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KEEPING TOUCH WITH REALITY On the Responsibility of Educators in the Post-truth Era

It is reasonable to claim that the term “post-truth” reveals the connection between truth and its relations to cognitive, social, and axiological problems. Describing the phenomenon of post-truth is therefore not so much about showing how information is distorted, but about what conditions the willingness to concede that truth ceases to be a socially recognized value around which modern conditio humana is centered.

“Post-truth” seems to have become a term as important or even as popular as it is difficult to define. The former is evidenced by its numerous applications not only to scientific discourses but also in journalism, whereas the latter—by various contextualizations of its understanding as a concept. Both phenomena are interrelated: a plurality of sources generates a plurality of interpretations. My purpose in this paper is not to introduce another interpretation, and even less so one correct interpretation of the concept. Instead, I would describe my intention as emphasizing the axiological aspect of the phenomenon of post-truth, or rather an absence of such an aspect in the phenomenon in question. The aspiration of those who use fake and false news as a tool for creating the world is primarily not to change the very facts describing the world but to adapt the ways of reading these facts to their chosen vision of reality. Therefore, when discussing the problem of post-truth, I note that it is rather a social phenomenon and not simply a conceptual or semantic issue. Next, I emphasize that recognizing the social context of the “post-truth era” allows us to better understand the phenomenon of fake and false news, as well as ourselves. This in turn takes me to the question of pedagogical responsibility for and towards those who are socially situated educational subjects.¹

While the term “post-truth” is relatively new and started to be widely used only in the second decade of the twenty first century, it has already become the subject of much discussion, scientific attempts at operationalization, and even encyclopedic entries. One of them—influential and frequently quoted—describes post-truth as “relating to circumstances in which people respond

¹ On this topic, see Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (London: Routledge, 2013).

more to feelings and beliefs than to facts.”² The authors diagnose a blurring line between truth and post-truth, reality and myth, fake news and fact, and even religion and science. The field in which this blurring occurs is primarily the world of politics, but it also applies strongly to the world of everyday experience. It is in these fields that we are dealing with the expansion of post-truth, often associated not only with inability but also, more significantly, with reluctance to make a distinction between truth and post-truth.³

THE INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

Looking at the scientific aspects of the issue of post-truth, it seems that research in this area is divided into two main orientations. The first one can be called epistemic and is usually associated with natural sciences. It refers to the hard distinction between truth and falsehood, but also to the one between certain knowledge and fallacies. At the same time, the expression “post-truth” is most often associated with the context of politics. In the works combining the two areas, which can be identified as *post-truth politics*, the focus is usually on the use of unproven or false information as an instrument of shaping public opinion by manipulating facts and information appropriate to the conditions in which politics is made. Analyses of this kind⁴—often based on differing understandings of politics, its scope, and the types of actors involved—emphasize that post-truth is simply the modern name for the old problem of lying associated with dishonest intentions. The term “post-truth” is in fact redundant, because there are already enough notions, such as lies, falsification, manipulation, disinformation or misrepresentation, which can be used for the purpose of analysis of issues related to the truth–untruth relationship (conceived not only in the logical sense, but also in the social one).⁵

Works analyzing the phenomenon of post-truth⁶ point to a somewhat vaguely understood postmodern philosophy, with figures such as Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida as responsible for a wide presence of falsehood mainly (although not only) in politics. In epistemic terms, postmodernism has reoriented classical thinking about truth and the conditions of its accessibility

² Oxford Learners Dictionaries, s.v. “Post-truth,” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/post-truth>.

³ See David Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 2–4.

⁴ See Harry Frankfurt, *On Truth* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 20–24.

⁵ See Raphael Sasser, “Postmodern Relativism as Enlightened Pluralism,” in *Relativism and Post-Truth in Contemporary Society*, ed. Mikael Stenmark, Steve Fuller, and Ulf Zackariasson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 35–52.

⁶ See, e.g., Lee McIntyre, *Post-truth* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2018).

by proclaiming that truth is not so much a result of the correct cognitive process, but rather an effect of power and the desire to rule; it is an instrument of political oppression rather than a realization of the adequacy between the actual state of affairs and the human cognitive capabilities. Postmodernism, therefore, also denied the very possibility of reaching the truth, that is, a description of the world, or reality, and human beings recognized by all, while leaning towards the idea that the multiplicity of such descriptions is not only a characteristic of our world, but also a certain good for which we should opt. The lack of a common vocabulary to describe the world—the epistemologists continue—is certainly not an obstacle to such attempts, but they are all doomed to failure because of their equal position, that is, the same impossibility of intellectually grasping the world as such. Thus, epistemically, politics has in a way exploited the postmodern challenge to truth, increasingly distancing itself from the idea that it should somehow cling to it.⁷

Among the epistemically-oriented critics of the validity of the term “post-truth,” the dominant belief, often combined with disbelief, is that talking about a “post-truth era” is a kind of paradox. It is paradoxical, in their opinion, that a rational and inherently truth-seeking humanity, using the achievements of science (conceived as an application of rationality for the purpose of the search for truth), should suspend confidence in these achievements and turn to the cultivation of atavistic emotional messages. Steven Pinker points out that attitudes which favor acceptance of post-truth as the regime of the present time and fake news as equal messages in the social space can be interpreted in terms of a retreat from rationality⁸: they signify a failure of reason and of all those who stand behind the institutionalization of these new phenomena. In his book *Enlightenment Now*, Pinker assumes the position of the Enlightenment’s optimism and naturalism and argues that the human cognitive apparatus is the best defender against fake news and other types of untruth; it only needs to be properly applied and disseminated. The combination of reason, science, humanism, and progress is the answer to every obstacle to the Enlightenment.⁹ In a similar vein, Harvey Siegel defends objective truth threatened by increasingly important intellectual currents related to and inspired by relativism. Relativism and the teaching methods based on this approach weaken education and the pursuit of evidence-based knowledge. Siegel calls for a return to the achievements of analytic philosophy and ethics which seek a balance between the development of the individual and society.¹⁰

⁷ See *ibidem*, 123–50.

⁸ See Steven P i n k e r, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018), 20–28.

⁹ See *ibidem*, 18–21.

¹⁰ See S i e g e l, *Educating Reason*, 9–13.

In this context, it is worth noting that even though discussions about post-truth necessarily refer to the terms “fake news” and “false news,” these terms do not have unambiguous definitions, and individual researchers pay attention to different aspects of the phenomena the concepts describe.¹¹ However, both terms usually refer to the universality of the mode of human existence in the world of media messages, where information (news) is widely distributed and intended to be not so much an element of the description of the world, but a factor in its change, for instance, through the formation of attitudes. Hunt Allcott and Mathew Gentzkow write: “We define ‘fake news’ to be news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false and could mislead readers.”¹² In this approach, fake news is presented as facts even though it is not based on facts. The authors point to the intentionality of untruth as a necessary feature to qualify a piece of news as fake, and the way to recognize the truth is—in their opinion—to verify the information provided by the media industry. They also point out that fake news has several close cousins, e.g., reporting mistakes unintentionally, rumors or conspiracy theories.¹³ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, the authors of the report issued by the Council of Europe, demonstrate in turn that “fake news” is only one among many terms used to describe information disorder. Moreover, along with its dissemination, the term “fake news” has become a double-edged sword: “The term has also begun to be appropriated by politicians around the world to describe news organizations whose coverage they find disagreeable.”¹⁴ In the opinion of the authors of the quoted report, the analysis of the falseness of information must necessarily address the issue of harm to describe the potential and actual consequences of crossing the line between false news and real news.

Therefore, in epistemic terms, fake news, with which we, unfortunately, must deal, comes from rendering falsehood as instrumental. Providing information, even if it is false, is always in someone’s interest. It is most often identified as an interest of a politician, a political party or even a state. However, the reference scope of the term “fake news” should not be limited to the political sphere. Fake news can equally serve economic, commercial, military, publishing or even scientific domains. As Linda Zimmermann points out, in

¹¹ See Klaudia Rosińska, *Fake news: Geneza, istota, przeciwdziałanie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2021), 20–32.

¹² Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016,” *Election Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (2017): 213.

¹³ See *ibidem*: 214.

¹⁴ Claire Wardle and Hossein Derakhshan, *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017), 5.

medicine, geology, and paleontology, “stupid theories”¹⁵ are promulgated, unsupported by adequate data or simply pronounced out of their authors’ desire to become known in the scientific community. In fact, no area of knowledge or social activity is free from susceptibility to falsehood. In her opinion, those who point out that this is not the specificity of our time are right—politicians and merchants have been lying since “the beginning of time,”¹⁶ and newspaper publishers and scientists have been doing so since the demand for their services appeared. The peculiarity of our time lies in that due to an increase in the general susceptibility to falsehood, it is universally used as a tool to reach specific goals. Epistemic arguments conclude that the concept of post-truth is unnecessary in science since using this concept does not refer to any new, previously unknown entity, fact or phenomenon.¹⁷ At most, it is a new form of verbalization of already recognized problems which have been well studied and described, or even an expression of a certain fashion in science.

Such an approach to post-truth certainly has many advantages, but they are rather analytical. Indeed, much of what the mentioned authors claim—using the epistemic understanding of post-truth—can be related to the accumulated and analyzed knowledge of the relationship between truth and untruth. However, such a description does not apply to the entire scope of the problem: after all, post-truth refers to other modes of communication, other types of social relations, or other ideological beliefs than those included in classical analyses of the issues of truth, falsehood, and lying.

Even if we accept the argument that the term post-truth does not refer to a new kind of entity, it would be difficult to argue that it does not expand our cognitive field with new positions relating to the relationship between truth and untruth. As I will demonstrate in this paper, it is reasonable to claim that the term “post-truth” reveals the connection between truth and its relations to cognitive, social, and axiological problems. Describing the phenomenon of post-truth is therefore not so much about showing how information is distorted (although this is also important), but about what conditions the willingness to concede that truth ceases to be a socially recognized value around which modern *conditio humana* is centered.

That is why I define the second orientation of researchers exploring post-truth and its presence in our lives as a constructivist-solipsist approach. They indicate that post-truth is not a simple opposite of truth, but a phenomenon of creating alternative versions of reality, so an application of classical episte-

¹⁵ Linda Zimermann, *Bad Science: A Brief History of Bizarre Misconceptions, Totally Wrong Conclusions and Incredibly Stupid Theories* (New York: Eagle Press, 2011), 7.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 19.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Block, *Post-Truth and Political Discourse*, 19–62.

mological distinctions does not help describe their social context. The social world is much more complex and intricate, and the empirically verifiable part of it includes social groups that not only criticize and reject the “official” vision of the world, but also frequently construct such types of descriptions and explanations of phenomena and actions they perceive as correct and corresponding to reality, at the same time closing themselves to any discussion and criticism, which brings to mind the besieged fortress syndrome.¹⁸ Without doubt, from the point of view of the epistemic perspective, which clearly distinguishes between true and false individual claims, many, though not all, statements made by representatives of such groups are openly false. However, this does not change the fact that what they say is not merely based on cognitive errors which science can expose, as it should within its area of competence, but is, above all, pronounced by people, individuals, and social groups, who have certain motivations, experiences, and histories. If, as social researchers, we want to understand their inner worldview, which usually approaches facts not only with hostility, as a disorder in their cognitive universe, but often as a manifestation of a “conspiracy of the elites,”¹⁹ we should also try to understand the social context in which such groups exist and operate. If we want to understand how the intensity of beliefs creates social groups focused on supporting, developing, and reproducing these beliefs, we should try to understand that, subjectively, to them, the real world is the world of their lived experience (*Lebenswelt*). So, along with post-truth understood as a new face of the old problems of lying, manipulation, and disinformation, comes its understanding as an alternative vision of reality. However, it would also be a misunderstanding to throw into one category all those whose beliefs about reality—in the light of rational and scientific knowledge—classify as fake news (e.g., sociopaths unable to distinguish truth from lies, those suffering from Delbrück syndrome, and uninformed or uneducated persons). There are probably no scientific studies that confirm the existence of a relationship between such groups of people, but there are many studies that emphasize the social background and context of their functioning. It would also be a mistake to underestimate their impact and describe it with phrases such as “crazy ideas” or “mad theories.” Such an approach would reveal our helplessness towards them and would contribute to an easy labelling of not only the ideas they spread, but also the ones who actually do so.

The approach in question does not in fact oppose the epistemic one; rather, it complements and extends it. The belief that human reason and cognitive

¹⁸ See Thomas Zoglauer, *Post-truth Society: A Political Anthropology of Trickster Logic* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2023), 10–12.

¹⁹ See Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 65–78.

powers are sufficient to counter fake news faces a fundamental difficulty, because—precisely in times of extremely easy and universal access to information and to mass and long-term education—a situation arises in which fake news, ordinary public lies, and a multitude of conspiracy theories appear easily and *en masse*. The belief in pseudo-science and conspiracy theories is stronger today than ever before, which of course does not mean it has not existed before. Even though today we have an extremely rich research apparatus and effective tools for verifying information, the process is reversed from the one that the eulogists of the Enlightenment announced. This, in turn, encourages us to take a closer look at the issue of post-truth and determine the social reasons for the success of fake news, false news, and alternative realities.

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

In his 2004 work *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*,²⁰ Ralph Keyes introduced in a fairly general way the term “post-truth” into public circulation before it became fashionable a decade later. His book might be seen as one of many works demystifying our not-entirely-correct ideas about the world. One might even be tempted to call it a chronicle of deceptions, many of which Keyes analyzed in detail. He included in his account stories about how Marilyn Monroe came up with her own biography²¹ and how after the Vietnam War there was a plague of “false veterans.”²² However, the main value of his book lies in the important observation that the uniqueness of the present time in terms of the presence of truth and falsehood in our lives consists in the fact that falsehood and its derivatives have been accepted: they have become an inevitable element of reality and even ceased to shock or outrage. Therefore, it is reasonable to refer to the present time as the “post-truth era,” emphasizing the difference between our times and the past, in which it was unthinkable to be proud of transmitting or disseminating false information. Thus, as Keyes argued, tolerance for lying and being lied to (also by oneself) has nowadays increased.²³

However, Keyes’s work should be seen as a description of the symptoms rather than one of the sources of the popularity of fake and false news or the acceptance of lying in social life. As the works of Michael J. Sandel suggest, the ideological source of the “post-truth era” is the concept of meritocracy, or

²⁰ See Ralph Keyes, *The Post-truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004).

²¹ See *ibidem*, 74.

²² *Ibidem*, 80.

²³ See *ibidem*, 12–17.

rather its dark side.²⁴ Meritocracy, on the one hand, has the task of justifying the release of human and social potential blocked in ancient regimes, and it appeals to the innate forces people can explore regardless of the whims of those in power. Since the Enlightenment, people have been throwing off their social corsets together with the social roles assigned to them and inherited from father to son, and they were doing so, for instance, by taking control over the choice of a spouse, now made without the pressure of social class or family. But meritocracy, on the other hand, is now more deeply connected with individualism than it has ever been the case before. In such a system, success or failure becomes, in fact, an individual matter in which no one else, including social institutions, should intervene and for which only a particular individual is responsible. And since people want the results of their actions perceived as a success rather than a failure, the ideology of meritocracy has resulted in what can be called a culture of narcissism²⁵ based on the ability to produce an appropriate impression, regardless of whether this impression in any way coincides with the actual situation. To claim that what matters in the culture of narcissism is not what qualifications one has, but exclusively the ability to present oneself as a successful person would certainly be an exaggeration; however, even a quick review of the book market or of offers of interpersonal training available nowadays shows how much interest the competence of being good in “selling oneself” generates. Moreover, lying is taken to be an effective tool for obtaining the appropriate effect and if it works, why not use it?

Consequently, one might say that, correlated with the “dark side” of the meritocratic ideology, post-truth is a field of hope based on resentment. Many promises made by the Enlightenment—the age when the idea of mass happiness was largely based on the belief in the progress of reliable knowledge—have not been fulfilled (for which the Enlightenment as such is hardly to blame), and Jürgen Habermas’s view that the Enlightenment might be viewed in terms of an unfinished project,²⁶ which requires only a little more effort and less of its criticism, has not received wide intellectual or social resonance. While liberty, equality, and fraternity remain the basis of many social movements in the post-truth era, they have developed their caricatured form: equality which

²⁴ See Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15–24.; Michael J. Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What’s Become of the Common Good?* (New Delhi: Allen Lane, 2020), 109–14.

²⁵ See Christopher Lasch, *Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 3–30.

²⁶ See Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” trans. Nicholas Walker, In *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on “The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,”* ed. Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 38–55.

comes before the law has turned into equality without an arbiter of opinion, liberty as the ability to control one's life has transformed into freedom to say anything without being responsible for one's words, and fraternity as an expression of community's emancipation against injustice committed by the authorities has transformed into its search for groups that support its shared beliefs. In this context, production of fake news and false theories can be interpreted as a distorted realization of the Enlightenment ideals: they are the kind of "knowledge" which offers comfort and confidence that one is right and does not need to confront one's views with anything or anyone.

Referring to Matthew d'Ancona, it is possible to claim that the present times are also characterized by generalized relativism disguised as skepticism.²⁷ Classical skepticism, which is still present in ordinary scientific conduct and in rational thinking, did not undermine information in the name of the act of undermining itself, but in the name of the anti-dogmatism of the goals and methods of cognition. Today's skepticism has become precisely the same kind of dogmatism: the skeptic has ceased to be a "seeker" (*skeptomai*) and has become a doubter of whatever does not fit his worldview. In other words, skepticism has evolved from legitimate criticism to a defense of any adopted point of view. Moreover, this relativism is shameless and in line with the saying that "a wise man changes his mind, a fool never will," which makes it orbit towards cynicism. In fact, it does not matter what has been said, it is important that it has been said and spread publicly. In a mediatized public space, it is silence rather than pronouncing even the most ridiculous statements that is tantamount to death.

Post-truth feeds on democratization of the public space. While the Enlightenment press and salon discussions represented emancipation from the official message created by the regime of absolute power to influence this message and develop common consensus norms,²⁸ today, the public sphere is undergoing a far-reaching privatization and individualization, which, as most social actors believe, makes their problems public, that is ones about which the public should know and care. The process in question also opens the way for those who think they know everything and can speak on any subject: from the benefits of dowsing to the praise of Nazi eugenics as a form of depopulation. An American rapper Bobby Ray Simmons, nicknamed B.o.B (supposedly famous among the rap community), got into a discussion on Twitter (today's variation of the public sphere) with Neil deGrasse Tyson, a recognized American scientist and

²⁷ See Matthew d'Ancona, *Post-truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (New York: Ebury Publishing, 2017), 8–10.

²⁸ See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 14–26.

expert in astrophysics, for the purpose of questioning the Earth's curvature and announcing a public fundraiser for purchasing a satellite to prove that the Earth is flat.²⁹ Regardless of the (non)sensibility of Simmons's idea and the results of the fundraiser, the example in question shows that misunderstood and misused relativism makes it possible nowadays to question the opinion of any expert as "merely" an opinion or a theory (without delving into the difference between the two notions). Consequently, the discussed approach—regardless of the degree of veracity of the messages it involves—leads to a fragmentation of the society and closes the possibility of settling disputes institutionally. Members of society begin to talk side by side each other rather than to each other, and the more cynical activists and politicians take advantage of this situation to gather groups of supporters around them (e.g., potential voters) and say to these supporters whatever they expect and whatever they accept.³⁰

Yet another reason why the present times are called a "post-truth era" is that they are marked by social acceptance of falsehood, which is accompanied by an ignorance of the risks the widespread presence of deception and lies in everyday life entails. Tolerance for cynicism in social and political life—resulting from the constant presence and even a deepening of social inequalities, correlated with neo-liberal policies and economic globalization—fosters, if not outright falsehood, at least positioning oneself in the so-called "right" camp. At the same time pressure is exerted on experts: scientists, journalists, and popularizers of knowledge, who used to be forerunners of the age of progress,³¹ and whose balanced and impartial views are now challenged. Their cautiously formulated conclusions, revealing the nuances of decision-making processes, are now to be replaced by hasty generalizations and partisan opinions. Among the weaknesses of the post-truth era is precisely the compliance such experts not infrequently show when confronted with a social demand to issue a particular judgment. Fake news propagators are particularly keen on attacking experts and the intellectual elite, whose role is to educate people, inform them and explain the world to them, and on nullifying the institutions which control the capability of distinguishing truth from falsehood. Discrediting the opinions of experts makes the opinions of fake news propagators—in their own eyes and in the eyes of the groups that support them—as valid as those of the former. The failure to recognize the risk of accepting the "universality" of deception

²⁹ Lauren Said-Moorhouse, "Rapper B.o.B Thinks the Earth Is Flat, Has Photographs to Prove It." CNN Entertainment, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/26/entertainment/rapper-bob-earth-flat-theory/index.html>.

³⁰ See Ulf Zackariasson, "Introduction: Engaging Relativism and Post-truth," in *Relativism and Post-truth in Contemporary Society*, 1–17.

³¹ On this topic, see Janusz Grygiewicz, *Democracy in the Post-truth Era: Restoring Faith in Expertise*, trans. Dominika Gajewska (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

and falsehood, so characteristic of the present times, is tantamount to a gradual decline of public discourse: not only science and politics are mistrusted, so is everyone who does not share the “proper” beliefs.³²

Undoubtedly the phenomenon of post-truth is affected by the current revolution in the transmission of information. Although the “traditional” media (the press, the radio, and the television) are well-known sources of false and propagandistic information, the falsified picture of reality they have conveyed is a result of a different mode of operation from that characteristic of the modern electronic media. The basic difference is that a regime that launches misinformation (propaganda) is easy to identify, which, in fact, is intended to serve its power. Propaganda operates from the top down, its message is addressed by the authorities to the social masses, and it is intended to reach the social nadir.³³ New digital technologies, the Internet in particular, have created almost unlimited opportunities for misinformation to spread so that post-truth has become a far more intense phenomenon than the most advanced forms of propaganda Hitler or Stalin might imagine.³⁴

In societies heavily impacted by the Internet, in which strong face-to-face social ties are continually being weakened, it is easier to share one’s “version” of truth with one’s Facebook friends than to talk to one’s neighbor about banning street parking. Even if we assume that the will or desire to lie and deceive is the same in human beings at a given stage of the evolution of the *Homo sapiens* species (and therefore has not changed significantly since the time of the existence of the first hominids), still different social conditions favor an increase in the intensity of the will or desire in question. Small and close-knit communities, with tighter social relationships and individuals knowing one another well, were naturally not conducive to confabulation: a lie is harder to hide from people who know a lot about you. Large agglomerations in turn, in which power and business are concentrated, anonymize and camouflage individuals so that others do not know them well: thus, conveying information so as to create one’s positive image in the eyes of others becomes easier.³⁵

Keyes emphasizes the fact that the ability to lie, to make up and create myths has indeed grown in the era of the Internet: “No rumor is too outrageous

³² See Emma Woods, “Science Policy in a Post-truth World,” in *Risk and Uncertainty in a Post-Truth Society*, ed. Sander van der Linden and Ragnar E. Löfstedt (London: Routledge, 2019), 26–43.

³³ See Anthony Pratkings and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: Holt Paperback, 2001), 4–8.

³⁴ See Łukasz Olejnik, *Propaganda: Od dezinformacji i wpływu do operacji i wojny informacyjnej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2024), 90–93.

³⁵ See Gabriele Cosentino, *Social Media and the Post-truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 16–22.

for the Internet, no paranoid delusion beyond its pale. The collapse of the World Trade Center towers provided a field day for wild allegations launched into cyberspace as facts. One e-mail that raced from computer to computer alleged that a friend of a friend had dated an Afghani who broke up with her just before the towers were attacked, then warned his former girlfriend not to take any commercial airliners on September 11. Phony photos were posted, including one supposedly taken by a tourist on the observation deck of the first tower, that allegedly showed an airplane about to fly into the second one. (In fact, this observation deck wasn't open at the time the towers were attacked.) Another portrayed a 'devil's face' in the smoke of the destruction. Subsequent postings assured Netizens that ironing their mail would kill anthrax spores, that French astrologer Nostradamus predicted the towers' collapse in 1654, that a man trapped high in a collapsing tower rode falling debris to safety, and that four thousand Jews who worked at the World Trade Center stayed home on September 11 because they knew what was about to happen."³⁶ One event triggered hundreds if not thousands explanations that immediately gained thousands new proponents. Donald Barclay notes that, in the age of digital information transfer, we are much more likely to encounter false information than ever before, which is caused by the characteristics of the information environment itself. These include: potential anonymity (concealed identity) of the source of the information, the speed of its spreading, the absence of age or competence restrictions on the authorship of information (potentially anyone can be a broadcaster and operate in any element of the network), the "tabloidization" of information (it is usually short, includes mental short-cuts, and aims at elucidating an emotional approach to its content), "clickability" combined with paid advertising (websites which appeal to the naivety of their users and often produce information based on a random coincidence of facts, names or positions simply make money from it).³⁷

At the same time, post-truth as a phenomenon does not have an ideological affiliation or a political identification (although it can certainly support an ideology or a political organization); creation of fake news is not bound with a specific professional role, gender or national identity, although it can act through forces that define themselves in this way.³⁸ Whether someone is a producer of false information or replicates pseudo-scientific claims is neither determined by their skin color, place of birth or education. Analyses show that fake news is created by dictators as well as by their opponents, by representa-

³⁶ K e y e s, *The Post-truth Era*, 206.

³⁷ Donald A. B a r c l a y, *Fake News, Propaganda, and Plain Old Lies: How to Find Trustworthy Information in the Digital Age* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017), 29–56.

³⁸ See Christian F u c h s, *Nationalism on the Internet: Critical Theory and Ideology in the Age of Social Media and Fake News* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1–18.

tives of democratic governments as well as by representatives of their political opposition, by owners of factories and businesses as well as by protesting trade union members, by theists as well as by atheists. This list can be expanded in virtually any direction, but the meaning of the claim in question comes down to the statement that falsehood has begun to be considered an effective tool in the struggle for power as much as in the struggle against it.

HOW DO WE DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST POST-TRUTH?

While there are many indications that we indeed live in a post-truth era and that the “lie machine” is not easy to stop, it does not mean that attempts at counteracting this situation are not needed or are not being taken. One of them involves fact-checking websites. Such initiatives are usually started by journalists (for instance, representatives of the *New York Times*³⁹), but also by amateur enthusiasts like the Bellingcat group,⁴⁰ who are becoming increasingly professional while advancing their mission. They frame their task as extracting facts from the clutter of the virtual infosphere and comparing them with the data available on the Internet. Websites like Bellingcat conduct online journalistic investigations and report the results of their work on news pages and social media.⁴¹ However, even though they sometimes achieve a spectacular success in the fight against disinformation, their titanic work is hardly sufficient to cope with the problem of fake news and false information. The first reason is that there is too much false and unreliable information (which is due to the very nature of Internet: information becomes viral and is constantly reproduced) for a limited number of fact-checkers to identify. Secondly, the exposure of fake news does not mean that it disappears from the Internet: even though it has been successfully identified as a fake, it can still be spread. Moreover, from a purely psychological point of view, to the propagators of false news and pseudo-science, a verification of fake news as fake is an exact confirmation of the alleged “conspiracy of the elites.” This is so, because, as can be determined from the constructivist-solipsist perspective, fragmented social worlds are generally closed off to any counter-information that strikes at the source of their message.

The positive role of anti-disinformation journalism and fact-checking in defending society against the flood of falsehoods and insincerities should cer-

³⁹ See, e.g., Charlie W a r z e l, “Don’t Go Down the Rabbit Hole,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/18/opinion/fake-news-media-attention.html>.

⁴⁰ See Bellingcat, “Who We Are,” <https://www.bellingcat.com/about/who-we-are/>.

⁴¹ See Lucas G r a v e s, “Anatomy of a Fact Check: Objective Practice and the Contested Epistemology of Fact Checking,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 3 (2016): 518–37.

tainly be noted and emphasized. However, such initiatives involve commitment of highly specialized individuals and require excellent expertise in the technology of falsification (for instance, the capacity to use a specific software). Thus, unmasking fake news provides knowledge of how the media work rather than of how the world and people function. An effective struggle against misinformation and nonsense requires also—and perhaps above all—an understanding of the social demand for post-truth.

Another way to protect ourselves from the consequences of the phenomenon of post-truth is taking legal action against the creators of fake news. In such situations, truth is usually understood as a good which needs to be protected by the statutory law. Many countries, in particular the democratic ones, as well as many political institutions, including the United Nations, have established various kinds of agendas designed to guard true and reliable reporting of the actions of their administrative units. At the heart of such initiatives lies the belief that trust in the functioning of the political system can be undermined by unprofessional attitudes on the part of public servants, resulting in a declining trust in and in a weakening of the democratic system.⁴² Precisely for this reason some democratic states have postulated reinforcement of the legal protection of true information,⁴³ and the European Union is the leader in this regard. Ferdinand von Schirach, a German writer, but above all a prominent criminal defense lawyer, stressed that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union should be expanded to include the right to truth. The issue in question is addressed in Article 4 of von Schirach's book-appeal *Jeder Mensch*⁴⁴ (Everyone), cowritten with a team of experts in human rights. In the preamble, he writes: "Everyone has the right to trust that statements made by the holders of public office are true."⁴⁵ In justifying this aspiration, Schirach points out that trust in public institutions, the media and judicial mechanisms protecting us against lying in the public sphere is no longer evident. "New media platforms, meanwhile, offer the authorities unforeseen opportunities to spread unproven and unverifiable claims that quickly reach very large audiences—what would Trump have been without Twitter? Once parliament and the media become polarized, the focus is no longer on the truthfulness of a statement, but solely on

⁴² See Lance W. Bennett and Steven Livingston, "The Disinformation Order: Disruptive Communication and the Decline of Democratic Institutions," *European Journal of Communication* 33, no. 2 (2018): 122–39.

⁴³ See, e.g., "W. Brytania: Rząd powoła specjalną instytucję ds. walki z dezinformacją," *Cyberdefence24*, <https://cyberdefence24.pl/bezpieczenstwo-informacyjne/wbrytania-rzad-powola-specjalna-instytucje-ds-walki-z-dezinformacja>.

⁴⁴ See Ferdinand von Schirach et al., *Jeder Mensch* (München: Marcel Hartges, 2021).

⁴⁵ Ferdinand von Schirach et al., *Każdy człowiek*, trans. Michał Szymani (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2022), 45. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

where it is located on the political spectrum. In a post-factual age, the proven correctives are no longer applicable.”⁴⁶ Therefore, every citizen should have the constitutional right not to be lied to by the state.

Political practice and initiatives for legal defense against false information, in particular against it being generated by those in public office, are worth supporting and promoting in spite of their shortcomings, three of which deserve special attention.

The first one has a particularly classical pedigree and is related to the issue of the so-called guardian of the guardians. The law remains an effective form of protecting values (reliable information is certainly among them) as long as the law-making institutions (the legislative bodies formed by representatives of political parties) and the law-based institutions (the judiciary) preserve their respective independence. The fact that the right to truth is declared in a legal document does not automatically guarantee in court that a given issue relating to this right will be dealt with by an impartial and independent judge. Unfortunately, it is frequently the case, in particular in countries which, although seemingly democratic, tend to adopt authoritarian rule and in overtly totalitarian states which use the facade of democracy. In both types of cases, one can observe a clear trend to subordinate the judiciary to the current political interests: the courts and tribunals adjudicate so that their decisions are favorable and beneficial to the authorities. Therefore, the case of a citizen claiming the right to truth can drag on indefinitely, be rejected or simply lost.

The second flaw in legal protection against post-truth results from an assumed connection between facts and moral judgments. Fake news, understood as units of post-truth, rarely or never refers exclusively to facts, but—as the Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries definition points out—contains a strong emotional component correlated with a particular value system, including ethical values. Such values do not have to be pronounced explicitly, but they are included in the message. For example, take a very popular message, widely distributed on Twitter by anti-vaxxers: “Vaccinating children should be a matter of an individual decision of the child’s caregivers, given the possible undesirable consequences.” The ones making claims of this type will probably not abandon their libertarian concept of freedom as self-determination (frequently associated precisely with the anti-vaxxer circles), even if all the possible intricacies of vaccination were thoroughly explained to them. Thus the court is not the right place to settle such ethical disputes: in the above-described case, should the court rule against the anti-vaxxer (even though, in the light of the available scientific data, mass vaccination is a rational means for a population to reach herd immunity), the court’s decision might be interpreted as a form of

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

coercion or even violence against a citizen and, ultimately, be considered by the anti-vaxxers as a confirmation of the fact that they are right in their (false) beliefs and, at the same time, in their attitude of selfishness.

The third drawback of legal protection against post-truth and fake news is that while the relevant legislation might protect citizens from false information produced by politicians and officials, it cannot eliminate most of the unproven, untrue, unreliable and false information spread in the public space. It is hard to imagine that legislation would prohibit, for instance, criticisms of GMOs, claims that the Earth is 6,000 years old and that it is flat, or that homoeopathy and consuming large doses of vitamin C are the best ways to counter scientific lies about global warming. Although, potentially, each of such beliefs can become part of a politician's narrative, as a rule, it is not politicians who are their source.

WITHOUT ETHICS, NO DEFENSE AGAINST PREJUDICE IS EFFECTIVE

The above considerations lead to the conclusion that the most effective and long-term protection against falsehood (and a potential way to overcome the post-truth era) is education. However, while the work done by independent fact-checkers and legal institutions in this respect might be described as educational, since it also brings out true information and shapes attitudes towards information-seeking, by referring to education as a sphere of resistance to the flood of fake news, urban legends and pseudo-science, I have in mind a simple project, namely: a modern school with students and teachers, where the learning process takes place.

There are many educational initiatives aimed at shaping the capability of critical analysis of information (in particular, the information spread by the media) which are intended to contribute to improving media literacy. Such projects are aimed not only at school and university students, but also at a wider range of interested audiences, and their purpose is primarily to create a space for improving the skills of critical analysis of information.⁴⁷ It is worth mentioning that there already are international projects in the field of the development and promotion of media education. In particular, the UNESCO⁴⁸ and the Council of Europe⁴⁹ play a significant role in this context by regularly broadening the understanding of education and media competence. Both or-

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Demagog, <https://www.ifla.org>; <https://demagog.org.pl>.

⁴⁸ See "Media and Information Literacy," UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>.

⁴⁹ See "Media Literacy," Council of Europe, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/media-literacy>.

ganizations highlight the need for media pluralism, freedom, and diversity as manifestations of the democratization of social and political life. To this end, they also formulate catalogues of competencies in the field of media, information, and digital education. Such documents, which can be applied to specific training and educational activities, emphasize the importance of critical thinking as a widespread common practice which helps distinguish facts from false news and, thus, shape the capability of making informed decisions. According to the documents issued by UNESCO, the competencies necessary for a proper functioning of the media zone include certain abilities, for instance, to use a variety of tools and search technologies, to identify information biases and partiality, and to share information responsibly and ethically. All of them should contribute to solving social problems and promoting positive change. The Polish researcher Grzegorz Ptaszek noted in this context: “Media education 3.0 shifts the burden from acquiring technical digital skills (as it turns out, also needed for more advanced management of one’s data or privacy) to developing skills of critical analysis of the entire media ecosystem (i.e., the data management companies, the users, and the data generated by them) functioning based on data, advanced technologies of data processing, including analysis and processing of data by intelligent algorithms.”⁵⁰ Some organizations implementing initiatives of media education also cooperate with schools to develop in their students an awareness of the impact of the media on human life and to teach them how to recognize, analyze, and expose online lies. While such projects are desperately needed in the post-truth era,⁵¹ education limited to teaching information technology ultimately results in replacing agency (or cooperation within the frame of what is worth the human effort) with mere efficiency.⁵² Understood as the acquisition of measurable skills, competencies or qualifications (typical for school and academic curricula), learning does not encourage reflection on the goals of education other than instrumental ones. Thus, the question of the ethical aspect of education either does not appear at all or does not resonate loud enough. The ability to critically apply the acquired skills—in the form of revealing hoaxes and disinformation or refuting facts coming from the so-called alternative worlds—is also not enough. Similarly, in the case of a judge, even the best legal knowledge is not sufficient to pronounce a fair verdict if no empathy is at play.

⁵⁰ Grzegorz P t a s z e k, *Edukacja medialna 3.0: Krytyczne rozumienie mediów cyfrowych w dobie Big Data i algorytmizacji* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2019), 165.

⁵¹ On this topic, see *Navigating Fake News, Alternative Facts, and Misinformation in a Post-Truth World*, ed. Kimiz Dalkir and Rebecca Katz (Hershey: IGI Global, 2020).

⁵² See Margaret S. A r c h e r, *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 51–85.

While media literacy focused on the analysis of the technological aspect of information may effectively help a person in recognizing true and false information, it only partially fulfils the inherent purpose of education, that is a holistic thinking about human beings, about their development and common response to the challenges we face. The deep fragmentation of the social world sustained by information bubbles and a focus on a bipolar vision of social problems, together with the lack of desire to understand each other's values and visions of the world, poses a challenge for educators in a post-truth era not to abdicate their responsibility.

Responsibility in turn involves caring about human beings, opening oneself up to every question the world asks: never avoiding such questions, but seeing in them a challenge to the totality of human existence and understanding them as ontic tasks.⁵³ In the ontological sense, the issue of responsibility in the post-truth era is not about how we can distinguish truth from falsehood, and identify false beliefs and hoaxes constructed in the struggle for power, attention and efficiency. Indeed, we already have means to do that. Rather, responsibility is about asking why it is good to know well, why our (not *my*) theoretical claim is better when it is true than when it is not true, and why truth is a common good.

One can speak about truth as a common good in a situation of symbiotic transmission of non-falsified information among people in various social relations, including the institutional ones as well as that between an individual and the state. However, Jerzy Bartkowski noted: "A good so defined has a certain structural weakness. It is connected with a characteristic of any common good: everyone benefits from them and everyone wishes they will continue to exist, but no one has sufficient incentives to defend them, and even more than that: these goods actually get violated."⁵⁴ This means that post-truth can be apprehended as a kind of "free-riding strategy"⁵⁵ in the cognitive sphere: "It means using the fact that others adhere to, while not adhering to it myself."⁵⁶ However, Bartkowski's claim may suggest the strength of perceiving truth as a common good rather than a weakness inherent in such an attitude. While post-truth may weaken the power of the conformist attitude to information (i.e., the assumption that any information can be trusted), an awareness of the

⁵³ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 225–73.

⁵⁴ Jerzy Bartkowski, "Prawda jako dobro wspólne i jako kapitał społeczny," in *Postprawda jako zagrożenie dla dyskursu publicznego*, ed. Tomasz W. Grabowski, Mirosław Lakomy, and Konrad Oświecimski (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2018), 34–35.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 35.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

negative effects of false news points to the benefits of consciously discarding the content that promotes information disorder from one's life and environment. This, in turn, requires active efforts to promote the accountability of and trust in reliable information providers.

There is no linguistic or grammatical protection against speaking (writing) untruths (I can easily formulate the sentence: "The text you are reading does not in any way address the issue of post-truth"), just as there is no linguistic or grammatical protection against making meaningless statements, a well-known example of which is Noam Chomsky's "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously."⁵⁷ There is nothing in the language that would automatically require a speaker to express a thought corresponding to reality. However, since the intentions of others are not known or available to us, we are doomed to a kind of communicative imperfection based on a socially developed trust in the reliability of the information which allows for a given social action. Thus, language is not directly correlated with transmission of true information; rather, it is correlated with transmission of information which has social effects (even if these should be effects on an individual). Therefore, whether a given piece of information is true or not depends on both the truthfulness of the agent of the communicative act who is the source of this information and the mutual trust between him or her and the recipients of the information in question. This, in turn, involves a social relationship based on dialogue and responsibility for one's words. True knowledge is important not only because it is helpful in solving the mysteries of the universe (as the task of science is sometimes defined), but, above all, because a concern for truth expresses a concern for the world.

Work carried out in the classroom may be an excellent field for disarming fake news and even a better one for discussing claims of pseudo-science or reports containing half-truths turned into sensations. In 2003, Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*⁵⁸ was published, and immediately, despite its fictitiousness, became a haven for refreshing several old conspiracy theories and creating some new ones. The novel became a bestseller and was soon turned into a movie, which even widened the scope of its influence. In 2004, the great Biblical scholar Barth Ehrman published *Truth and Fiction in "The Da Vinci Code,"*⁵⁹ in which he confronted the pseudo-theories included in Brown's novel with the results of the current research, but his work passed unnoticed. Both Brown's and Ehrman's works had the potential for starting a dialogue

⁵⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1957), 15.

⁵⁸ See Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

⁵⁹ See Bart D. Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in "The Da Vinci Code": A Historian Reveals What We Can Really Know about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

with pseudo-science also on the level school education, during classes in, for instance, the history of literature, history, and religious education, and thus for becoming examples of engaged resistance (of both teachers and students) to post-truth. The phenomenon of a continuing stream of fake news and pseudo-scientific claims in today's culture might become a motivation for teachers to refer to the problem during classes in practically any subject. For instance, the so-called flat-Earth theory may provide excellent material to discuss in physics and geography classes; the views of anti-vaxxers can be challenged in biology classes, while the claims of climate change deniers are worth discussing within the framework of education in ecology.⁶⁰

Responsible education is a response to reality. It does not abandon reality even for the sake of the students or others to whom knowledge is addressed. Inclusion of fake news and pseudo-scientific claims needs to be systematically eliminated from educational curricula. Therefore, "extra-curricular" flexibility is necessary so that we shall not lose touch with reality, otherwise we will demonstrate that, in the case of the domain of education, our concern for truth occupies a lower level in the hierarchy of values than the implementation of the existing curricula.

There are two aspects to teachers' integrity and responsibility in this regard. They are primarily responsible for themselves. Their first task is educating themselves in the sense of not only acquiring the competencies to teach certain school subjects, but also taking an interest in reality as such and thus developing their openness to the world. Their involvement in this aspect can be described as cognitive and critical. Therefore, a responsible educator motivates the search for truth in his students, but at the same time does not romanticize science as an infallible field of knowledge. Science and scientists are not without fault. Associations with politics and business, struggle for fame, unethical experiments or misrepresentation of data are only the tip of the iceberg of allegations against scientists.⁶¹ However, this does not change the fact that science remains the best tool at our disposal for examining reality. Therefore, the responsibility for one's cognitive development (i.e., constant openness to learn) does not consist merely in being familiar with the newest results of scientific research, but in understanding the ways and contexts in which these results appear.

The second aspect of teachers' responsibility is about the ones they educate. Its essence is searching for truth together with their students by shaping in them the ability to ask questions that stimulate reflection and encourage refer-

⁶⁰ On this topic, see *Critical Thinking in Biology and Environmental Education: Facing Challenges in a Post-truth World*, ed. Blanca Puig and María Pilar Jiménez-Aleixandre (Cham: Springer, 2022).

⁶¹ On this theme, see William Broad and Nicholas Wade, *Betrayers of the Truth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983).

ence to reality in order to confront various claims made about it in potential debates. The responsibility educators have towards their students can therefore be understood in terms of an intervention in the world in which the learners are immersed. This, however, is primarily a responsibility towards human beings rather than for information as such. Such an attitude goes beyond addressing the demand to straighten out fake news and reflects the need to think about how to change the society so that it is no longer susceptible to misinformation. Moreover, retrieving trust in the public discourse must be accompanied by a recognition that truth is a common good.⁶²

Responsible education in the post-truth era should then consist in working out the connection of human beings with their current and future tasks, understood not as obedience to a mandate externally imposed by reason or science, but as overcoming inevitable challenges on the way to common liberty, in accordance with the dictate of honesty. There is no room for assuming, in this process, that there are aspects of reality which are not worth discussing. The basis of education is provided by respect for the intellectual independence and moral autonomy of those who participate in it either as teachers or as students. Among the indispensable tools used throughout the process are empathy, rationality, criticism, and dialogue. Without the latter, one cannot speak of responsibility towards the world. Dialogic education leads to a responsible counteraction to the fragmentation of the world. Addressing the views of those who propagate fake news or pseudo-science, also by including such views in the current school curricula, should be interpreted as a concern for the common world, and not just for one's own world, one's own information bubble. Socrates, a street wisdom lover, was not offended by those who, lost in their ignorance, stopped talking to him. He saw his goal—which might serve as an inspiration for contemporary teachers—not in raising doubts about the truth of the beliefs of the people with whom he engaged in discussion. Rather, he wanted to follow a common train of thought and create opportunities for his adversaries to understand their ignorance (such as cognitive errors or a lack of proper sources of their views). Socrates knew that the ultimate truth-test of one's knowledge is ethical action, that is, being with the other. This is also our lesson for the post-truth era.

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⁶² See Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002), 206–32.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Sylwester ZIELKA, Keeping Touch with Reality: On the Responsibility of Educators in the Post-truth Era

DOI 10.12887/37-2024-2-146-07

The paper aims to draw attention to the issue of responsible education in the post-truth era. Reaching such a goal involves (1) introducing a distinction between the ways of addressing the issue of post-truth, (2) determining the social conditions which favor the occurrence of post-truth as a phenomenon on a mass scale, and (3) discussing the most common ways in which a society may protect itself against the negative consequences of post-truth, among them responsible education, which is the most effective tool in this respect. The author extensively discusses the essence of responsibility within the educational process. Using the method of text analysis, he also investigates available modes of post-truth discourses, which leads to the conclusion that media-focused education remains an insufficient instrument of struggle against fake news. Therefore, education focused on seeking the truth as common good is needed.

Keywords: post-truth era, media education, falsehood in public discourse, fake news, pseudo-science, fact-checking, responsible education, truth as a common good

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Sylwester ZIELKA, Utrzymać kontakt z rzeczywistością. O odpowiedzialności pedagogów w epoce postprawdy

DOI 10.12887/37-2024-2-146-07

Celem tekstu jest zwrócenie uwagi na kwestię odpowiedzialnej edukacji w epoce postprawdy. Realizacja tego celu obejmuje (1) wprowadzenie rozróżnienia między sposobami ujmowania zagadnienia postprawdy, (2) określenie społecznych warunków jej występowania, a także (3) omówienie najczęściej stosowanych sposobów zabezpieczania się przed jej negatywnymi skutkami. Wśród sposobów tych za najskuteczniejszy autor uznaje odpowiedzialną edukację, szeroko omawiając przy tym sposób rozumienia tej odpowiedzialności. Stosując metodę analizy tekstów, bada dostępne sposoby mówienia o postprawdzie i wskazuje na niewystarczalność edukacji medialnej jako techniki demaskowania fałszywych informacji. Podkreśla jednocześnie potrzebę edukacji nastawionej na poszukiwanie prawdy jako dobra wspólnego.

Słowa kluczowe: epoka postprawdy, edukacja w zakresie wykorzystywania mediów, kłamstwo w debacie publicznej, fałszywa informacja, pseudonauka, sprawdzanie faktów, odpowiedzialna edukacja, prawda jako dobro wspólne

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