and altering the integrity of all kinds of cultural and political discourses. However, in our opinion, the postmodern philosophy theoretically revealed a categorical tendency gradually percolating the western world – the general relativization of key concepts and values that constituted the backbone of European mentality for a long period of time. After the age of

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[2] Oxford Dictionaries. 2016. „Word of the Year 2016 Is … Post-Truth." Oxford Dictionaries. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016 (last access 12.06. 2019).

[3] B. McComiskey, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, Utah State University Press, Colorado 2017, p. 5-6.

totalitarian regimes in XX century, the humanity dealt with this destruction of the trust in meta-narratives. This period coincided with an increase in informational and semantic entropy that ranged from the development of a global information society. We must carefully observe the increasing level of entropy occurring in open dynamic systems, which leads – according to synergetic paradigm – to the fact that through various information flows, we begin thus gradually lose the value and semantic dimensions of our social being.

Let's treat more subtle manifestations and factors that contribute to the understanding of the „post-truth" context in order to prevent partial or full collapse of the humanitarian sphere. It be remembered that one of the phenomena, that is attributed to the informatization of social life, manifests so-called „The Illusion of Explanatory Depth", or, in other words, is that what F. Keil, L. Rozenblit, S. Slomen and P. Fernback explain for the Knowledge Illusion. In book „The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone", authors S. Slomen and P. Fernback announce in broad term the nature of Knowledge Illusion: „the Knowledge Illusion occurs because we live in a community of knowledge, and we fail to distinguish the knowledge that is in our heads from the knowledge outside of it. We think the knowledge we have about how things work sits inside our skulls when in fact we're drawing a lot of it from the environment and from other people. This is as much a feature of cognition as it is a bug. The world and our community house most of our knowledge base. A lot of human understanding consists simply of awareness that the knowledge is out there"[4]. The Illusion of Explanatory Depth exemplifies the human failures which, according F. Keil and L. Rozenblit define the general tendency of „people to feel they understand the world with far greater detail, coherence and depth than they really do". The explanation, as it turns out, involves the mixture of personal and collective consciousnesses. In fact, the self-blindness of their certainty preserves themselves in the same manner as its eccentricity. Sloman and Fernbach gloss on the attitude: „Beliefs are hard to change because they are wrapped up with our values and identities, and they are shared with our community. Moreover, what is actually in our own heads – our causal models – are sparse and often wrong. This explains why false beliefs are so hard to weed out. Sometimes communities get the science wrong, usually in ways supported by our causal models. And the knowledge illusion means that we don't check our understanding often or deeply enough. This is a recipe for antiscientific thinking"[5].

There is no doubt that this dumbfounding symptom of illusion, which includes at least two hundred cognitive prejudices, was dominant at all times of peoples' destiny. Only by dint of dissemination of information and network communication, the mentioned form of illusion has received a rapid boost to growth. As a result, by incompetence, people uprooted from political, economic, ideological or medical discussions, consequently, they became the platform for speaking and defending their

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[4] S. Sloman, P. Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone*, Riverhead Books, New York 2017, p. 127-128.

[5] S. Sloman, P. Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone*, p. 169.

views within community of interests. With this information network conceived as a springboard for distributing knowingly a large number of false (dis)information in the form of fake news, myths, various pseudo-sensations conspiracy theories--based claims about distractively-irrational media perception among consumers. In addition, the *Google*'s and *Facebook*'s algorithms of networks modified configuration of information in such a way that there could disaggregate the cyberspace of the information into its component parts, certain subgroups of people who think equally, but who are isolated within their own Internet community and do not dialoguize with different points of view.

As a result, we observe the appearance of so-called informational bubbles or „reality tunnels" that create the effect of small access to those points of view that contradict our own views. The primary overwhelming paradox for those implemented digital algorithms was not only crash of biological and psychological nature of human being, but adjusted selectivity of rational perception. It is important to understand the rejection and ignorance of information that doesn't express our views, so we confine ourselves to the use of the blindness and stubbornness of our needs. Finally, we become more vulnerable to propaganda, manipulation of the organized habits and opinions, because we assume that thinking sameness of the environment which gives us the impression of our proper information security-awareness. It is assertion of what the post-truth human attitude is. To say that „Post-truth involves a great deal of denial, therefore, and there is a long history of denialism in our culture", it persuades us that „Being post-truthful also relies heavily on exaggeration to win over its audience"[6].

Rational or irrational in-between-ness

Not surprising therefore, that the reasons for making political or economic decisions don't take in an account any personal decisions, public goodness or rational reflections. These decisions find their legacy in forced out emotions and fears, instantly reflex reactions and thoughts that they or either of them expert from different fields share. The „collective unconscious" first released on the Internet, reminds metaphorically the liberation of Aladdin from a golden bottle, which bottled up inside of bottle all possible rational framework and norms. The „behavioral economics" and Cognitive Sciences help us better understand what is happening in the cognitive sphere which pushes contemporary people – according the jokingly suggestions – to be baptized as „*homo media*", in contrast to the traditional „*homo sapiens*".

At a time when René Descartes has founded the tradition of classical European rationalism and formed the basis of Western European rational nature of human subjectivity, along this time we assume till now this capacity for self-reflection and investigating one's own thinking to develop the prerequisite skills. Descartes' confidence in the method made him believe that a person seeks to know the truth, surpassing all necessary obstacles placed in its path. Are the principles that Descarts delineate still relevant in our time? F. Nietzsche, K. Marx and Z. Freud from the middle of the XIX

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[6] S. Sim, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, Newcastle 2019, p. 18.

century began reviewing the classical concept of the subject, concentrating on unconscious determinants of consciousness thoughts, concentrating on the study of social, mental, linguistic and physical aspects of human existence. In this respect we associate with another tradition, namely of Deleuze and Guattati's concepts of „desiring machines" which describe human behavior in society and emphasize its irrational character. However, the final risk including the concept of a rational and reflexive subject we identify in recent results that have been developed in areas of biology and cognitive sciences. Neuroscientists deny the basic nature and existence of person's „free will", considering that this former metaphysical category is posterior to the activity of brain which is placed anterior in front of conscious decision-making. This process related subject of our research can be used for analyzing the processes of information processing and decision-making. The representatives of cognitive psychology choose one of the alternatives that a person is considerably more irrational than rational creature. The researcher in behavioral economics, the Nobel Laureate in Economics, Daniel Kahneman in his book entitled „Thinking Fast and Slow" (2011) describes two thinking systems that people use in Information Processing and decision-making.

Kahneman defines our thinking „a psychological drama with two actors". He describes 'mental life by the metaphor of two agents called System 1 (is our intuition/heart) and System 2 (logic and calculation/head). Kahneman operates two Systems in the next way: System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control. System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration[7]". Rapid thinking is associative, impulsive, firstly responsive, due to the nature of human evolutionary development. We originally keep those parts of the brain that are ready to react in case of danger, while the prefrontal cortex responsible for our ability to think and reflect, relatively reacts more later. Kahneman highlights that „System 1 as effortlessly originating impressions and feelings that are the main sources of the explicit beliefs and deliberate choices of System 2. The automatic operations of System 1 generate surprisingly complex patterns of ideas, but only the slower System 2 can construct thoughts in an orderly series of steps"[8].

Kahneman's conclusions resulted of his research prove that there is a circle of exchanges among two systems: „System 1 runs automatically and System 2 is normally in a comfortable low effort mode, in which only a fraction of its capacity is engaged. System 1 continuously generates suggestions for System 2: impressions, intuitions, intentions, and feelings. If endorsed by System 2, impressions and intuitions turn into beliefs, and impulses turn into voluntary actions. When all goes smoothly, which is most of the time, System 2 adopts the suggestions of System 1 with little or no modification. You generally believe your impressions and act on your desires, and that is fine—usually"[9]. Our observation reveals the fact, that we, as individuals, identify ourselves with System 2 as rational beings; instead, we often operate under the influence of System 1, thinking immediately according impulsive and irrational intuition.

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[7] D. Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow*, Penguin, London 2011, p. 20.
[8] D. Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow*, p. 20-21.
[9] D. Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow*, p. 24-25.

When we place ourselves often in an informative-communicative environment, our system of fast thinking is much more immediate to react on short and emotionally colored messages, whereas analytical reflections isolates us from this mediated immediacy. We shouldn't be surprised that the thinking is a cost-effectiveness evidence of brain, and consequently so it, in particular, imitates the thought's label to hang mental process labels for the gradually evolved usage of stereotypical explanations and search to find simple solutions to complex problems. Behind background is our biological nature obtained its characteristic in the course of the development process. In addition, we must take into account the processes of our thinking, consistent with the influence of cognitive prejudices. A recital of the particular kinds of four idols of human mind exemplified by Francis Bacon has been multiplied into about 200 points and it is constantly replenished. Does the human ability persevere and use every shred of willpower to doubt and resist in front of cognitive prejudices' policy to exit the truth?

Return(ing to) of Critical Thinking

Thesis about the necessity of developing critical thinking and media literacy in view of restoring thus a „cognitive immunity system" looks for instrument incounteracting irrational tendencies. The critical thinking would entirely cultivate people's consciousness in maturation of decision-making-choices which don't imply the information itself, but rather focus on theirs studying and usage. As an example, we enumerate the following features of critical thinking skills: the ability to evaluate critically information and its sources, the ability to distinguish between facts and their interpretations, appreciate the problem from different types of measurements, evidence's analysis and evaluation of arguments, beliefs, etc. Therefore, there is every reason to hope that the principle of critical thinking resists to any manipulating attempts against human thought.

The development of these skills partially contributes to the introductory critical thinking courses taught in institutions of higher and secondary educations. In some countries, in particular, in Ukraine, this process is just begun, so the results must appear later. The experience of Western countries, where such courses have been introduced much earlier, does not find a lot of optimism and don't resolve the crisis concerning either the threat of populism or the infantilism of human thinking on a large scale. Therefore, I would like to identify possible obstacles on past way, which paralyze the influence of critical thinking and its significant affects offering a possibility for understanding the reality.

One thing that we observe is the audacious rejection of critical thinking as a needless quality of human audience. Réné Descartes in his treatise „Discourse on Method for Conducting One's Reason Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences" argues: „Good sense is the best distributed thing in the world, for everyone thinks himself to be so well-endowed with it that even those who are the most difficult to please in everything else are not at all won't to desire more of it than they have (...), it provides evidence that the power of judging well and of distinguishing the true from the false (which is, properly speaking, what people call 'good sense' or 'reason') is naturally equal in all men, and that the diversity of our opinions does not arise from the fact that some people are more reasonable than others, but solely from the fact that we lead our thoughts along different

paths and do not take the same things into consideration"[10]. In modern language, we can qualify and apply the cited thought in terms of Dunning-Kruger effect, according to which „incompetent people do not recognize – scratch that, cannot recognize – just how incompetent they are"[11]. Just as with fire, these people generally are not inclined to review their views and to doubt their beliefs. They are unable to recognize in them and in their supporters the negative attribution of narrow-mindedness primarily discovered in communication networks (read: „information bubbles").

My second argument rely on the conviction that critical thinking, in general, emphasizes just one component of the overall thought processes back to the emotional and irrational support components struggling sometimes irrationally with their powers. There are several resources on the feature of critical thinking. In hermeneutics, a theory of interpretation and understanding, we remind us the principle of the hermeneutic circle that would ground the interaction of the whole with its parts and of the parts with the whole. When some information or facts cross the field of our attention, we critically already understand a pre-formed sense challenging our established views and beliefs. Consequently, on the one side we should pay more attention to the formation of impartial and critical consciousness, on the other side enrich the general philosophical context of our previously formed individual convictions.

Although there has always been a fact that the worldview or system of views or beliefs, affect the way in which individuals behave and maintain their links within the system of friends, family members and community interactive dialogues. Steven Slomen in his book „The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone", indicates just our views and convictions which are not isolated pieces of data in our heads; the gathered convictions are closely interwoven with other views, classified under common cultural value, cultural value identity. This immersion into views of community deepens our understanding of what is meant by a sense of belonging, trust and identity. Already starting with this sort of observations, Slomen describes that „beliefs are hard to change because they are wrapped up with our values and identities, and they are shared with our community. Moreover, what is actually in our own heads—our causal models—are sparse and often wrong. This explains why false beliefs are so hard to weed out. Sometimes communities get the science wrong, usually in ways that are supported by our causal models. And the knowledge illusion means that we don't check our understanding often or deeply enough"[12]. GMOs crops, vaccinations, and evolution don't change the world view of people's life. People are increasingly inclined to look for something more reliable that does not contradict their views and corresponds to reality. A system of a counteraction benefits appeals and provides assessments of experts' opinions on each issue. The method of analyzing number forms of confidence is also a difficult mental process that does not yield guaranteed results. In order to encourage people to witness their views, is inevitable to condivide theirs consciousness and understandings mutually reinforcing them with possible mistakes in use of scientific facts.

Cultural sociologists Jeffrey C. Alexander inclines to the proposition that our world

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[10] R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, tr. D. D. Cress, Hackett Publishing Company Indianapolis-Cambridge 1998[4], p. 1.

[11] J. Kruger, D. Dunning, *Unskilled and Unaware of It: How Difficulties in Recognizing One's Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments*, „Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 77 (6) 1999, p. 1121−1134.

[12] S. Sloman, P. Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone*, § 8.

and its understanding aren't pursued individual but collective interpretations. In his cultural sociology he is convinced that we are not in a half so smart, rational, or prudent, as we would like. Our way of life until now is dictated by the unconscious than by conscious considerations. We still control the impulses of the heart and the instincts that give us horror, but they are actually filled with our insides. The „critical" desire, othrerwise, as interior desire, minded often leads to another trap: - mixture of critical and open-minded thinking. Unlike the closed thinking, the peculiarity of impartial consciousness possesses the ability and readiness to see the different perspectives or points of view simultaneously incorporated into the problem: „To be open-minded is to be prepared to see the other person's point of view and potentially shift your own point of view, whereas to be close dminded is to think your own point of view is correct, so there is no point in even considering shifting it"[13].

Nevertheless, the open and impartial desire participates in life's game and plays a causal role in the conflict between a doubt and false perspective where players encounter themselves in our cognitive field. These tactics are seen as helpful among propagandists which introduce into public space a misinterpretation of events in the form of an alternative point of view, seen as a form of conversion reaction. We can envisions the appearance of tolerance in which false narratives form gradually the powerful fragments, which don't often correspond to skeptical belonging of some identified groups. There is no doubt, that even the doubts as modes of prevalent thought and reliable tool of critical thinking can bring a proliferation of obvious lies and fakes, rendering more obvious and truthful the order of doubt. To transgress all known binderies, we to find out a way to harmonize the policy of openness and critical consciousness which postulate to investigate thoughts upon reason and evidence. The formation of such an open-critical state of consciousness is, in our opinion, one of the most important philosophical challenges in the 21st century. If this condition is generally natural for philosophers, therefore we must think of it in some a way that would be profitable for the public.

Conclusion

The arguments we encountered in present research were limited in scope to respond the question concerning the nature of critical thinking in itself in terms of tool for achieving its own purpose. The vast panorama of research permitted us to expose the results obtained by modern cognitive sciences in the field of human intelligence. Reconsidering direct disapproval arguments against post-*truth* information world, we as critical community, didn't concern to protect a unique alternative which would support rationality and diminish weakness of „slow thinking". On the contrary, we still guard the impulsive, emotional ground of thinking, which is too vulnerable to challenge the modern information era, but offers a specific motion. Predicting post-truth situation may lead itself to the impact and change of journalistic standards. The development of artificial intelligence, decision-making, the philosophy of evaluation process of thinking, invest a lot of attention both in information world, as well, in the global context of values. What, more exactly, was a purpose of our articulated research? Our task is to re-interpret the role of philosophy, as an urgent claim of plurivocality of thinking, as an assumed unity of a universal thinking, and finally, harmony of axiological, cognitive and emotional components of rationality of the world.

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[13] J. Lambie, *How to be Critically Open-Minded – A Psychological and Historical Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2014, p. 39.

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