"POST-TRUTH" IN MODERN MEDIA: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS

I.V. Fotieva, *Doctor of Philosophy, Professor*
T.A. Semilet, *Doctor of Philosophy, Professor*
Altai State University
(Russia, Barnaul)

Abstract. This study examines the socio-cultural notion of "post-truth" as the condition of modern media and a new model of mass media communication. The authors analyzed the empirical implications, the ideological foundations, and the social determinants of this phenomenon. Moreover, the authors examined the socio-cultural notion of "post-truth" and its connections with "post-democracy" and "post-journalism". The study aimed to predict the ontological and epistemological consequences of the post-modernistic philosophy in mass communication. In comparing the opinions of mass media theoreticians, the authors concluded that this theme is extremely divisive.

Keywords: Post-truth, Media landscape, Mass communication, Post-journalism, Postmodernism.

Mass media determine all aspects of modern socio-cultural reality. The notion of "post-truth" points to the dysfunctional state of mass media, leading to radical transformations in Western socio-culture. Modern researchers increasingly point to the formation of a new media-communicative system – the "post-truth era" [1] and "post-journalism epoch" [2].

The phenomenon of "post-truth" is a popular subject matter of many media science studies. However, the majority of authors address only the political aspect of it. Many studies focus on the applied, empirical examination of mass-media products of "post-truth". The theoretical works on this topic mainly dwell on the formation of post-truth manifestations, discussions of sociological surveys, its impact on the polling results, etc. Simultaneously, its emergence, predominance, and consequences require more in-depth socio-cultural and philosophical analysis. Thus, this study aims to socio-culturally and philosophically examine the phenomenon of "post-truth".

Results

1. The term "post-truth" has two meanings. The narrow meaning, presented in the Oxford dictionary, includes the dominance of emotions, opinions, and visualization over rational thinking, facts, and analytics. It also mentions

that a person may still stick to their opinion, even after being presented with a rational explanation and factual confirmation. In the broadest sense, the term includes many dysfunctional manifestations of mass media, mainly the equivalence of truth, lie, and half-truth. Most of theorists view "post-truth" as a critical situation. On the one hand, it is a desecration of communication, journalism, and democracy. On the other, it is a transition to the new system of mass media, where nothing is universally true, and no one requires proof anymore.

2. There are three main groups of reasons for the existence of "post-truth". The subjective group: lying politicians and public figures; expanding PR activities; untruthful advertising; guerilla journalism and professional journalism that use propaganda, rumors, and myths to attract attention. The technological group: the ubiquity of the Internet, which equalized the messages of professional communicators and of the individuals, unbound by communicative ethics and social responsibility. The ideological: the implementation of post-modernistic values of total relativism, equalizing the statuses of truth and lie.

3. Journalism plays the leading role in the implementation of the "post-truth era". This type of journalism called "post-journalism," prioritizes business over journalistic integrity,

entertainment over analytics, spectacle over covering socially important issues, biases over neutrality, and popularity over social engineering.

4. Postmodernism in mass media introduces fiction to journalism, causes social instability, and threatens the very notion of democracy, which is built on the idea of informed, conscious choice. Rejecting objective truth disrupts the social systems and, therefore, endangers the existence of humanity.

Discussion

R.V. Zholud states: "The neologism became extremely popular in Western journalism… in 2016, when, despite common sense, objective truths and factual evidence, and thanks to populistic remarks, emotional pressure and misinformation, Donald Trump won the USA elections and the UK voted to leave the EU" [3, p. 119]. I.S. Shushpanova believes that the goal of "post-truth" is forming the public opinion and presenting false information as truthful via the Internet mass media [4, p. 97]. N.A. Bortnikov and A.P. Pungina state that the characteristic features of "post-truth" are: appealing to emotions and personal beliefs of the audience; lying by omission; information overload of the news feed; combining truth and lies; "lucky" timing of information; sensationalizing the content [5, p. 38].

The discussions on the "post-truth" phenomenon mainly focus on the mass media's role in modern society. The researchers point to the "crisis of fact" caused by several factors from "the overload of factual information, and the existence of multiple ways to deliver the message, meaning that its impossible to check the media biases" to "the influence of post-modernistic values" and "the decline of media credibility, caused by their involvement in infowars and commercialization" [6, p. 202]. The studies on the theoretical aspects of "post-truth" are somewhat divisive. For example, O.V. Popova criticizes the notion, stating: "The 'politics of post-truth' is often seen as a specific political and cultural phenomenon associated with the symbolization of coercive practices by various social entities selfishly struggling to maintain or acquire political power" [7, p. 202]. Simultaneously, some authors justify it, seeing post-

truth as a socio-historical pattern, where the modern person needs emotional engagement and societal consensus more than the objective truth. "Post-truth accounts for the things that connect the speaker with the audience, their emotions and passions" [8, p. 102].

The philosophical aspects of this phenomenon have scarcely been discussed. These discussions mainly dwell on the "truth," its criteria, and verification methods in the modern "pluralistic" world. In this regard, there are two scientific directions.

The first one states that the notion of "truth" will be eliminated due to: the crisis of "linear" rationality, the complexity and multifacetedness of scientific knowledge development, the "flexibility" of truth and rationality, and the growing multitude of scientific facts' interpretation. The term "post-truth" signifies "a new cultural reality, where the concept of truth is constantly challenged" [9, p. 330]. Moreover, in post-modernistic philosophy, the notions of "truth" and "rationality" are oppressive. The alternative social epistemology states that not only the notions of "objectivity" and "truth" are subjective, but also the cognitive attitudes since they are presumed to be influenced by the dominant social group. They propose shifting the attention of epistemological discourse from the "dead white males" to the victimized minorities. For example, the works of E.K. Sedgwick, analyzing the homo/heterosexual definitions in the framework of "queer-epistemology", have become massively popular in the late 1990s [10, p. 110]. The second direction points to the theoretical and practical irremovability of the notion of "truth". Philosophical epistemologists and mass-media theorists state that journalism's primary function is providing the audience with objective facts. B. McComiskey divides between "bullshit", "lie", and "post-truth". According to him, the latter is a much more dangerous lie than all the others [11, p. 12]. The authors note that the "crisis of fact," on the one hand, creates societal chaos and disaggregation, which may lead to overt violence. "The reality is a singular thing and, even though different information sources report different things, only one version of an event may have happened... Everything else is just sophistry. But some-

times, sophistry may play an even bigger role in societal reality than the event itself. However, this does not make the words truer and the event falser... If one were to admit that everyone lives in their own reality, one would be doomed to live in a Plato's cave, watching the social constructs instead of the dancing shadows" [12, p. 23].

On the other hand, the existence of "post-truth" marks the beginning of the transition to the totalitarian government. Most of the manifestations of "post-truth" are not the expression of an individual's believes but regurgitated opinions, purposefully fed to the society by political and financial institutions. Therefore, the "triumph of post-truth" will eliminate all choice in solving societal and household problems, destroying the civil society in the process.

In analyzing the philosophical aspects of "post-truth," the authors concluded the following. The legitimization of "post-truth" is caused by the Western epistemology's tendency to consider the individual's consciousness and cognition to be independent of the environment. If one were to consider this valid, one would be unable to relate to other people's experiences. However, this position is not universal. Moreover, it faces a multitude of insoluble problems. The alternatives to it include evolutionary epistemology, quantum approaches to consciousness, philosophical teachings of West and East, which has become a subject matter of many philosophical and consciousness studies. These positions establish a significant connection between human consciousness and the objective reality.

All post-modernistic discussions view "truth" as a rigid and static structure, which contradicts to the modern notion of dynamic and multifaceted "truth" that reflects an equally dynamic reality. However, the dynamic nature does cause chaos, but only complicates the structure of "truth". Different facets of one "truth" do not signify the existence of several "truth". Thus, the criteria of distinguishing between complementary truths and false opinions must be examined further.

One cannot doubt the significance of emotional and axiological aspects of interpersonal communication. However, according to most scholars, these aspects do not intersect with the "truth/lie" dichotomy. Thus, most discussions on these topics are prone to straw-man fallacies. Moreover, most philosophical schools of thought that established the "reality of the ideal" and the ontological status of values have also recognized the "ordo amoris" – an objective order of preferences. Thus, these theories are not exactly relativistic but expanded rationalistic ones. The legitimization of "post-truth" questions the very existence of science as a social institute that binds all other areas of life together. "Post-truth devaluates the expert knowledge, causes anti-intellectualism, and tries to drive science and education away from the societal focus. The governments aggressively attempt to reduce the 'undesirable' scientific theses to the level of a mere opinion, which prevents people from obtaining the objectively valid information" [13, p. 371].

Conclusion

The authors of this study conclude that the criticism of "post-truth" legitimization is completely valid. The "truth/lie" dichotomy still applies, and "post-truth" must, therefore, be considered a lie. D.C. Dennett, in his debates with R.M. Rorty, wrote that the question of truth is a question of life and death for everyone on Earth, since every living being actively seeks the truth about environment, in order to react to it adequately and survive. The human's methods of obtaining the truth are quite sophisticated, as they involve constant verification of truths "The point of asking questions is to find true answers... the goal of truth goes without saying, in every human culture" [14, p. 98]. However, this does not mean that "post-truth" does not deserve serious attention. It laid bare the complexity of socio-cultural and epistemological problems. The notions of truth, objectivity, and the existence of standard verification criteria cannot be eliminated. Moreover, they must be clarified and substantiated, due to the recent fundamental findings in natural sciences and the increasingly complex societal life.

References

1. Keyes R. (2004) Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life. – New York, US: St. Martin's Press. – 135 p.

2. Почепцов Г.Г. Постжурналистика в современном мире. – [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://psyfactor.org/lib/postjournalism2.htm (дата обращения: 20.12.2021).

3. Жолудь Р. В. «Эра постправды» в западной журналистике: причины и последствия // Вестник ВГУ. Серия: Филология. Журналистика. – 2018. – № 3. – С. 117-123.

4. Шушпанова И.С. «Постправда» в социальной реальности: риски и угрозы // Социологические исследования. – 2018. – №12. – С. 94-104.

5. Бортников Н.А., Пунгина А.П. Визуальный политический интернет-мем как инструмент постправды // Материалы Всероссийской научной конференции с международным участием «Политика постправды и популизм в современном мире», 22–23 сентября 2017 года. – СПб.: Скифия-принт, 2017. С. 38-40.

6. Резник Г.М. Журналистика в мире постправды // Материалы XIX Международных Лихачевских научных чтений «Мировое развитие проблемы предсказуемости и управляемости», 22-24 мая 2019 г. СПб.: изд-во СПбГУПТД, 2019. – С. 202-204.

7. Политика «постправды» и популизм / под ред. Поповой О.В. – СПб.: Скифия-принт, 2018. – 216 с.

8. Морозов А.В. Ответ на вопрос: что такое постправда? Перспектива проблематологии // Горизонты гуманитарного знания. – 2019. – №3. – С. 93-105.

9. Синельников Д.П. Постправда и проблема современного коммуникационного пространства // Век информации. – 2018. – Т. 1. №2. – С. 329-330.

10. Sedgwick *E.K.* (1990). Epistemology of the Closet. Berkly, US: University of California Press. – 258 p.

11. McComiskey *B.* (2017) Post-truth rhetoric and composition. Boulder, US: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press. 56 p.

12. Труфанова Е.О. (2018). Истина, знание и реальность в эпоху «постправды» // *Материалы VII Иоанновских научных чтений «Поиск истины как аксиологическая парадигма гуманитарного знания: прошлое, настоящее, будущее»,* Москва, 23 октября 2017 г. – М.: «Летний сад». – С. 17-25.

13. Глухова А.В. Постфактическая демократия и политика постправды: как защитить реальность? // Материалы 12 региональной научной конференции «Личность, общество, власть: прошлое и современность», Воронеж, 2 февраля 2018 г. – Воронеж: Издательский дом ВГУ, 2018. – С. 368-373.

14. Деннет Д. Постмодернизм и истина: Почему нам важно понимать это правильно // Вопросы философии. – 2001. – № 8. – С. 93-100.

«ПОСТПРАВДА» В СОВРЕМЕННОМ МЕДИАПРОСТРАНСТВЕ: СОЦИОКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ И ФИЛОСОФСКИЙ АСПЕКТЫ

И.В. Фотиева, *д-р филос. наук, профессор*
Т.А. Семилет, *д-р филос. наук, профессор*
Алтайский государственный университет
(Россия, г. Барнаул)

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу социокультурного феномена постправды как ситуации в современном медийном пространстве и новой формирующейся модели осуществления массовой коммуникации. Исследуются эмпирические проявления, мировоззренческие основания и социальные детерминанты феномена; предпринимается попытка выяснения социально-культурной сущности постправды в сопряжении с феноменами «постдемократии» и «постжурналистики», дается прогноз онтологических и гносеологических эффектов от следования установкам постмодернистской философии субъектами коммуникации. Особое внимание авторами уделено сопоставлению позиций теоретиков массовой коммуникации, показывающему амбивалентность анализируемых явлений и неоднозначность в оценках рассматриваемых феноменов и ситуаций.

Ключевые слова: постправда, медиапространство, массовая коммуникация, постжурналистика, факт, истина, постмодернизм.