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TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH

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FROM THE EDITORS

FROM TRUTH TO POST-TRUTH AND... BACK TO TRUTH?

“Post-truth” is an adjective (rather than a noun), as the editors of the Oxford Dictionaries website explain in their justification of the choice of the Word of the Year 2016.¹ As is often the case today, information turned into promotion, rapidly making the term “post-truth” (also as a noun) popular and placing it in the center of attention that went far beyond the world of dictionaries.² It was also simultaneously clarified that although the term had been in existence for over a decade (it was probably first used in 1992³), it served in 2016 mainly to describe post-truth politics, discussed with extraordinary persistence in the context of Brexit and the United States presidential election. Abundantly commented upon, the British politics of the time, i.e., before the referendum on the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, and the American politics during the presidential campaign, became symptomatic of the new, currently much more widespread political style, adopted also beyond the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

In this “post-truth regime ... a subversion of truth for emotional or political purposes”⁴ is enacted and, in consequence, human beings, who, as citizens, lack access to the truth about reality, become unable to assume responsibility for the common good. Without accurate, true information, citizens cannot take right decisions to “truly” serve their communities and they become politically “mutilated.” In any context, post-truth means renouncing actual knowledge of reality for the sake of emotional responses and subjective views. What counts—in the first place, or even in general—is not objective (and, in this sense, true)

¹ See “Word of the Year 2016,” OxfordLanguages, <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/>.

² The New China News Agency is reported to have announced in January 2017 that Europe adopted post-truth politics. See Jonathan Mair, “Post-truth Anthropology,” *Anthropology Today* 33, no. 3 (2017): 3.

³ The term was given a slightly different meaning in the paper by Steve Tesich. See Steve Tesich, “A Government of Lies,” *Nation* 254, no. 1 (1992): 12.

⁴ Saulo de Freitas Araújo, “Truth, Half-Truth, and Post-Truth: Lessons from William James,” *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2022): 485.

facts: these are challenged by “alternative facts”⁵ or by subjective responses to facts, emotions and beliefs they originate. A result of this process is the specific choices it induces people to make. In this reality, it is the “I” with its perceptions and feelings that is important rather than the world outside the “I.” An individual recognizes something as true because he or she “feels” it is true, and not because they have rational grounds for their convictions. It is an individual who decides, according to his or her wish, whether a given statement or a fact is true and the decision in question is based on whether the given statement or fact is consistent with his or her feelings, expectations, or beliefs.⁶ Not only does post-truth lead to domination of feelings over facts, but it results in alienation from reality as such at the levels of both individuals and communities.⁷

It is not difficult to see that the contemporary preference for post-truth is not characteristic merely of certain issues or particular areas of life, but is gradually becoming a general attitude of individuals and communities towards themselves, the world, the supernatural, and, consequently, also towards God. It is also frequently pointed out that the prefix “post” does not mean that we have “overtaken” the truth by going, as it were, further, but that the truth has been in some way clouded or obscured by our personal emotions and beliefs.⁸

In the face of post-truth politics, it is necessary to place a fresh emphasis on responsibility and thus on the ethical dimension, indispensable if politics understood as commitment to public life is to be “true.” In the post-truth era, politics can be saved only by ethics, that is by reintroducing responsibility which presupposes a realistic attitude based on the recognition, on the one hand, of the existence of “pure” facts and, on the other, of the value of one’s own and the other’s identity; the attitude in question involves also the perception of one’s fallibility and susceptibility to doubt. Such political responsibility should become a distinctive feature of politics and politicians.⁹

⁵ M a i r, “Post-Truth Anthropology”: 3.

⁶ See Stewart L o c k i e, “Post-truth Politics and the Social Sciences,” *Environmental Sociology* 3, no. 1 (2017): 1; Frank F i s c h e r, *Truth and Post-truth in Public Policy: Interpreting the Arguments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 13–14.

⁷ See L e e M c I n t y r e, *Post-truth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018), 172. Timothy Snyder expressed an inevitable consequence of post-truth: “If nothing is true, then all is spectacle.” Timothy S n y d e r, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Bodley Head, 2017), 65.

⁸ See Kristoffer A h l s t r o m - V i j, “Do We Live in a ‘Post-truth’ Era?,” *Political Studies* 71, no. 1 (2023): 501; M c I n t y r e, *Post-Truth*. A spokesperson to Donald Trump was to say, “Anything is true if enough people believe it.” Cited in Tracy B. S t r o n g, “Foreword,” in Ilan Zvi Baron, *How to Save Politics in a Post-truth Era: Thinking through Difficult Times* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2018), ix.

⁹ See B a r o n, *How to Save Politics in a Post-truth Era*, 196–98.

Spreading the post-truth political culture stems from a more or less consciously given consent to “free unfreedom,” from renouncing responsibility for oneself and, ultimately, responsibility for one’s freedom. In this way, consent is also given to manipulation by political authorities, the media, and cultural powers. Liberation from this form of enslavement and humiliation can be achieved primarily by a new, radical choice of truth, which will help individuals regain their autonomy, restore their subjectivity, and become authentically committed to public life.¹⁰ Return to truth will certainly not be free from difficulty, but it is indispensable—not only in the social or political domain, but even more so in the ideological and cultural ones. Also, not infrequent contemporary skeptical attitudes towards the possibility of making universal claims require fresh and courageous reflection on the possibility of truth in the time after post-truth.¹¹

From the sphere of politics, post-truth has moved to other areas of life and has penetrated culture, philosophy, science, law, literature, and the mass media. It is worth recalling at least some related publications. Christopher Schaberg writes about the precarious future of literature in the world of post-truth.¹² The theme of painting and post-truth interpretations of its significance is discussed in an essay by Enrico Terrone.¹³ Threats posed by post-truth to science are addressed in a monograph *Pseudoscience*.¹⁴ Angela Condello defends the inalienable value of factual truth in legal theory and practice,¹⁵ while Matthew D’Ancona describes an alarming shift of emphasis from evidence to emotions.¹⁶ Defending truth in psychology, Saulo de Freitas Araujo critically refers to William James’s pragmatism and his notion of half-truths, stressing, however,

¹⁰ See Saul Newman, “Post-Truth and the Controversy over Postmodernism: Or, Was Trump Reading Foucault?,” *Continental Thought and Theory: A Journal of Intellectual Freedom* 3, no. 4 (2022): 68–69.

¹¹ See Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou, *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy: Mapping the Politics of Falsehood* (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 25–28, 131–142.

¹² See Christopher Schaberg, *The Work of Literature in an Age of Post-truth* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

¹³ See Enrico Terrone, “The Post-Truth in Painting,” in *Post-Truth, Philosophy and Law*, eds. Angela Condello and Tiziana Andina (Abingdon: Routledge 2019), 155–67.

¹⁴ See *Pseudoscience: The Conspiracy Against Science*, eds. Allison B. Kaufman and James C. Kaufman (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018).

¹⁵ See Angela Condello, “After the Ordeal: Law and the Age of Post-truth,” in *Post-truth, Philosophy and Law*, 21–31.

¹⁶ See Matthew D’Ancona, *Post Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Ebury Press, 2017), 68. See also: Hannah Arendt, “Lying in Politics: Reflections of the Pentagon Papers,” in Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972), 1–47; Martin Jay, *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

that his theory cannot be used to support “the absurdity of the celebration of post-truth.”¹⁷

In the context of Christian faith (which is fundamentally and in an obvious way contradictory to the idea of post-truth), reaching further than theology, one can refer to liturgy as revealing the pure truth about God. In the liturgical celebration, God reveals himself as particularly true as he makes his love, that is himself, fully present. If beauty is the splendor of truth, as Plato believed, the truth of liturgy should be recognized in its beauty.¹⁸ David Fagerberg emphasizes that “something cannot be beautiful unless it is true.”¹⁹ Thus the truth of liturgy makes it possible to perceive, or even to encounter, the particular beauty: God the Savior. Disregard for truth or its denial would make human condition unbearable by depriving it of beauty. It is God who became man that reveals to human beings their condition and destiny: “The truth is that only in the mystery of incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.”²⁰ As it were, every human being recognizes the truth about himself or herself as *imago pulchritudinis* only in the face of God-Man. Therefore, being with God is beautiful for man and brings joy: we experience joy because of God and in community with him.²¹

Even if renouncing truth to adopt post-truth began with “mere” post-truth politics with its effectiveness at any cost, including disregard for truth and acceptance of total manipulation, and reached other realms of the human world only later, the fundamental causes of the process in question are postmodernism and the accompanying relativism. As the sources of post-facts and post-truth, postmodernism and relativism migrated from the academic world to the mass media by universally imposing the idea of an arbitrary narrative on events: “lies can be excused as ‘an alternative point of view’ or ‘an opinion,’ because ‘it’s all relative’ and ‘everyone has their own truth.’”²² In this way truth was not so much suppressed or censored as radically relativized. What was previously

¹⁷ de Freitas Araujo, “Truth, Half-truth, and Post-truth: Lessons from William James”: 487.

¹⁸ See David W. Fagerberg, *On Liturgical Asceticism* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 181.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 22, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

²¹ See Joseph Ratzinger, “‘I ulitował się Bóg’ (Jon 3,10): Lectio divina,” in *Opera omnia*, vol. 14, part 2, *Kazania*, trans. Jarosław Merecki, eds. Krzysztof Gózdź and Marzena Górecka (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2020), 677.

²² Peter Pomerantsev, *Why We’re Post-fact*, Granta, July 20, 2016, <https://granta.com/why-were-post-fact/>. See Mair, *Post-truth Anthropology*: 4.

a true fact has now been transformed “into mere opinion, [drowned] out in a cacophony of competing perspectives and narratives.”²³

Such a condition is often called “new subjectivism,” as “everything is subjective.”²⁴ The truth of beliefs does not depend on their facticity or reference to truth, but on a personal, subjective conviction. Thus post-truth can be described as an extreme relativization of truth. At an ideological level, such a manner of thinking can be found particularly in the writings of Michel Foucault²⁵ and Jacques Derrida²⁶ who, in turn, both endorsed Friedrich Nietzsche’s rejection of objective truth.²⁷ On their view, truth is reduced to a mere human construct and practice; it is produced by a community or a culture. This tendency became a leading factor in the transformation of modern thought into post-modern one.²⁸ The fundamental presuppositions of modernity concerning universal and objective truth and the possibility of acquiring ever deeper knowledge of the world thanks to the progress of sciences were questioned. According to Jean-François Lyotard, post-modern thought deprived scientific cognition of its authority, the metanarrative degenerated into a vision of reality incapable of providing an ontological foundation to thought and (also political) action²⁹. There is no “dominant coherent understanding of society but, rather, a plurality of narratives or perspectives.”³⁰ The point here is not a denial of the existence of facts or of the possibility to verify them but rather a rejection of

²³ Saul Newman, “Post-truth, Postmodernism and the Public Sphere,” in *Europe in the Age of Post-truth Politics: Populism, Disinformation and the Public Sphere*, eds. Maximilian Conrad et al. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 14.

²⁴ Lawrie McFarlane, “Editorial,” *Anahin/Nimpo Lake Messenger*, 13, no. 12 (2017): 4; cited in C. G. Prado, “Introduction: The New Subjectivism,” in *America’s Post-truth Phenomenon: When Feelings and Opinions Trump Facts and Evidence*, ed. C. G. Prado, (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2018), 2.

²⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Random House 1985.

²⁶ See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

²⁷ See, e.g., Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1974.

²⁸ See Prado, “Introduction: The New Subjectivism, 2–4.” In this context, Marci Shore’s interesting reflections on the struggle with the communist lie are worth careful reading (see Marci Shore, “A Pre-History of Post-Truth, East and West,” *Eurozine*, September 1, 2017, <https://www.eurozine.com/a-pre-history-of-post-truth-east-and-west/>). For exceptionally extensive research into the sources of post-truth, see Steve Fuller, *Post-truth: Knowledge as a Power Game* (London: Anthem Press, 2018). For a discussion of the Kantian and Nietzschean sources of post-truth, see Tiziana Andina, “Truth, Lies, and Post-truth,” in *Post-truth, Philosophy and Law*, 1–13.

²⁹ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

³⁰ Newman, “Post-truth, Postmodernism and the Public Sphere,” 20–21.

the existence of one objective method of their interpretation, while the selection of facts and their explanation depends on those who are in power.³¹

Not without significance for the emergence of the contemporary post-truth situation (and not only post-truth politics) is the development and universal availability of communication media and, in particular, of the so-called social media. This concerns almost everyone, as almost everyone has access to them. At the same time, one must remember that journalism, where authentic social communication is increasingly replaced by propaganda, is a particularly vulnerable profession. Referring to old, yet even more apposite observations of Gabriel Marcel, Paul Fairfield describes propaganda as “technology of ideas, ‘a method not of persuasion but of seduction,’ whether for money, power, or both.”³²

Transmission of unverified information on an earlier unimaginably large scale being easy, social networks have been used as tools of manifold manipulation to achieve all possible purposes. A well-known case of such manipulation was the theft by Cambridge Analytica of the data of at least fifty million Facebook users to influence their perception of election candidates. The CEO of the company “is proposing that post-truth, as a cultural phenomenon, has rendered objective facts anachronistic and ‘The Real’ as a phantasm.”³³ Additional issues related to post-truth arise from the fact that it is not (or, at least, not primarily) a theoretical problem, but an increasingly acceptable instrument used in practical, often large scale activities focused rather on public (particularly political) life than on everyday life of individuals.

It is also observed that using modern information technologies, the post-truth political discourse dangerously reinforces emotional and aggressive components of human communication, thus serving authoritarian ideologies, their manipulative intentions, and social control.³⁴ Hence post-truth is sometimes

³¹ See Sophia Rosenfeld, *Democracy and Truth: A Short History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 143–4.

³² Paul Fairfield, “Lords of Mendacity,” in *America’s Post-truth Phenomenon: When Feelings and Opinions Trump Facts and Evidence*, 159. See McIntyre, *Post-truth*, 89–90; Gareth Thompson, *Post-truth Public Relations: Communication in an Era of Digital Disinformation* (London: Routledge, 2020), 25–46. An optimistic and pro-democratic perception of social platforms quickly changed into accusations of unlimited promotion of lies and destruction of democracy. See Farkas and Schou, *Post-truth, Fake News and Democracy*, 55–57.

³³ Michael E. Sawyer, “Post-truth, Social Media, and the ‘Real’ as Phantasm,” in *Relativism and Post-truth in Contemporary Society: Possibilities and Challenges*, eds. Mikael Stenmark, Steve Fuller, and Ulf Zackariasson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 67.

³⁴ See Lisa Portmess, “Post-truth: Marcuse and New Forms of Social Control,” in *America’s Post-truth Phenomenon*, 59–60; see also Jason Hannan, “Truth and Trolling,” in *America’s Post-truth Phenomenon*, 126–40.

described as “a precursor to authoritarianism”³⁵ or “pre-fascism.”³⁶ Not only is post-truth an obvious sign of the regression of contemporary politics towards authoritarianism and totalitarianism, but it also begins to be considered—and this is even more dangerous—as something normal and thus acceptable in political reality and, broadly speaking, public life.³⁷ It is not difficult to see that in their critique of post truth, the cited authors refer mainly to arguments based on political practice, considering post-truth as a threat to public life, democracy, state, and the like.

Advocating post-truth in any area of human life is a manifestation of the belief that, as Vittorio Bufacchi puts it, “truth is no longer essential ... truth has become obsolete,”³⁸ or of the choice of something that only “resembles truth,”³⁹ or perhaps even of a proclamation of its death.⁴⁰ Attitudes towards truth such as agnosticism and relativism, not infrequent today, get bogged down “in the shifting sands of widespread skepticism”⁴¹ and give rise to an uncritical pluralism claiming that all opinions are equally valid, which was discussed by John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*. Finding „the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6) in Christ, Christianity persists in reminding that, as John Paul II stated in the opening words of the Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, “truth enlightens man’s intelligence and shapes his freedom.”⁴² However deep is the mark left by post-truth on the world of today and on human beings living in it, one cannot renounce truth altogether as „the concept of truth will never

³⁵ See Martha Merrill Umphrey, Lawrence Douglas, and Austin Sarat, “Post-truth as a Precursor to Authoritarianism,” in *Law and Illiberalism*, eds. Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas, and Martha Merrill Umphrey (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022) 78–101; Lee McIntyre, “Why We Are Living in a Post-truth Era,” *Skeptic Magazine* 25, no. 1 (2020): 40–41.

³⁶ Snyder, *On Tyranny*, 71.

³⁷ See Stuart Sim, *Post-truth, Scepticism and Power* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 164–5.

³⁸ Vittorio Bufacchi, “What’s the Difference between Lies and Post-truth in Politics? A Philosopher Explains.” *The Conversation*, January 24, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-difference-between-lies-and-post-truth-in-politics-a-philosopher-explains-130442>.

³⁹ Sondra Hale, “Something Resembling ‘Truth’: Reflections on Critical Pedagogy in the New ‘Post-truth’ Landscape,” in *Gender in an Era of Post-truth Populism*, eds. Penny Jake et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022): 79–96.

⁴⁰ See Michael Hanon, “The Politics of Post-truth,” *Critical Review: A Journal of Politics and Society* 35, nos. 1–2 (2023): 42; Michiko Kakutani, *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018).

⁴¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, Section 5, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

⁴² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html.

die ... The concept of truth is a survivor,”⁴³ yet it is possible to lose „respect for truthfulness.”⁴⁴

Sławomir Nowosad

Translated by *Patrycja Mikulska*

⁴³ Simon B l a c k b u r n, *On Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11.

⁴⁴ H a n n o n, “The Politics of Post-truth”: 43.

JOHN PAUL II
“TRUTH CANNOT CONTRADICT TRUTH”

JOHN PAUL II

TRUTH CANNOT CONTRADICT TRUTH*

With great pleasure I address cordial greeting to you, Mr. President, and to all of you who constitute the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, on the occasion of your plenary assembly. I offer my best wishes in particular to the new academicians, who have come to take part in your work for the first time. I would also like to remember the academicians who died during the past year, whom I commend to the Lord of life.

In celebrating the 60th anniversary of the academy's refoundation, I would like to recall the intentions of my predecessor Pius XI, who wished to surround himself with a select group of scholars, relying on them to inform the Holy See in complete freedom about developments in scientific research, and thereby to assist him in his reflections.

He asked those whom he called the Church's "senatus scientificus" to serve the truth. I again extend this same invitation to you today, certain that we will be able to profit from the fruitfulness of a trustful dialogue between the Church and science.¹

I am pleased with the first theme you have chosen, that of the origins of life and evolution, an essential subject which deeply interests the Church, since revelation, for its part, contains teaching concerning the nature and origins of man. How do the conclusions reached by the various scientific disciplines coincide with those contained in the message of revelation? And if, at first sight, there are apparent contradictions, in what direction do we look for their solution? We know, in fact, that truth cannot contradict truth.² Moreover, to

* Address of Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (Vatican, October 22, 1996). For the original text, see *L'Osservatore Romano*, The English Edition, October 30, 1996: 7. The notes were added by the editors.

¹ See P i u s IX, Address to the Academy of Sciences, Section 1 (Vatican, October 28, 1886), *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, November 24, 1886: 22.

² See L e o XIII, Encyclical Letter on the Study of Holy Scripture *Providentissimus Deus* (Rome, November 18, 1893), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html.

shed greater light on historical truth, your research on the Church's relations with science between the 16th and 18th centuries is of great importance. During this plenary session, you are undertaking a "reflection on science at the dawn of the third millennium,"³ starting with the identification of the principal problems created by the sciences and which affect humanity's future. With this step you point the way to solutions which will be beneficial to the whole human community. In the domain of inanimate and animate nature, the evolution of science and its applications give rise to new questions. The better the Church's knowledge is of their essential aspects, the more she will understand their impact. Consequently, in accordance with her specific mission she will be able to offer criteria for discerning the moral conduct required of all human beings in view of their integral salvation.

Before offering you several reflections that more specifically concern the subject of the origin of life and its evolution, I would like to remind you that the magisterium of the Church has already made pronouncements on these matters within the framework of her own competence. I will cite here two interventions.

In his encyclical *Humani Generis*,⁴ my predecessor Pius XII had already stated that there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of the faith about man and his vocation, on condition that one did not lose sight of several indisputable points.

For my part, when I received those taking part in your academy's plenary assembly on October 31, 1992, I had the opportunity with regard to Galileo to draw attention to the need of a rigorous hermeneutic for the correct interpretation of the inspired word. It is necessary to determine the proper sense of Scripture, while avoiding any unwarranted interpretations that make it say what it does not intend to say. In order to delineate the field of their own study, the exegete and the theologian must keep informed about the results achieved by the natural sciences.⁵

³ See Pontificia Academia Scientiarum, *Reflection on Science at the Dawn of the Third Millennium* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997).

⁴ See P i u s XII, Encyclical Letter Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of the Catholic Doctrine *Humani Generis* (Rome, August 12, 1950), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html.

⁵ See J o h n P a u l II, "Ad quosdam Galliae episcopos Apostolorum limina visitantes," *Acta Apostolice Sedis*, 85 (1993): 281; J o h n P a u l II, "Ad eos qui conventui Romae habito 'de sententia, saeculo XVII volvente, super Galilaei doctrinis pronuntiata' interfuerunt," *Acta Apostolice Sedis*, 85 (1993): 764–72; J o h n P a u l II, "I expleto saeculo a Litt. Enc. *Providentissimus Deus* necnon L exeunte anno a Litt. Enc. *Divino afflante Spiritu* foras datis habita: Address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission," *Acta Apostolice Sedis* 86 (1994): 232–43. See also The Pontifical Biblical Commission,

Taking into account the state of scientific research at the time as well as of the requirements of theology, the encyclical *Humani Generis* considered the doctrine of “evolutionism” a serious hypothesis, worthy of investigation and in-depth study equal to that of the opposing hypothesis. Pius XII added two methodological conditions: that this opinion should not be adopted as though it were a certain, proven doctrine and as though one could totally prescind from revelation with regard to the questions it raises. He also spelled out the condition on which this opinion would be compatible with the Christian faith, a point to which I will return. Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical, new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory.

What is the significance of such a theory? To address this question is to enter the field of epistemology. A theory is a metascientific elaboration, distinct from the results of observation but consistent with them. By means of it a series of independent data and facts can be related and interpreted in a unified explanation. A theory’s validity depends on whether or not it can be verified; it is constantly tested against the facts; wherever it can no longer explain the latter, it shows its limitations and unsuitability. It must then be rethought.

Furthermore, while the formulation of a theory like that of evolution complies with the need for consistency with the observed data, it borrows certain notions from natural philosophy.

And, to tell the truth, rather than the theory of evolution, we should speak of several theories of evolution. On the one hand, this plurality has to do with the different explanations advanced for the mechanism of evolution, and on the other, with the various philosophies on which it is based. Hence the existence of materialist, reductionist and spiritualist interpretations. What is to be decided here is the true role of philosophy and, beyond it, of theology.

The Church’s magisterium is directly concerned with the question of evolution, for it involves the conception of man: Revelation teaches us that he was created in the image and likeness of God (see Gn 1:27–29). The conciliar constitution *Gaudium et Spes*⁶ has magnificently explained this doctrine, which is pivotal to Christian thought. It recalled that man is “the only creature on earth

“The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” Catholic Resources for Bible, Liturgy, Art, and Theology, <https://catholic-resources.org/>.

⁶ See Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican, December 7, 1965), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

that God has wanted for its own sake.”⁷ In other terms, the human individual cannot be subordinated as a pure means or a pure instrument, either to the species or to society; he has value *per se*. He is a person. With his intellect and his will, he is capable of forming a relationship of communion, solidarity and self-giving with his peers. St. Thomas observes that man’s likeness to God resides especially in his speculative intellect, for his relationship with the object of his knowledge resembles God’s relationship with what he has created.⁸ But even more, man is called to enter into a relationship of knowledge and love with God himself, a relationship which will find its complete fulfillment beyond time, in eternity. All the depth and grandeur of this vocation are revealed to us in the mystery of the risen Christ.⁹ It is by virtue of his spiritual soul that the whole person possesses such a dignity even in his body. Pius XII stressed this essential point: If the human body takes its origin from pre-existent living matter, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God (“animas enim a Deo immediate creari catholica fides nos retinere iubet”¹⁰). Consequently, theories of evolution which, in accordance with the philosophies inspiring them, consider the spirit as emerging from the forces of living matter or as a mere *epiphenomenon* of this matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. Nor are they able to ground the dignity of the person.

With man, then, we find ourselves in the presence of an ontological difference, an ontological leap, one could say. However, does not the posing of such ontological discontinuity run counter to that physical continuity which seems to be the main thread of research into evolution in the field of physics and chemistry? Consideration of the method used in the various branches of knowledge makes it possible to reconcile two points of view which would seem irreconcilable. The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life with increasing precision and correlate them with the time line. The moment of transition to the spiritual cannot be the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being. But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and

⁷ Ibidem, Section 24.

⁸ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I–II:3:5, ad 1.

⁹ See *Gaudium et Spes*, Section 22.

¹⁰ Pius PP. XII, Litterae encyclicae “*Humani generis*” de nonnullis falsis opinionibus, quae catholicae doctrinae fundamenta subruere minantur,” The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/la/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_12081950_humani-generis.html. See Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, Section 36.

reflection, while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator’s plans.

In conclusion, I would like to call to mind a Gospel truth which can shed a higher light on the horizon of your research into the origins and unfolding of living matter. The Bible in fact bears an extraordinary message of life. It gives us a wise vision of life inasmuch as it describes the loftiest forms of existence. This vision guided me in the encyclical which I dedicated to respect for human life, and which I called precisely *Evangelium Vitae*.¹¹

It is significant that in St. John’s Gospel *life* refers to the divine light which Christ communicates to us. We are called to enter into eternal life, that is to say, into the eternity of divine beatitude. To warn us against the serious temptations threatening us, our Lord quotes the great saying of Deuteronomy: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Dt 8:3; see Mt 4:4). Even more, “life” is one of the most beautiful titles which the Bible attributes to God. He is the living God.

I cordially invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon you and upon all who are close to you.

¹¹ See J o h n P a u l I I, Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life *Evangelium Vitae*, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html.

HOW TO CONCEPTUALIZE POST-TRUTH?

Agnieszka LEKKA-KOWALIK

A POST-TRUTH THEORY OF TRUTH

*A statement is true when hearing it is a source of pleasure, joy, satisfaction, and so on; and it is false when it causes opposite emotions. We may then summarize the post-truth theory of truth in a maxim: Truth is *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*. The term “*meorum*” is crucial here, for it is my emotions that provide a criterion for indicating whether a given statement should be accepted as true. I like a statement and I know that I like it. I cannot be mistaken about my liking or disliking it. Therefore, I do not need anything else as the ultimate criterion of truth.*

Post-truth is a well-known phenomenon, yet there is no agreement as to what it is. In the paper, I argue that different views on that phenomenon presuppose a novel understanding of Truth. I will develop an argument for my claim in four steps. First, I will summarize some thinkers’ views on what post-truth is and indicate intuitions on which the views in question are based. Second, I will show that the views on post-truth may be interpreted as the conception of Truth, where Truth is defined as *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*. In this conception, emotions are both the defining element and the criterion of Truth. Third, I will draw some consequences of accepting such an understanding of Truth, and fourth, I will explain why it is a *post*-theory rather than simply a theory of Truth.

ATTEMPTS AT UNDERSTANDING POST-TRUTH

It is generally agreed that the term “post-truth” was first used by Steve Tesich in the 1992 article “A Government of Lies.”¹ In his paper, Tesich lamented that the response of American people to lies told by politicians was not what it used to be: “We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary that we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can denude truth of any significance. In a fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world.”² The post-truth world is one in which we do not care about truth, for “we came to equate truth with bad news and we didn’t want bad news anymore, no matter how true or vital

¹ See Steve Tesich, “A Government of Lies,” *Nation* 254, no. 1 (1992): 12–14, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+government+of+lies.-a011665982>.

² *Ibidem*: 13.

to our health as a nation.”³ If truths are bad news, then post-truths are neutral or good news. Tesich grasps here a certain important fact: truths are claims that can make us feel perplexed. Such adjectives as “bad,” “good” or “neutral,” when applied to claims, have an irremovable subjective dimension, for they mark the recipient’s reaction to a piece of information.

Since Tesich’s article, the term “post-truth” has gained currency. In 2016, “post-truth” was declared by the Oxford Dictionaries to be the “Word of the Year.” It was then defined 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.”⁴ This definition seems to grasp the reasons making one accept a claim. Thus, the fact that a person has been made to experience the “right” emotions, coupled with her being in agreement with her personal beliefs, is tantamount to “good reasons” for her to accept the given claim as her own. These are post-truth reasons, and when they prevail, we find ourselves in a post-truth condition. The Oxford definition grasps the relation between the claim-maker and their recipient: the claim-maker provides post-truth reasons to accept the claim and the recipient sees the post-truth reasons as sufficiently good ones to accept the claim in question.

Kathleen Higgins states that “post-truth refers to blatant lies being routine across society, and it means that politicians can lie without condemnation. This is different from the cliché that all politicians lie and make promises they have no intention of keeping—this still expects honesty to be the default position. In a post-truth world, this expectation no longer holds.”⁵ Yet considering post-truths as lies requires an understanding of what a lie is. Without going deeply into the problem, let us observe three things: first, lying is a human act that requires activity of the intellect and the will. The intellect is necessary, for one must lie about *something* that one *has recognized* and then *decides* to report one’s own cognitive result in a way that is contrary to what one has accepted as recognized. Therefore, the intention of the lying subject is the decisive factor that makes it possible for us to distinguish lying from making a cognitive mistake. Second, three relations should be distinguished: (1) the one between the statement and the fact to which it relates, (2) the one between the statement-maker and the statement itself, and (3) the one between the statement and the other statements held by the person in question. The first relation might be seen in terms of truth in the classical sense: i.e., as *adaequatio* between the statement and reality; and since any statement is a product of the intellect, we can

³ Ibidem: 12.

⁴ “Word of the Year 2016,” OxfordLanguages, <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/>.

⁵ Kathleen Higgins, “Post-truth: A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Nature* 540, 9 (2016), <https://www.nature.com/articles/540009a>.

say that truth is *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. The second relation is the stance towards a given statement: I may accept, reject, or withhold a judgment for various reasons—the latter requirement is a basic condition for being rational. And since the two relations are different, I may accept a false statement or reject a true one. Since it is a piece of reality that makes my statement true or false, a cognitive error may also occur. Yet we do not classify a cognitive error as a lie. The third relation is that of consistency or inconsistency. This relation is independent of my recognition of it: I may consider my views as consistent but in fact they might be inconsistent (or vice versa). When are we dealing with a lie? Wojciech Chudy defines a lie as: (1) making claims that one believes are false and (2) deliberately misleading someone.⁶ The first definition is narrower, for it concerns making false statements in order to mislead the recipient of the message, and therefore cases such as telling legends, fairy tales, and the like are excluded from the definition. Yet, as practical logic shows, one may mislead others by making true statements or even by asking questions. To give an example: John is very late for an important meeting, and Mary, quite angry, asks: Why did you come so late? John answers: There are terrible traffic jams in the city today. The claim is true—there are traffic jams today—but it is not a true answer to Mary's question, for John simply forgot about the meeting. Thus John deceives Mary by making a true statement, for he allows her to think that the traffic jam was the real cause of his being late. One may use also questions to mislead others, as questions include presuppositions that, in an ordinary conversation, can be taken as true. Once I ask, "How much would X take for granting me a permission to build a house here?" I suggest that X takes bribes. If post-truth were just a lie in the above sense, it would be as old as humankind, and we would not need a new word for it. While the diagnosis that we are less sensitive to lies and not ready to expose them might still hold, we do not need to invent a new word to describe the situation.

Ralph Keyes claims that what is new is not lying as such, but the fact that we are ready to lie without seeing ourselves as dishonest: "Even though there have always been liars, lies have usually been told with hesitation, a dash of anxiety, a bit of guilt, a little shame, at least some sheepishness. Now, clever people that we are, we have come up with rationales for tampering with truth so we can dissemble guilt-free. I call it post-truth. We live in a post-truth era. Post-truthfulness exists in an ethical twilight zone. It allows us to dissemble without considering ourselves dishonest."⁷ Yet there were always cases when

⁶ See Wojciech Chudy, *Filozofia kłamstwa* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen 2003), 110.

⁷ Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press 2004), 12.

people lied without thinking they were dishonest, for instance to protect someone from danger or when they thought someone did not have a right to the truth, because they knew what the person was going to do with the knowledge she would have gained (as, e.g., in the case of a Gestapo officer asking whether there is a resistance member hiding in my basement). Whatever stance one takes in such cases, the lying person does not deserve to be described with the adjective “dishonest.” However, should a man lie to a girl saying that he is unmarried and do so in order to seduce her, no one would probably hesitate to call him dishonest. According to Keyes, post-truth means that the two described cases are in fact of the same kind. Lying is just an effective means to achieve the desired goal: in the first case it would be protecting the resistance member, in the second—seducing a girl. If we follow Keyes, post-truth is intrinsically connected to the subject’s individual will. Even Tesich’s original observation may be interpreted as reflecting precisely such an idea: It is my wish not to receive any disturbing news, and if any truth perplexes me, I do not want to hear it.

Jarosław Kucharski suggests that the sense of post-truth is better grasped in Harry G. Frankfurt’s concept of “bullshitting” than in the concept of lying.⁸ According to Frankfurt, the claim-maker wants to achieve a certain goal and attempts to do so without regard for the claim’s truthfulness or falsity. In the case of bullshitting—Kucharski claims—the concern for truth is replaced by one for efficiency: getting the recipient of the message to believe or do what the lying one wishes. Thus, the central issue is credibility. Kucharski contrasts a liar and a bullshitter with a truth-communicator. Liars care about credibility, for it helps them deceive others and make them accept a false statement as true; truth-communicators care about credibility as it helps them achieve their goals: make others find out what the truth is; bullshitter care about credibility because they want to achieve their own goals, and they become liars when they intentionally deceive others. Yet, the contrast is not as sharp as Kucharski assumes. Any communicative act is directed at a person, and its goal (or, usually, goals) is to inform, to frighten, to educate, to express feelings, and so on. By performing a communicative act its author wants to achieve such a goal. Also, any communicative act has a content which may be, at least in part, classified as true or false.⁹ Thus the concept of bullshitting does not grasp what post-truth is any better than the concept of lying does. Having analyzed

⁸ See Jarosław Kucharski, “Postprawda—próba dookreślenia znaczenia,” in *Postprawda: Spojrzenie krytyczne*, eds. Tomasz W. Grabowski, Mirosław Lakomy, Konrad Oświecimski, and Aleksandra Pohl. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum, 2018), 99–113; Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁹ I say: “at least partially,” for whether or not one can predicate truth/falsity of norms depends on their broader philosophical views.

many definitions of post-truth, Tadeusz Borkowski goes as far as to claim that post-truth is a useless concept as it does not denote a new phenomenon, while misleadingly suggesting a relation to truth which it does not possess: the opposite of truth is falsity, not post-truth.¹⁰ The popularity of the concept of post-truth—he states—is a matter of fashion. Maciej Żulpo argues in turn that the concept of post-truth has already lost its original meaning. Instead, he proposes the concept of “post’s truth” referring to messages contained in the Internet’s posts being potentially true. He does not define what he means by “true” but from the context one may infer that he understands truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. In his view, “someone’s truth” expressed in a post on the Internet, if considered as “potentially true,” encourages others to verify and to change its potentiality of being true into it being actually true, i.e., make someone’s truth my own.¹¹ Such an understanding—Żulpo insists—allows truth as *adaequatio* to regain its importance lost in Tesich’s “post-truth world.” Yet the description “potentially true” refers to any statement, if “true” denotes correspondence to reality, i.e., states how things are and does not state how they are not; thus accepting a claim as “my truth” is, in a sense, independent of the claim’s being true—I may commit a cognitive error and sincerely and with good reasons accept a false statement. However, Żulpo is right in saying that post-truth as such—in the sense of justifying claims by appealing to emotions instead of facts—as well as the world in which lying is always morally permissible, valued negatively. This indirectly shows that truth is a value.

Yet to argue that the term “post-truth” denotes a novel understanding of truth and not merely our attitude of considering truth as unimportant, I need to contrast post-truth with Truth.

POST-TRUTH AS “ADAEQUATIO INTELLECTUS ET AFFECTUUM MEORUM”

Post-truth expresses a post-theory of Truth. I will explain what I mean by “post-theory” in the concluding section of the paper. Here, let us compare Truth and post-truth. There are various theories that explain what Truth is. Yet, once we look closer at debates on post-truth (as I did in the section above), we

¹⁰ See Tadeusz B o r k o w s k i, “Brzytwa Ochkama przeciw postprawdzie,” in *Postprawda: Spojrzenie krytyczne*, eds. Tomasz W. Grabowski, Mirosław Łakomy, Konrad Oświecimski, and Aleksandra Pohl (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie 2018), 25–39.

¹¹ See Maciej Ż u l p o, “Post-prawda jako największe zagrożenie i szansa współczesności. Próba dalszej redefinicji i zmiany percepcji pojęcia,” in *Media Business Culture*, vol. 2, *Sila medialnych przekazów*, eds. Małgorzata Łosiewicz and Anna Ryłko-Kurpiewska, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2020), 179–93.

discover that the allegation of dishonesty does not refer to a person making a statement different from someone else's statement but to the person lying. Moreover, a lie does not consist simply in the fact of one statement about a particular state of affairs differing from another statement about it; a lie is a statement intended to make another person think about *things* as they are not; and claims can be disturbing not because they are somebody's opinion but because they say something about reality. Thus, it is the classical theory of Truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* that is in fact presupposed in the way we understand lying, and not the coherence or pragmatic theory. The term *adaequatio* grasps the epistemic sense of the term "truth." Truth is a property of propositions that state how things are and do not state how they are not. We also need to distinguish Truth as the relation between a statement and a piece of reality that makes it true, and truths as statements having the property of being in that relation. The term *intellectus* suggests that what we mean is statements intentionally formulated by intelligent beings, even if a monkey playing with a computer might accidentally produce a string of words which resembles a true statement. We should also recognize that truths (i.e., statements) are aspectual because, as contingent beings, we are able to grasp only aspects of reality. There is a disagreement as to of what "true" can be predicated, but solving this issue is not relevant to our discussion on post-truth; it is sufficient to take propositions expressed by means of statements as bearers of truth. What is important, however, is the criterion (or criteria) of predicating "true" of propositions.

The metaphysical sense of the term "truth" needs to be distinguished from the epistemic one. Truth is a transcendental property of a being that (in the case of the natural world) itself accomplishes the plan of the Creator or (in the case of the world of culture) the one of a creator. In this sense truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Truth may also be an idea created by a mind (truth in the ontic sense).¹² Certainly not all philosophical traditions would accept the three senses of the term "truth." Here I refer to the tradition of the Lublin school of philosophy: the ideas worked out there will help contrast Truth and post-truth.

In the epistemic concept of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, five elements need to be distinguished: a statement of which we predicate truth, a piece of reality that makes the statement true, the relation between the two, and a subject who predicates and accepts or rejects the statement. The relation between the statement and reality is independent of the subject's act of predication of truth or untruth and the subject's acceptance (or rejection) of the statement, i.e., the subject may predicate "true" of a statement that is

¹² See *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, vol. 8, s.v. "Prawda" (by Andrzej Maryniarczyk), eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk et al. (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu 2007), 458–66.

not in the relation of *adaequatio* to reality, and “false” when the statement is in fact in such a relation. Yet, the proposition “p is true” implies an obligation to accept p, and “p is false”—to reject p. Stanisław Majdański grasps this fact in the adage “Vérité oblige.”¹³ Jan Łukasiewicz adopts a similar approach when he introduces two super-principles: I acknowledge truth and I reject falsehood. I wish to acknowledge truth and only truth, and I wish to reject falsehood and only falsehood.¹⁴ “I wish” should not be interpreted psychologically in this case but as the recognition of “the truth about truth,” or (to use Tadeusz Styczeń’s terminology) of the binding power of truth. Post-truth has the same structure: there is a statement, there is a subject who predicates and who accepts or rejects the statement, and there is “reality” to which the statement is supposed to correspond. I put the term “reality” in inverted commas to mark a substantial difference between the classical conception of truth and a post-theory of truth. In the former, it is my *intellect* that must subject itself to *res*, things as they are; and when I discover that there is no *adaequatio*, I must make a correction in the contents of my intellect. The new statement I am dealing with must correspond to the already existing contents of my intellect, and when I discover that there is no *adaequatio*, I must correct the statement in question. Thus, according to the post-theory of truth discussed here, truth is the relation of *adaequatio* between a statement and my already held opinion. Yet a theory of truth should indicate also a criterion of recognizing the truth value of a statement. The classical conception of truth indicates evidence as the ultimate—although not infallible—criterion of truth: *evidentia obiectiva* that belongs to the act of cognition itself.¹⁵ At first glance, the post-theory of truth seems to be taking consistency (or even stronger: non-contradiction) between a statement and my opinion as the criterion of truth. Yet, in order to accept this criterion, we need to refer to reality. Why do we look out to contradictions? Why, for example, science insists on non-contradictoriness of its theories? The reason is the metaphysical thesis that since reality, i.e., the entities about which science develops theories, are non-contradictory, a contradictory theory cannot be true (cannot correspond) to reality. Once we ignore reality as a term of the relation of *adaequatio*, the criterion of non-contradiction loses its usefulness,

¹³ See Stanisław Majdański, “Postawy i logiczne wartości (szkic w nawiązaniu do pewnych idei Jana Łukasiewicza),” in: *Wartość i sens: Aksjologiczne aspekty teorii interpretacji*, eds. Andrzej Tyszczyk, Edward Fiała, and Ryszard Zajaczkowski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2003), 93–125.

¹⁴ See Jan Łukasiewicz, “Logika dwuwartościowa,” in Jan Łukasiewicz, *Logika i metafizyka*, ed. Jacek Jadacki (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Filozofii i Socjologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1998), 112.

¹⁵ For further analysis, see Antoni B. Stępień, “Wartości poznawcze w ujęciu współczesnej filozofii tomistycznej,” in Antoni B. Stępień, *Studia i szkice filozoficzne*, vol. 1, ed. Arkadiusz Gut (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1999), 197–237.

as consistency may obtain between false claims. So, if not consistency, what criterion may the post-theory of truth offer?

An analysis of the existing attempts at defining post-truth suggest an answer: the criterion for recognizing the truth of a statement is emotions. A statement is true when hearing it is a source of pleasure, joy, satisfaction, and so on; and it is false when it causes opposite emotions. We may then summarize the post-truth theory of truth in a maxim: Truth is *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*. The term *meorum* is crucial here, for it is my emotions that provide a criterion for indicating whether a given statement should be accepted as true. I like a statement and I know that I like it. I cannot be mistaken about my liking or disliking it. Therefore, I do not need anything else as the ultimate criterion of truth.¹⁶ By liking it, I *establish* a statement as true *for myself*. Thus emotions become both the defining element of Truth and the criterion for accepting a statement as true. Emotions play a role here analogous to the role of coherence in the coherence theory of Truth. The latter states that the truth of a proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions, i.e., assertions conceived as statements formulated by a subject. Coherence is then the defining element of what Truth is and the criterion to predicate the truth value of a given statement. In the post-truth theory of Truth emotions work in an analogous way. A statement is true if it corresponds to my previous views and causes positive emotions in me. Classical philosophy also recognizes the role of emotions in cognition, including their function as “indicators” of the importance of an object, or even of a statement, but not as the criterion of truth.¹⁷ This constitutes the crucial difference between the classical theory of truth and the post-theory of truth. Moreover, there is no reason why, in an act of predicating truth of a statement, one person’s emotions should be more important than other’s. There might be “my truth” and “your truth.” Claiming that a certain statement is true *per se* would be an attempt at imposing a universal acceptance of that statement—an act of cognitive violence. Epistemology would then turn into ethics. The post-theory of Truth explains why we find ourselves in cognitive bubbles. We then tend to look for claims that which appeal to our emotions and on this basis we accept them as true, which reinforces our opinions and practically excludes other sources of information.

On the grounds of post-truth theory of truth also the metaphysical sense of truth gains a different meaning: truth becomes *adaequatio affectuum meorum et rei*. *Res* should correspond to my emotions, for otherwise it is not as it should be (it is not true in the metaphysical sense). And if it is not true, it should be

¹⁶ This is what philosophy knows as *conscientia concomitans*—a self-awareness accompanying the lived experience of acting.

¹⁷ See Antoni B. Stępień, “Zagadnienie poznawczej roli sfery emocjonalnej,” in Stępień, *Studia i szkice filozoficzne*, vol. 1, 171–77.

changed. The world becomes then raw material for the practice of adjusting entities to feelings. Cognitive acts turn into acts of construction. Again, there is no reason why one person's emotions are more important than other's, so the world created by me is not less important than the one created by you. There is "my world" and there is "your world."

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF ACCEPTING THE POST-TRUTH THEORY OF TRUTH

Ideas have consequences, so the post-truth theory of Truth has them as well. If we take seriously the definition of truth as the correspondence of a statement to the person's already existing opinions verified by her emotions, consequences for our individual and social life will follow. The first is that any dialogue, will turn into persuasion. What is debated is various views of what *is* true, for any person can *establish* the truth value of a given statement based on her emotional response to it. So, what clashes in a debate are various *truths* rather than various *views considered as true* by the debating parties respectively. If there is no independent reality that functions as an "external arbiter" for all involved, the only way to solve the debate is to persuade one of the parties to change their relevant emotions. "Argumentation" in a debate would then consist in provoking in one's interlocutor an emotion that agrees with one's emotional reaction to a given statement (or recommendation). In this way, reason and logic disappear from communication. In the post-truth world, what was hitherto seen as manipulation—such as using persuasive definitions or eristic tricks—is elevated to the level of good reasons. Also lying becomes something different. It will consist in causing—by whatever way that works—in the recipient of a message an emotion which is opposite to that experienced by the one who communicates the message.

In the post-truth theory of truth, truth retains its binding power but changes its form. When Truth is defined as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, its binding power is expressed by means of the norm: Whatever I have recognized as true, I must not deny.¹⁸ According to Styczeń and other representatives of the Lublin school of philosophy, for instance Karol Wojtyła and Stanisław Kamiński, the norm in question expresses genuine human experience: I grasp a certain fact, express my recognition with a statement, and grasp myself as the author of this statement. I adjust my intellect to reality that is independent

¹⁸ See Tadeusz Styczeń, "Etyka jako antropologia normatywna," in: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 4, *Wolność w prawdzie*, ed. Kazimierz Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL and Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, 2013), 313–49.

of my intellect, will, and emotions, and this is an act of *my* recognition. I must not deny it because I would then cause an ontic fracture in myself, for instance, as a cognitive subject, I recognize that the cat in front of me is black, and as a subject endowed with volition, I deny this fact.¹⁹ I may wish the cat was of a different color, I may expect the cat would be of a different color, or I may imagine the cat is of a different color—but the cat is as it is. I *recognize* the color of the cat when I adjust my intellect to its blackness. Moreover, Truth retains its binding power even if I am mistaken. For to reject my own claim about the cat's color, I need reasons stemming from reality. For example, someone changes the light, and the cat turns out to be dark brown; or a doctor informs me that my eyes do not work properly when it comes to seeing colors. Only then do I have a rational answer to the question why I have changed my mind about the color of the cat. Yet, as a being endowed with freedom, I *can* reject my own statement and behave contrary to what I accepted earlier. Once emotions are chosen as the criterion of the truth value of a statement, their binding power becomes absolute. For I cannot reject the truth I have established, unless I change my emotion. If I like the claim "this cat is black," I am bound by my liking. I cannot ask myself, with regard to that claim: Is this a correct emotion? For assuming the correctness or incorrectness of emotions with regard to a certain claim would presuppose that there is an independent indicator of the correctness of a given emotion. However, we cannot provide such an indicator, once dispose of reality as the truthmaker. We may of course change our emotional attitude towards a claim under the influence of others. Thus, accepting the post-theory of truth does not liberate us from the influence of others. On the contrary, since there is no external arbiter to which we can appeal when claiming "I am right," we are more prone to yield to power, be it that of money, military force or political prominence. This at least partially explains why the phenomena of filter bubbles²⁰ and echo chambers²¹ work so effectively, causing social and political polarization.

There is one more consequence of the post-truth theory of Truth: the intellect becomes self-contained. If I like the claim "this cat is black," the claim becomes true. However, emotions may also be cognitive objects. So, in order to establish the truth value of my own emotion, I need another, i.e., a meta-emotion, and to

¹⁹ This explains well why Chudy sees lying as something against the human nature. See Chudy, *Filozofia kłamstwa*, 315.

²⁰ A filter bubble is a situation when the content one sees on the Internet is based on one's previous activity, while the contrasting views or opinions are filtered out. Thus the information one encounters usually reinforces one's beliefs. See Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012).

²¹ An echo chamber is an environment in which persons find only opinions that are consistent with their own. So, their existing views are reinforced, while alternative ideas are not considered, which results in a confirmation bias. See, e.g., Cass R. Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

establish the truth value of my meta-emotion, I need a meta-meta-emotion, and a *regressus at infinitum* begins. In order to break it, one needs to decide, arbitrarily, which or whose emotion will be the ultimate criterion of the truth value of the claim “this cat is black.” Should I decide it is my emotion, I will be unable to explain why I have made such a decision, for to answer the question “why?” I need to refer to reality, not to my emotions. In this case, I lose my rationality. If the decision is made by someone else, I lose my autonomy. Thus accepting the post-theory of truth does not liberate us, but rather deprives us of our essential personal traits.

Ralph Keyes captures another consequence of accepting the post-theory of truth. It is our common experience that our actions follow from our view of reality, and the view in question consists of claims we take to be true. Thus, our view of reality comprises statements we like. Suppose we report our view to someone, and she says: “You are lying.” “When our behavior conflicts with our values—Keyes observes—what we are most likely to do is reconceive our values. Few of us want to think of ourselves as being unethical, let alone admit that to others, so we devise alternative approaches to morality. Think of them as *alt.ethics*. This term refers to ethical systems in which dissembling is considered okay, not necessarily wrong, therefore not really ‘dishonest’ in the negative sense of the word.”²² We now tend to eliminate such evaluative words as “lying,” “dishonest” or “dissembling,” and replace them with “reporting my truth,” “having a right to my own truth” or “sharing my truth.” In this way we relativize our knowledge in a peculiar manner. For what makes a statement true is *my emotion* towards that statement and this is why it is accepted as true *by me*. Since this holds for anyone, the post-truth theory of Truth brings a radical democratization of knowledge: all views are equally true. However, since decisions and actions pertaining to entire society cannot be based on contradictory views, what is accepted as true in such cases is subjected to political processes; politicization of truth is a natural consequence of the post-truth theory of truth. It provides also a basis for political and social acts: if one wishes to change the worldview of a group of individuals or of a nation, one should work to provoke the “right” emotions in them. The power of arguments referring to reality is then replaced with the power of the argument appealing to emotions. The road to barbarism has been opened.

THE POST-TRUTH THEORY OF TRUTH AS A POST-THEORY

The post-truth theory of Truth is in fact a *post*-theory of Truth. The term “theory” usually denotes (among other things) a basic component of science.

²² Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (New York: St. Martin’s Press 2004), 12.

From a methodological point of view, the theory is a set of substantively and logically ordered general principles, definitions, laws, and hypotheses that describes and explains a piece of the universe. The theory is testable by comparing it to reality (by observation and experimentation), it enables formulating predictions, new hypotheses (it is then theoretically fruitful), and new definitions of objects.²³ We do not need to go deeply into philosophical and methodological controversies on what constitutes a good theory. What has been said so far is sufficient to state that the conception of post-truth, as any theory, pretends to describe what Truth is (*adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*). Emotions assume in it the role of the truthmaker. My claim “this is true” acquires performative power: Whatever I say, having used my emotions as the criterion of its truth value, is true, and, consequently, whatever I say is false becomes false, for I can recognize my likings and dislikings, and there exists nothing to falsify my judgment on the truth value (or falsity) of a statement. Thus I *establish* the truth (or falsity) of a statement rather than recognize it. Truth is subjected to my freedom and to my will. The claim “this is *my* truth” is thereby justified as truthful, however, it no longer belongs in the domain of cognition, but in that of creation (as art does). Truth becomes a question of taste—and *de gustibus non disputandum est*. This explains why lying is no longer perceived as condemnable. Suppose I attempt to persuade someone to like a claim I dislike. Why, if truth is a matter of taste, should it be morally wrong? Am I *lying* when I am trying to persuade someone to like impressionism which I dislike? This explains also why science is criticized for being an exercise of power—scientific theses make the claim to universal validity and apparently require to be accepted by everyone unless scientific reasons to question them are presented. If so, they are seen as *imposed* on us.

The post-theory of Truth is self-referential in the following sense: it is accepted as the correct theory of Truth on the basis of liking it as ethically adequate. The theory of Truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* divides us into those who know and those who do not know reality; and knowing might become a source of power over those who do not know. Only the post-truth understanding of what Truth is makes us equal as creators of truths and this is why we *should* like the theory of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*. It is, however, a *post*-theory, for it explains—as any *bona fide* theory does in relation to its subject-matter—what Truth is; it does not, however, fulfill a basic requirement set for any theory (maybe except theories in formal sciences, such as mathematics or cybernetics), namely the possibility to be confronted with reality. For it *establishes* what Truth is, instead of discovering it. This fact justifies the term

²³ See Stanisław Kamiński, *Nauka i metoda: Pojęcie nauki i klasyfikacja nauk*, ed. Andrzej Bronk (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1992), 214–15

“*post-theory*”: an “ordinary” theory is a result of inquiries into reality and plays various functions; a *post-theory* plays similar functions, but it results from acts of the will following emotions. Therefore, whoever controls our emotions, controls also truths for us. And since there are people who still like the correspondence theory of truth or the coherence theory, or any other theory formulated throughout the history of philosophy, the creators of the post-theory of Truth should work to change such likings. Yet, to make one like or dislike a theory, it is not necessary to use philosophical argumentation; what one needs are rhetorical and psychological means to influence emotions. Logic becomes useless and classes in philosophy should turn into courses on persuasion. And it seems that only advocates of the post-theory of Truth should teach such courses.

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We do not need to enlarge on the consequences of accepting the post-theory of Truth further to see that subjecting truth to freedom neither liberates us from being controlled by external powers or empowers us. On the contrary, by claiming that the truth value of a statement is established and by ignoring the fact that truth needs to be recognized, we lose the ability to protect ourselves from being presented certain claims as true. For any protest makes sense only when there is a reason for it. The fact that I dislike a claim someone else likes is not a reason to protest—I may only say: “I protest against your liking this claim because I dislike it.” However, it is not a real protest but rather an expression of non-understanding or astonishment. It seems then that we should take seriously the warning of Joseph Ratzinger: “In a world without truth, however, one cannot keep on living; even if we suppose that we can do without truth, we still feed on the quiet hope that it has not yet really disappeared, just as the light of the sun could remain for a while after the sun came to an end, momentarily disguising the worldwide night that had started.”²⁴

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²⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, “Why I Am Still in the Church.” *Comunitatea monastica Preasfanta Treime*. April 19, 2012, <https://www.preasfantatreime.ro/en/blog/2021/04/19/why-i-am-still-in-the-church/>.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Agnieszka LEKKA-KOWALIK, A Post-truth Theory of Truth

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Against the background of various attempts to understand post-truth, the paper argues that an effort to make an overall intellectual grasp of the concept produces a post-theory of truth. Truth is defined in it as *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*, and emotions are both the criterion of the truth-value of a given claim and its truthmaker. This in turn gives the claim “this is true” a performative potential, which has various consequences, such as politicization of truth and invalidation of logic and argumentation, turning dialogue into persuasion, epistemology into ethics, and cognition into construction. What we are dealing here with is a post-theory, because, while it still fulfills the main functions ascribed to “ordinary” theories based on inquiries into reality, it springs, unlike them, from acts of volition which follow emotions.

Keywords: truth, post-truth, lie, cognition, emotion, post-theory

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Agnieszka LEKKA-KOWALIK, Postprawdziwa teoria prawdy

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Na tle różnych prób zrozumienia postprawdy w artykule wykazano, że ujęcie tego, czym jest postprawda, należy interpretować jako postteorię prawdy. W teorii tej prawdę definiuje się jako *adaequatio intellectus et affectuum meorum*. Moja emocja stanowi zatem zarówno kryterium prawdziwości danego twierdzenia, jak i jego uprawdziwacz. To z kolei nadaje twierdzeniu „to prawda” moc performatywną. Fakt ten ma rozmaite konsekwencje, takie jak upolitycznienie prawdy, nieważność logiki i argumentacji, zamiana dialogu na perswazję, epistemologii na etykę i poznania na konstrukcję. Jest to postteoria, spełnia ona bowiem główne funkcje przypisywane „zwykłym” teoriom, jednakże w odróżnieniu od tych ostatnich, które są rezultatem badania rzeczywistości, jest ona rezultatem decyzji woli podążającej za emocjami.

Słowa kluczowe: prawda, postprawda, kłamstwo, poznanie, emocja, postteoria

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Ryszard STRZELECKI

POST-TRUTH, AS SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIOLOGY, LOGIC, AND METAPHYSICS Introductory Remarks

Post-truth affirmed in the process of social communication is universal not so much because of its quantitative predominance in the world, but due to the universal model of the modern subject, easily recognizable in post-truth statements and shared by individual members of communities and participants in the communication processes. Thus the essence of post-truth must be sought in anthropology, while the principles of subjective functioning of post-truth can be found in ontology.

POST-TRUTH AN AMBIGUOUS AND MULTI-INTERPRETABLE PHENOMENON

Post-truth is an attribute of contemporary culture in two senses: as its specific characteristic, but also as a way of understanding it. It is certainly a multifaceted category and has multiple interpretations. In linguistic terms, this multiplicity is manifested in a homonymic ambiguity, whereas in the discussion undertaken here, it will be understood also as multi-interpretability. Multi-interpretability in science refers to grasping a subject from multiple research perspectives (i.e., using multiple disciplinary systems).

THREE LEVELS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE PHENOMENON

Post-truth is manifested primarily in statements made in everyday life, in social communications, in linguistic (speech) acts, and in decision-making processes, in various resolutions, opinions, proclamations, also in the polemical discourse, it informs decrees, reviews, introductions, afterwords, messages, and announcements of all kinds, and it is not absent from vows and oaths, or even from acts of consecration and sacramental rites. Although post-truth attitudes are clearly present in the communication processes involving the enumerated acts, they do not themselves affirm its presence, and the word “post-truth” does not necessarily appear in them. However, the situation is different in the case of statements which describe the first-level ones. Such metastatements

(referred to as statements of the second level) contain the term “post-truth.” They appear most often in the mass media and in academic articles intended for general audience, but also in scholarly texts. Post-truth is conceived there in terms of disturbing social phenomena which prove that those responsible for them either disregard facts or are not in touch with actual reality. There are also third-level statements in which the insight into the nature of post-truth is much deeper than it is in the case of the social sciences: those who make third-level statements seek to unveil the essence of post-truth by making use of the conceptual categories worked out within logic, ontology and metaphysics, and philosophical anthropology.

POST-TRUTH AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF POSTMODERNISM

Post-truth in the shape I am discussing here emerged together with post-modernism, postmodernity, or better said, late modernity.¹ Thus, one of the factors that opened the way to post-truth was modern continental philosophy developed since Descartes. Within this paradigm, the foundation of knowing the truth about the world is provided by reflection rather than by natural cognition (a cognitive grasp of things). The truth-value of an idea is grounded in the subject rather than in the idea’s reference to reality. However, modern philosophy and the so-called modernism in general acknowledged the reality of being, although they emphasized the role of the mediation of ideas in its recognition. It was only in late modernity, precisely in the radical Nietzschean paradigm, that the value of truth as the ultimate goal of any statement was abandoned. As a result, today, post-truth is perceived as the permanent condition of culture on the one hand, and as the prevailing attitude towards truth on the other. Therefore, the disregard for truth in the world of post-truth must be approached differently than occasional odd lies with which we deal on daily

¹ The expression *modernité tardive* (late modernity), used by Chantal Delsol describes the totalist nature and global scope of the currents prevailing in today’s culture. See Chantal Delsol, *Éloge de la singularité: Essai sur la modernité tardive* (Paris: La Table ronde, 2000); see also Chantal Delsol, *The Unlearned Lessons of the Twentieth Century: An Essay on Late Modernity*, trans. Robin Dick (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006). “Globality” does not denote merely the extent or omnipresence of cultural elements, but also certain regularities manifested in the cultural space. Thus, globality consists in the presence of common and, as it were, obligatory regularities (rules) governing the world today. Globalization must be understood in the same way—again, this observation is not limited to a process of simple unification, but includes adoption of principles governing the world and man in the world. Globalization involves the removal of earlier principles (ontological, ethical, and social principles which promoted individualism and communality); hence it creates a completely new picture of the world. See Marguerite A. Peters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution: Key Concepts, Operational Mechanisms* (St. Louis: En Route Books and Media, 2023),

basis, regardless of the historical time. Unlike them, it signifies a permanent departure from truth-based social life. As such, post-truth has an increasing impact on the functioning of the society and is responsible for the generally accepted ways of institutional diverging from truth in particular domains of life. Moreover, while individual instances of refusal to acknowledge truth may be considered in psychological or moral terms, post-truth provides the entire foundation of the functioning of the information society with all its structures and units.

PRELIMINARY DIAGNOSES

As a decisive factor in the functioning of individuals and entire societies, post-truth needs to be considered primarily from the vantage point of its implications for truth in social life. A view of culture from such a perspective involves second-level statements critical of the instances of disregard for truth. Such statements are expressed not only in *ad hoc* press communications or in general-interest articles, but also—and above all—in scholarly studies in fields such as the social sciences, media studies, cultural and historical anthropology, and religious studies. Thus, at the second level, manifestations of post-truth are confronted with the idea of truth valid in the disciplines in question. However, the analysis of post-truth cannot stop here, but needs to probe deeper into the ontological, i.e., metaphysical and existential, level of human reality. Yet, before taking this step, we need to focus on the second-level statements critical of post-truth in particular scholarly disciplines and providing cognitive tools which make it possible to recognize post-truth on the grounds specific to each of the disciplines. As each of them uses its own category of truth, it is necessary, in order to recognize and diagnose the peculiarities of post-truth in a particular discipline, to refer to its own understanding of truth. This is true about all the disciplines within social, cultural or media studies.

However, the research conducted in these disciplines, unlike that characteristic of the third-level reflection, does not scrutinize post-truth in an analytical or principled manner. Moreover, it is by no means easy to draw demarcation lines between them or specify their theoretical peculiarities. Yet, it remains true that although the disciplines in question differ in their choice of perspective and research approach, they do refer to post-truth as it is manifested in the same social and everyday life. In each case, disciplinary research concerns widespread and interpenetrating discourses and verbal behavior. Hence, in the paper, I cite works that address the field of post-truth in various ways and accurately portray variants of post-truth present in the social world. However,

I will not focus on the deviations from truth analyzed in various disciplines; I believe it more important to give, based to some extent on those analyses, an assessment of the situation of truth in the world and in global cognitive and communication processes.²

In a study of post-truth, it is essential to adopt a method that unites rather than separates dispersed disciplinary practices. Without doubt, such a universalizing approach is provided by disciplines important for the third-level considerations. It should be added that, albeit without in-depth philosophical reflection, the consolidation of disciplinary approaches can be provided to some extent by the cognitive science approach and research in the field of linguistic worldview.

One can easily observe that post-truth does not consist in the incompatibility of a claim with the state of the world (such a claim would belong in the category of falsity), but in contesting or undermining the valid ways of recognizing the truthfulness of claims. A post-truth statement cannot be considered in terms of simple correspondence between a proposition and the state of things. This is because things are not given in isolation, but usually against a background, and variously conditioned. A claim-maker can “bring out” certain elements of such a background, select and juxtapose them, and thus modify the image of things. In approaching things, a claim-maker is guided by his or her own vision of the world or even by an ideology superimposed on the expressed

² Truth requires human beings, who are at the same time social subjects, to recognize state of affairs *in statu nascendi*, in other words, the states of affairs whose objectivity has been demonstrated on the basis of realist philosophy. It is only when we reach objectivity prior to different contexts and cognitive situations that we can speak of one truth, which, by virtue of the objectivity of what it refers to, manifests itself in the same way to each cognitive subject. Therefore, opinions about the same objects expressed by different subjects are variants of the same judgment (proposition); this applies to both true and false claims about these objects. In both cases the main issue is that of assertion (i.e., recognizing, in a true proposition, that something is the case), or a lack thereof (i.e., claiming, in a false proposition, that something is the case when it is not). In both cases, the question about assertion independent of the subjects’ cognitive disposition and point of view arises. We refer here to the concept of objective truth whose interpretation was offered by Thomas Aquinas: *Veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei*. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 16, a. 1, co., Corpus Thomisticum, <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth1015.html>. The cited phrase speaks of the *adaequatio* between the intellect or, rather, the intellect’s judgment (thought) and the thing. A proposition is true when it corresponds to the order of things. The understanding of truth as *adaequatio* cited here is called the classical, or correspondence definition of truth. A later non-classical theory of truth, called a coherence theory, reduces truth to a relation between propositions, or a set of propositions. “An internal consistency and a consistency with the data of experience are to be the truth-making criteria here.” *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk et al., vol. 8, s.v. “Prawda” (by Andrzej Maryniarczyk), (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2007), 461. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own. In the non-classical approaches, the relation to being as an object of a proposition is not taken into account.

proposition. Such a perspective prevents the claim-maker from seeing things in their anthropological, social or historical factuality modifies the situational context in which he or she comes up with a specific proposition. As a result, the categories of truth and falsity are no longer applicable to propositions. A complex of ideas (an ideology) in which post-truth is grounded makes it possible to confirm any proposition stating any state of affairs. The categories of truth and post-truth belong in different orders of apprehending reality and thus post-truth statements cannot be effectively overcome by the true ones. Post-truth results from an ideological rearrangement of the order of reality, whereas truth is a confirmation of this order (and falsity is, respectively, its denial). Only on rare occasions can an individual assert something and contrast his or her post-truth claim with a true one, and if such a situation is possible, the comparison in question is made in the individual's personal cognitive space. Post-truth statements, although each of them is individual, presuppose a universal state of reality encompassing the entire social sphere. Such statements are grounded in an ideology that is widely accepted and socially well-established. Their post-truth status can be revealed only as a result of an advanced analysis and critique of the ideology in question, carried out from the position of realism.

POST-TRUTH VERSUS FICTION

Not only is post-truth different from falsehood (e.g., of propositions), but it also cannot be identified with fiction. This is because post-truth statements do not concern an imaginary, illusory, or "as if" world, nor do they refer to components of the world that were produced entirely and exclusively by the mind and do not exist outside it. On the contrary, post-truth is about components of the factual world (events, opinions, interpersonal relations, and institutions), which, however, is formed following principles different from those applied to the world of ordinary human relationships. Post-truth propositions are modelled on certain "projects" of reality, born of imagination and confirmed by a consent of participants in social life who comprehend and "cultivate" the world "in their own way."

One may ask how big the scope of the arbitrariness that creates post-truth is. Where are, and, in general, are there any limits to the excesses of post-truth? In the first place, those who implement (ideological or political) projects with the purpose of transforming reality adopt an indifferent attitude towards its objective shape which cannot be captured except through the categories of truth and falsehood. But can one go still further? What else can fall victim to post-truth?

POST-TRUTH VERSUS THE LOGIC OF LANGUAGE

As disciplinary analyses show, post-truth authors, in order to achieve some of their goals, generally respect the logical consistency of propositions. But do they always do so? Do they not sacrifice the coherence of an argument to achieve some goals of theirs? If so, this would indicate that post-truth distances itself not only from the inherent logical rules, but also from the logical order of its own claims in favor of a deliberate pluralism or intentional ambivalence of opinion. Is there any “liberal” logic in which post-truth practices could be justified?³

THE “FALSITY” OF POST-TRUTH
AN INVERSION OF THE ORDER OF VALUES

The nature of post-truth consists in that the real world (the world of human life) is arbitrarily modified and, as a result, departs from the “truth” of that real world as the ultimate reference of (truthful) propositions. This is the case not only when the creators of post-truth aim to produce an alternative conception of the world in a spontaneous (so to speak, “disinterested”) manner, but also when they intentionally oppose the truth about reality, i.e., propagate untruth, or deliberately lie. As a result, the post-truth project is reintroduced, as it were, into the context of truth and falsehood, and must inevitably be evaluated by its

³ The question could be addressed to Saul Kripke. I refer to his idea to “liberalize” logic and his concept of possible worlds. The conditions of systemic correctness should be preserved in possible worlds. Can post-truth abrogate these conditions, or, colloquially speaking, the principles of rational thinking? Kripke considers the identity: the Evening Star is the Morning Star. In the world where the planet Venus is absent, there would be neither the Evening Star nor the Morning Star. The question arises whether the proposition stating the identity is true, false, or neither true nor false. If the latter is the case, the question of the truth of the proposition remains unresolved (which reminds us of post-truth and its location beyond truth and falsity). However, the vagueness of the identity proposition, related to the truth of its reference, points to its second essential property: the proposition is necessary because it is never false. On the basis of this finding, Kripke asks: “Should we require that a necessary truth be true in all possible worlds?” Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 110. In fact, Kripke’s questions are whether necessary truths should obtain in any arbitrary worlds and whether such truths are prior to and entirely independent of the vicissitudes of these worlds. Kripke prefers not to address them: “I am leaving such problems outside my considerations altogether.” Ibidem. Does he think that the primacy of necessity over possible truthfulness is not unconditionally certain? Does he suspect that there are possible worlds that do not guarantee such primacy? If that were the case, one might think that the post-truth world with its inherent contradictions is nevertheless not outside the scope of possible worlds, even if the contradictions were intentionally produced. This issue, as in Kripke’s considerations, must remain open.

audience as either true or false. An ideological construct created for the benefit of interest groups is presented to a certain audience as a faithful testimony to reality, which is supposed to furnish them with grounds for making judgements about the world. Such an attitude is possible on condition that references to “truthful” statements, and therefore also references to the original state of being, or reality as such, were excluded. Thus, all ideas, all claims, be they social, cultural, religious or scientific, retain their post-truth quality unless they correlate, or are identical with certain actually true or false utterances. If such a correlation, or identification, occurs, post-truth claims also enter the domain of “truthfulness.”

The creation and propagation of post-truth often involves a practice of inverting the hierarchy of values shared in daily life. Ideologies shape not only the world, but also the subject, his or her behavior and acts of judgment. Post-truth undergoes transformation in the processes of communication. Participants in cultural communication use multiple codes (sender codes and receiver codes) in which meanings and statuses of what they say change. However, the dependence of statements on their communicative situation cannot be used as an argument for adopting cognitive relativism and abandoning efforts to discover objective states of affairs.

THE REINFORCEMENT OF POST-TRUTH IN THE MASS MEDIA

In the following considerations, I will focus on the second-level statements, mainly those which express post-truth in the domain of specific disciplines: sociology, media studies, social communication, political science, education, economics, and others. Despite an abundance of available publications, it is still difficult to capture the general features of the phenomenon of post-truth, because, as I pointed out earlier, each discipline operates from its own, and thus relatively narrow, cognitive perspective. Therefore, I shall limit the scope of my analysis to political science and media studies. In the field outlined in this way, I will scrutinize works focused on social and communication issues.

A noteworthy attempt to identify the phenomenon of post-truth on the ground of social science and media studies was made by Marek Sokołowski,⁴ who makes numerous references to the accomplishments also of other re-

⁴ See Marek Sokołowski, “Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm: siła czy słabość? Pytania o wartości,” In *Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm. Definiowanie (nie)oczywistych pojęć. Post-politics, Post-truth, Populism. Defining (Non)Obvious Concepts*, ed. Marek Sokołowski (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego and Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2023): 7–26.

searchers.⁵ In his opinion, the source of the dissemination of post-truth is the collapse of the politics of modernist liberalism and, in his view, the process in question encompasses all spheres of life: knowledge, economics, religion, and even gender relations,⁶ as they are all, to some extent, immersed in politics. Due to the collapse of liberalism, values and truth could no longer be expressed in these spheres, and the respect for truth itself ceased to be the basis of human life. Steve Tesich, cited by Sokołowski, even speaks of a traumatization of society as a whole, which seems to have played a key role in the advent of postmodernism he describes as a state of the frustrated universal mind.⁷

The theme of post-truth is also addressed by Adam Zamojski, who believes that due to the oligarchization of the electoral procedure, democracy is moving towards post-democracy: "The instruments and procedures of the democratic system are sometimes used to introduce identity changes, going in the direction of transforming the traditional identity of our civilization, built on the Judeo-Christian foundation. This applies to the process of dechristianization of Europe, its secularization, atheization, religious indifferentism, and the consumerist attitude characterized by hedonism."⁸ The current upheaval of civilization uses democracy for the purpose of a destruction of democracy itself. Through post-truth, democratic procedures go against the principles of the European heritage and work against it.

This view is confirmed by Anna Ślósarz who holds that post-democracy consists in depriving citizens of real and effective decision-making through an electoral procedure by cutting them off from true information about themselves and social reality. Lies are spread by centers that control the awareness and beliefs of citizens through total media coverage. Such centers obtain dictatorial power as a result of, as Ślósarz writes, performing a spectacle of democracy without democracy.⁹

Norbert Tomaszewski's article also discusses political post-truth in the media. Tomaszewski notes that despite widespread criticism of media abuse, deception is still being practiced. This is because the benefits of lying prevail over the damage caused by openly challenging truth or deliberately mislead-

⁵ See Wojciech D o h n a l, *Od polityki pierwotnej do postpolityki: Z dziejów anglosaskiej antropologii politycznej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauka i Innowacje, 2013); Stephen H o l m e s, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

⁶ See S o k o ł o w s k i, "Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm: siła czy słabość? Pytania o wartości," 8.

⁷ See Steve T e s i c h, "A Government of Lies," *The Nation*, January 6, 1992: 12–14.

⁸ Adam Z a m o j s k i, "Demokracja czy demolatria: Brzydsze oblicze systemu," in *Populizm jako narzędzie marketingu politycznego*, eds. Maria Nowina Konopka, Kamila Glinka, and Rafał Miernik (Kielce: Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego, 2017), 50.

⁹ See Anna Ś l ó s a r z, "Kulturowe źródła postdemokracji: Cultural Sources of Post-democracy," in *Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm*, 96–98.

ing the public. As a form of lying, fake news, in Tomaszewski's view, is part, of the manipulative machine called post-truth¹⁰ and involves blurring or ignoring the difference between truth and lies. The dictatorship of post-truth opposes truth by exploiting the truthfulness mentality and the public respect for truth.

The latter view is developed by Katarzyna Bąkowska, who believes that post-truth, a phenomenon closely related to our time, can be best described as a commonly accepted way of doing things; hence such a multitude of its different forms and sectors. In her opinion, it is difficult to agree with the Oxford Dictionary that post-truth can be recognized only after the actual truth has been revealed.¹¹ Only falsehood or motivation to make false claims can be revealed in this way. In the case of post-truth, a "reality" is created in which differentiation between truth and falsehood becomes meaningless. Bąkowska's view suggests that post-truth statements themselves legitimize the reality they create and are performative in it (i.e., what they establish is binding). So, since everyone is navigating the thicket of post-truth claims, they are unable to see the fact that these claims lack reference to the factual state of the world and take them to be testimony to actual reality. Any opposition or differentiation that might emerge in a world constructed in such a way would not defy global post-truth,¹² nor would they problematize it for the sake of something else (something more); instead, they would take the form of opposite post-truth claims, as if micro-truths and micro-falsehoods were established in the domain of post-truth. Such post-truth claims seem close to John L. Austin's constatives.¹³ There are also researchers who demand a higher status for post-truth than that of performatives. In their view, post-truth constitutes the third

¹⁰ See Norbert Tomaszewski, "Post-prawda oraz fake news jako machina napędzająca kampanię prezydencką Donalda Trumpa w 2016 r.," in *Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm*, 215.

¹¹ See "Word of the Year 2016," OxfordLanguages, <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/>.

¹² The term "global post-truth" is opposed to "local post-truth." In the realm of global post-truth the meanings of "truth," "falsehood," "truthfulness," "lying," and "deception" are redefined. One can even say that a world created in such a way is characterized by some kind of post-truth ontology (for it is assigned an ontological status).

¹³ Neither are constatives a category subordinate to performatives, nor can they be attributed logical values. Thus it can be assumed, after Agnieszka Kułacka, that their lower status finds a certain interpretation in the theory of possible worlds. Truth (here: constative truth) is limited, "attributed" to a specific possible world. See Agnieszka Kułacka, "Wypowiedzenia performatywne i konstatywne: Teoria aktów mowy," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis: Kształcenie językowe*, no. 9(19) (2011): 81–90. Although post-truth statements do not respect even a weak opposition between truth and falsity, and may not respect the basic principles of logic (e.g., the principle of non-contradiction and identity; see also footnote 3), the theory of constatives, derived from John L. Austin's work, at least to some extent suggests a way of understanding some logically opposed values within a post-truth statement. See John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975).

logical value, alongside truth and falsity. However, by recognizing post-truth as a logical value, one shifts the problem from the logic of being to the logic of thought and cognitive models.¹⁴

Post-truth statements are factors in the global process of information exchange. Thus, post-truth has become possible only today, in the era of electronic communication and constant transmission of information among numerous media outlets. Bąkiewicz points to an increasing amount of information, its accumulation, congestion, and the social pressure it produces. Correlations and interactions of messages make all claims ambiguous, which leads to blurring the boundary between fact and opinion.¹⁵ Opinions prevail over statements of fact, and as a result it is difficult to break through the build-up of communications, while the truth becomes less and less accessible. Such is the nature of the modern world.

Jan Kłós states: “I understand the lack of foundation also, or perhaps primarily, as a lack of deeper understanding of the concepts by which society lives.... In this context, understanding consists in relating them to the reality of human nature.”¹⁶ The latter approach, which is close to a metaphysical one, considers truth as reference to the order of being, in full awareness of the fact that being—in this case not only nature, but above all the human person—is characterized by an internal order, which means that—to the researcher—it is an intelligible object (in the metaphysical sense), one whose order can be recognized, reconstructed, and researched in a cognitive process. In this case, post-truth would be a mere divergence from the order in question, i.e., ignorance of the truth or its rejection. It is still worthwhile to point out, after Irving Babbitt cited

¹⁴ Some researchers allow themselves to be manipulated by the idea of post-truth, one might say that they succumb to the power of post-truth since they begin to treat it as a category that can be placed in the context of truth or falsity; as a result, post-truth becomes a third logical value alongside truth and falsity, of in some sense equal status. This is pointed out by Mirosław Lakomy in an article where he discusses the concept of trivalent logic (as conceived of by Jan Lukasiewicz and interpreted by Ludwik Borkowski), side by side with the traditional standpoint (rooted in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition) and fuzzy logic, which is closer to the category of post-truth. See Mirosław Lakomy, “Postprawda w dyskursie publicznym w kontekście logiki klasycznej i logiki rozmytej,” *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis: Studia de Cultura* 11, no. 1 (2019): 5–14. There are also other systems of logic more favorable for legitimizing post-truth; such systems (i.e., modal logics, temporal logics, logics of change with a history functor, causal logics, and numerous others) have been created for their formal qualities and sometimes to overcome certain difficulties in scientific research. One can accept the value and usefulness of such systems of logic, but without considering them as interpretations of the “inherent” order of the real world.

¹⁵ See Katarzyna Bąkiewicz, “Fake News”: *Produkt medialny czasów postprawdy* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2020), 19.

¹⁶ Jan Kłós, “Dyktatura jako rezultat braku fundamentów,” in *Postpolityka, postprawda, populizm*, 79.

by Kłos,¹⁷ to humility as a condition for recognizing a higher source of the order of human existence, since that order cannot come from the human being, but from a transcendent source¹⁸. A rejection of this key-principle stems from hubris, from constituting oneself in opposition to truth. In this sense, hubris is not merely a delusion and illusion, or affirmation of appearances, but it is a transformation of reality resulting from the processes initiated by post-truth, namely the processes of ludification and globalization, and from widespread hypocrisy, which I will discuss in the conclusion of the article.

As can be seen, some studies place post-truth at an ever-deeper level of research. It is possible to follow such investigations as long as the category of post-truth is correlated with an appropriate conception of truth that makes it possible to understand the former. There are, for instance, media post-truth and media truth, social post-truth and social truth. However, as I have already pointed out, the essence of post-truth cannot be adequately grasped in terms of social truth, media truth, or even in the reflection undertaken within individual scholarly disciplines. A proper grasp of post-truth requires a reference to truth in ontological, logical or anthropological-philosophical sense. Only in such a context can one acquire a deeper understanding of the post-truth fabric of today's reality. In addition to the views of Anna Ślósarz and Jan Kłos, it is worth referring to the ideas of Michał Głowala. In reflecting on truth and post-truth, Głowala reaches back to the realist philosophy of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, which refers to natural cognition. Realist philosophy proclaims the obviousness of truth (one can "enter" it, as it were, as one enters a house¹⁹); at the same time, the obviousness in question makes it possible to effectively recognize the signs of a deformation of truth.

TWO ONTOLOGIES

Thus, it seems that there are two separate ontologies: one is related to truth-based categories, the other is formed beyond truth and falsity, grounded in the relations of power, knowledge, and status, and essentially constructivist

¹⁷ See *ibidem*, s. 83.

¹⁸ See Irving B a b i t t, *Democracy and Leadership* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, 1979).

¹⁹ See Michał G ł o w a ł a, "Łatwość i trudność poznania prawdy," in *Prawda i metoda*, vol. 2, *O prawdzie*, ed. Janusz Jaskóła and Anna Olejarczyk (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006): 49–65. The author cites the saying: "Who would miss the door?" which, according to the scholastics, points to certain similarities between knowing the truth and knowing a house. The metaphor emphasizes the ease of finding an entrance (*introitus, aditus*) to the house, even if finding one's way in its interior (*interiora domus*) is difficult (see *ibidem*, s. 52).

(statements do not reflect the pre-existing order of things, but create an order of their own). Accordingly, a reality created in this way affirms itself, determines its own existential "virtue," according to its own principles. Such general properties, considered on their own, without taking into account personal subjects, constitute a basic form of the latter ontology. It may seem that, as such, it should be considered as an object of a theory or scholarly discipline.

Presuppositions present in such a discipline can also provide content for intellectual activities and aspirations of individuals. It can even be said that individuals themselves profess and possess their own ontologies which become their personal imperatives. Therefore, such ontologies, in addition to "closed" theoretical forms, have also "open" forms which, through individuals, give shape to cultures. The correlation of "closed" and cultural ("open") ontologies does not cause concern only if they are all based on the same categories of truth and falsity.

POST-TRUTH, TRUTH, AND METAPHYSICS

Ontological comparisons help explain the opposition between the concept of being developed on the grounds of realist philosophy and the problematic concepts of being which disregard the criteria of truth and falsity, i.e., post-truth ontologies. I insist on using the term "ontology," although its usage in this article has no precedence in any other available studies. In fact, I operate with two radically opposing notions of ontology. One is related to realist philosophy, the other is introduced here *ad hoc* to denote the realm of being referred to in post-truth discourses. In our considerations, only these two extreme forms of ontology are relevant. In the terminology coined in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, the ontology of realist philosophy, is called metaphysics. This is important because a proper diagnosis of post-truth requires the strongest possible context, that of metaphysics, i.e., the realist theory of being. The philosophies situated between these extreme poles, such as numerous philosophies (ontologies) rooted in Cartesian thought, are less significant. I mention them because against their background both the classical (Aristotelian-Thomistic) perspective and the ontological peculiarity of post-realist thought become clearer. The advantage of metaphysics over any ontology consists in that ontologies are concerned with "the content of a spontaneous recognition of the existing reality, while metaphysics is concerned with the content of a recognition of a rationally conceived concept of being as worked out throughout the process of philosophical analysis."²⁰ According to the standpoint of Thomistic

²⁰ See *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk et al., vol. 7, s.v. "Ontologia" (by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec) (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, 2006), 816.

metaphysics, the philosophical system originates from the data derived from a spontaneous perception of reality, and the explanation of the data is made on the grounds of philosophical realism. All other ontologies, which grasp reality through ready-made and even arbitrarily adopted, and thus subjective, schemes and conceptualizations, grasp being on the basis of reflection alone. Mieczysław A. Krapiec writes: "Philosophers since Descartes have found it superfluous to distinguish between subjective and objective concepts in view of the identity of their content. They enclosed all reality in the consciousness of a subjective concept."²¹ As a result, in the European tradition, reflection-based and idealistic ontologies emerged, imposing ready-made cognitive concepts on reality. The ontologies I have in mind include theories proposed by Descartes, Malebranche, Kant, Hegel, phenomenologists (such as Husserl, Scheler, and Ingarden), Heidegger, and Sartre. In the idealist phase of Husserl's thought, the subjective approach played a particularly important role: the subject does not turn towards the transcendent (objective) reality but gives "reality" to the components of its pure consciousness (*reine Bewusstsein*) and noetic-noematic acts.²²

TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH COEXIST IN MAN

Although post-truth falls outside the scope of serious reflection, it nevertheless plays an important role in the vicissitudes of modern thought, primarily because of its cognitive peculiarity, universality, and potential to transform human lives. Post-truth does not occur in isolation, it is present in publicly and privately made statements and deeply penetrates the space of real life. The powerful influence (admittedly different, but comparable to that of truth) it exerts on the human being makes it an important category and an alternative ontology: it is related to the essence of being, but completely "obscures" it. Therefore, the very importance of post-truth, namely the fact that it replaces truth in culture, forces us to recognize it as an ontology (in action). Still, it is necessary to demonstrate its theoretical nature.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² "Husserl was convinced that by unveiling the transcendental aspect of human consciousness he reached 'the thing itself,' all 'the rest,' among others the real world, is only an intentional stream of possible experiences, where reality is just one of the constitutive objectivities." *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, eds. Andrzej Maryniarczyk et al., vol. 3, s.v. "Fenomenologia" (by Henryk Kiereś) (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2002), 402. Thus, the emphasis on the sphere of pure consciousness diminishes the cognitive importance of the "external," objective world, which, in realist philosophy, is called "actual."

The question of ontology is situated at the third level of considerations, that of metaphysics, logic, and philosophical anthropology. What does such a positioning of post-truth mean? The term “post-truth” refers to states of affairs established by post-truth statements, alleged situations, worlds, and images of the world. This means that post truth excludes propositions regarding the states of affairs prior to those established by post-truth statements. If post-truth is called “ontological,” but does not come under the order of logic, it is necessary to ask what other theoretical criteria are met by post-truth to justify, at least to some extent, the use of the term “ontological”?

AN ONTOLOGY OF THE “POST-TRUTH” SUBJECT

To characterize the all-encompassing phenomenon of post-truth, it is first necessary, in accordance with the rigor of ontological thinking, to focus attention on the cognitive and social peculiarities of the “post-truth” subject. One may ask whether, to reconstruct it properly, one should start from individual post-truth claims which, by replicating and self-confirming, encompass entire culture, or, on the contrary, one should focus on the properties of the subject itself shaped under the influence of the spirit of postmodernity. Most studies follow an “inductive” method based on exemplification and describe post-truth by analyzing post-truth texts, while I direct attention to the subject and its socio-cultural context.²³

Post-truth affirmed in the process of social communication is universal not so much because of its quantitative predominance in the world, but due to the universal model of the modern subject, easily recognizable in post-truth statements and shared by individual members of communities and participants in the communication processes. Thus the essence of post-truth must be sought in anthropology, while the principles of subjective functioning of post-truth can be found in ontology.

The act of the conscious subject in the post-truth world is transcendent, i.e., goes beyond his or her consciousness and shapes the world outside it.

²³ An inclination of the subject towards post-truth is strengthened by an increase in ambivalent attitudes, present in culture, towards the fundamental realities of everyday life. Such attitudes result from “saturating” life with the effects of post-truth practices (post-truth generates post-truth, and so on). The problem, however, is not just an excess of data about reality but, as Kenneth J. Gergen points out, resentment and reserve towards truth-related aspirations (see Kenneth J. G e r g e n, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). The appeal of negation, the need for egotistic self-realization on the part of individuals, their sense of subjective omnipotence, insensitivity to truth-related and ethical commitment to the world and to other human beings are among the factors that contribute to this vicious circle.

However, the structure of such a world does not respect the logical order of the “truthful” one, i.e., the domain of science and everyday knowledge, and subject to true or false judgements. The way in which the post-truth subject apprehends being is neither subjective, nor objective-transcendent; it is not an ordinary human act of cognition of objective reality, but an act performed from a specific postmodern perspective, which transforms reality without logical justification, and therefore in a performative manner. However, it should be noted that it is not only post-truth that shapes the world of the modern subject; the subject also participates in the domain of truth. Despite the influence of the (often hidden) mechanisms of post-truth (e.g., fake news), the subject uses also truth-related criteria. By applying both logical and extra-logical tools, the subject reinforces post-truth claims with other post-truth claims until an ideological universe is created. The contemporary, post-modern subject is defined by its context, namely that of “weakened” reality, and must be described in terms of a post-truth ontology. What defines the universal subject (the subjectivity of our time) applies also to individual subjects, participants in culture.²⁴

POST-TRUTH FACTOR IN CULTURAL PROCESSES

It is hence necessary to identify factors that have shaped contemporary culture and its subject in terms of post-truth. Above all, post-truth plays a role in the development of the ideology of globalism, as the principles of globalism transcend (or bypass) the truth-related “regulations.” As it originates from the tendencies diagnosed by Jean Baudrillard in his theory of simulacrum,²⁵ post-truth also contributes to the processes that undermine the reality of the world and man. Such a global transformation of the world in which the criteria of truth are eliminated through ludification, i.e., reducing aspirations and endeavors of individuals to unrestrained creation and promoting pleasure (and play), leads to diminishing the meaning of a full-scale human existence.²⁶ Eventually, post-

²⁴ The post-truth ontology is related to defining the individual through his or her post-modern cultural rootedness. The totality of cultural processes can be interpreted neither by classical ontology (metaphysics), nor by other modern ontologies. Hence the duality of the ontology of culture and the human being functioning in it.

²⁵ See Jean B a u d r i l l a r d, “The Precession of Simulacra,” in Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1–42; Jean B a u d r i l l a r d, *The Intelligence of Evil: Or, The Lucidity Pact*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2005).

²⁶ See Ryszard S t r z e l e c k i, *Homo ludens kultury współczesnej*, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2019; Ryszard S t r z e l e c k i, *Ku antropologii zabawy: Teoria statusowo-transformacyjna*, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2020.

truth is a factor in the virtual world which pervades our reality but over which the order of being has no hold. The virtual world transforms our world by selecting and de-hierarchizing the existing orders of things and values.²⁷ Thus reality is perceived through arbitrary rules that shape post-humans against the actual and spiritual realities of the human person.²⁸ The phenomenon of post-truth is also grounded in widespread hypocrisy, in a sphere which is founded on a hidden lie and which does not permit any verification.²⁹ Post-truth is present in all these universal processes and operates in numerous texts of the info-sphere. Therefore, in this paper, I have emphasized an in-depth identification of post-truth as a global cultural phenomenon. Some other studies, including those cited here, also go beyond the usually studied local aspect, where post-truth is seen mainly as undermining the social, cultural or media-related truth. In my research, I follow the indications included in such further-reaching studies, but also develop the reflection initiated there. I do so with the idea that the very essence of post-truth, captured in its textual representations, consists in abandoning the concept of truth accepted on the grounds of two-valued logic, ontology (metaphysics), and philosophical (in this case, personalist) anthropology. The foundation for such an opinion is provided by the principles of classical metaphysics in the Thomistic interpretation (specifically, in existential neo-Thomism). I strongly emphasize that post-truth is an important factor in the post-modern processes that transform the world and, in a sense, degrade the human being.

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²⁷ See *Wirtual czy nowy wspaniały świat?*, ed. Kazimierz Korab (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2010).

²⁸ See Tom Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

²⁹ See Wojciech Chudy, *Spółeczeństwo zakłamanie: Esej o społeczeństwie i kłamstwie*, vol. 1, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2007.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Ryszard STRZELECKI, Post-truth, as Seen from the Perspectives of Sociology, Logic, and Metaphysics: Introductory Remarks

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In the article, the phenomenon of post-truth is addressed from several perspectives (social, cultural, media, political, logical, anthropological, and metaphysical) and at the three levels of cultural presence, namely, in texts containing post-truth, in studies in which post-truth is analyzed and criticized, and in studies devoted to investigating the essence of post-truth in terms of personalism, classical logic, and metaphysics. The purpose of the article is to analyze post-

truth at the third level, aiming to show the peculiarities of the phenomenon in the context of truth, fiction, classical logic and non-classical logics, ontology, metaphysics, the social subject, and its acts. Post-truth is a constitutive element of the culture of postmodernism and contributes to a diminished existential status of both societies and individuals, being a causal factor of globalization, simulacration, virtualization, ludification, and widespread hypocrisy. As such, post-truth is identified as a factor in the degradation of human beings and of the values inherent in the European tradition.

Keywords: truth, post-truth, fake news, logic, media studies, ontology, metaphysics, communication, postmodernism, subject

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Ryszard STRZELECKI, Postprawda w perspektywie społecznej, logicznej i metafizycznej. Uwagi wstępne

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Zjawisko postprawdy zostało ujęte w artykule w perspektywach: społecznej, kulturowej, medialnej, politycznej, logicznej, antropologicznej i metafizycznej, oraz na trzech poziomach obecności kulturowej: w tekstach zawierających postprawdę, w opracowaniach poddających postprawdę analizie i krytyce oraz w studiach poświęconych badaniu istoty zjawiska w zakresie personalizmu, logiki klasycznej i metafizyki. Celem artykułu była analiza postprawdy na poziomie trzecim, zmierzająca do ukazania osobliwości zjawiska w kontekście: prawdy, fikcji, logiki klasycznej i logik nieklasycznych, ontologii, metafizyki, społecznego podmiotu i jego działania. Postprawda jest konstytutywnym elementem kultury postmodernizmu i przyczynia się do obniżenia bytowego statusu zarówno społeczeństw, jak i jednostek. Jest czynnikiem sprawczym globalizacji, symulakryzacji, wirtualizacji, ludologizacji (uzabawienia) oraz powszechnego zakłamania. Jako taka wskazywana jest jako źródło degradacji człowieka i wartości obecnych w tradycji europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: prawda, postprawda, fake news, logika, medioznawstwo, ontologia, metafizyka, komunikacja, postmodernizm, podmiot

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IN THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH
AN INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

Małgorzata HOŁDA

THE (IN)AUTHENTICITY OF BEING-WITH Virginia Woolf and Collective Consciousness

Featuring a pageant play with its possible (mis)hearings and (mis)understandings, the narrative of the novel thematizes a human being's capacity for understanding but also the possibility and inevitability of (mis)understanding, which ensues from our finite, conditioned, and provisional being-in-the-world.

Working at the possibility of successful communal experiences, we believe that the state of unity with others is not merely an elevated idea but a feasible reality. However, the sense of our primordial and genuine unity with others is often infringed by both our internal deficiencies and external forces, such as wars and pandemics, as well as by various forms of domination and subjugation. Written in the time between the two world wars, Virginia Woolf's final novel, *Between the Acts* (1941),¹ explores the human necessity of candor and connectivity, which the deeper meaning of our human existence as *being-with* engenders. As a social and political thinker, Woolf implicitly expresses in fiction her concerns about totalitarianism that stands in opposition to the spirit of connectedness, rectitude, and social integrity. She renders those issues more directly in her non-fictional writings, such as her famous polemic *Three Guineas* (1938).² Accompanying the process of fictional writing and constituting a one-of-a-kind portrait of her as a writer,³ Woolf's diaries give us invaluable insights into a broader context of her novels. As Rasheed Tazudeen notices, Woolf's meticulous documentation of events around the time of conceiving *Between the Acts* sheds light on its historical significance: "In Woolf's diary entries from the beginning of World War II, a world without human consciousness is often conceived as the terrifying limit-point of culture's collapse into barbarism with animal life functioning as a threatening, dark and violent emergence aligned

¹ See Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (London: Penguin Classics, 2019).

² See Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own" and "Three Guineas" (London: Vintage Classics, 2016).

³ For an exploration of the intimate relationship between Woolf's fictional writings and her diaries, see, e.g., Małgorzata Hólda, "The (Self)portrait of a Writer: A Hermeneutic Reading of Virginia Woolf's (Auto)biographical Writings," *Analyses/Rereadings/Theories: A Journal Devoted to Literature, Film and Theatre* 6, no. 1 (2020): 52–66.

with fascism.”⁴ This weighty remark inspires us to investigate further Woolf’s political stance and her insight into the causes of the disavowal of the univocal truth and the demise of ethics at the political and societal level.

Although Woolf’s major fictional realizations that precede *Between the Acts* are viewed as mainly preoccupied with individual consciousness, they already exhibit her interest in consciousness with indistinct boundaries. For instance, in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Septimus Warren Smith, Clarissa’s double, feels unity with inanimate objects. Clarissa seems to have a peculiar sense of being at once in London and at the seaside. Her consciousness is extended beyond self, experienced across time and space: “Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees, or barns.... The unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death.”⁵ Woolf delves into the interconnectedness between inanimate objects, space, and people also in *To the Lighthouse*⁶ (1927).⁷ To mention but one example, Mrs. Ramsay in the novel experiences some mysterious oneness with a beam of light coming from the lighthouse. The destabilization of the clear-cut notion of selfhood is also realized to great effect in *Orlando*⁸ (1928); its eponymous character has a transgenerational, male-female identity.

Undeniably, Woolf’s earlier fictions investigate the blurred distinctions between self and other,⁹ but it is her final novel, *Between the Acts*, that especially centralizes concerns of collective consciousness in its relationship to societal issues, and more specifically, the question of authenticity. In this text, Woolf sensitizes us to various dualisms and divides whose seeming innocuousness may lead to a devastating separateness, dispersion of individuals belonging to a community, as well as to a challenge to the truths that seemed to be the community’s unifying force. Featuring a pageant play with its possible (mis)hearings and (mis)understandings, the narrative of the novel thematizes a human being’s capacity for understanding but also the possibility and inevitability of (mis)understanding, which ensues from our finite, conditioned, and provisional

⁴ Rasheed T a z u d e e n, “‘Discordant Syllabling’: The Language of the Living World in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” *Studies in the Novel* 47, no. 4 (2015): 491.

⁵ Virginia W o o l f, “Mrs. Dalloway,” in *Collected Novels of Virginia Woolf* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 168.

⁶ See Virginia W o o l f, *To the Lighthouse* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1981).

⁷ See, e.g., Paul T. B r o w n, “Relativity, Quantum Physics, and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 3 (2009): 40–43.

⁸ See Virginia W o o l f, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹ On the modernist erosion of the distinction between selfhood and otherness see Omri M o s e s, *Out of the Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). See, in particular, “Introduction” (1–28) and “Personhood beyond Personality” (29–72).

being-in-the-world. *Between the Acts* is often interpreted as a plea against the patriarchal system and fascist ideology.¹⁰ Indeed, Woolf expresses her pacifist views through the deployment of an artistic performance—the play within the narrative—which explores the possibilities of art’s efficacy to stave off the dire results of fragmentation in modern societies. The novel communicates a strong desire to demonstrate the importance of emancipatory action in preventing the failure of authentic communication and effective communal life.

COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS, THE UNCERTAINTY OF TRUTH AND KAIROLOGICAL TIME

Between the Acts thematizes the notion of collective engagement through the act of ritual—the annual performance. Bringing many voices together to reenact national history in a shared cultural rite underlines a sense of belongingness to a community, interdependence, similar values, and the central role of tradition. Featuring pilgrims traveling to Canterbury, the life of Queen Elizabeth I, along with a Restoration comedy, a Victorian picnic, and a final scene entitled “Ourselves,” the play within the narrative captures various elements of history and establishes a true sense of national identity. The action of the novel takes place on a June day *between* the acts of a pageant play staged by a small village community in the English countryside. This *in-between* has a deeper meaning; it symbolizes the interval between the First World War and the Second World War. Although war is not often spoken about overtly, the title of the novel unmistakably alludes to the intermediary state between the wars and establishes the certitude of its gruesome presence.¹¹ The idyllic scenery and the tranquil lives of the characters are in the shadow of the imminent threat of war. Woolf started to draft the novel in 1938, shortly before the Second World War, and it was published posthumously in 1941.¹²

Between the Acts shifts between the past and the present, with the latter remaining pregnant with nostalgic overtones and allusions to the cultural, literary, and societal roots of the *Now*. Tradition is shown as the uniting force

¹⁰ See, e.g., Rachel Crossland, “‘Peace Was the Third Emotion’: Tripartite Balance in *Between the Acts*,” in *Virginia Woolf, Europe, and Peace*, vol. 2, *Aesthetics and Theory*, ed. Peter Adkins and Derek Ryan (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 161–74. For further information on Woolf’s attitude to fascism, see, e.g., Merry M. Pawlowski, “Reassessing Modernism: Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, and Fascist Ideology,” *Woolf Studies Annual* 1 (1995): 47–67.

¹¹ See, e.g., Karen Schneider, “Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and *Between the Acts*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 16, no. 1 (1989): 101.

¹² For an in-depth study of how the historical events preceding the Second World War are reflected in *Between the Acts*, see, e.g., Alex Zwerdling, “*Between the Acts* and the Coming of War,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 10, no. 3 (1977): 220–36.

that provides a sense of continuity and unbrokenness in the light of the ensuing violation of the wholesomeness and truthfulness of human existence. By showing the traditional staging of English history, the novel emphasizes the stability and dependability expected of a healthy communal life. Allusions to the English pastoral tradition and to conventional Romanticism¹³ in the novel's setting—the lushness of the countryside and the beauty of the grounds surrounding Pointz Hall—reveal Woolf's keen interest in fronting the value of rootedness in what is understood as constructing reliability and unity. The novel examines the exigency of oneness and the reinforcement of a system of authentic connections among individuals, but also the lack of genuineness and the danger of disunity, potently articulated through the repeated phrase “dispersed are we”¹⁴ as the performance in the novel comes to a failure.

Whereas—both literally and metaphorically—the process of gathering individuals to act in a play evokes the pursuit to experience both the strengths of collective agency and the inherent oneness and genuineness that ensue from tradition and its restoration, the fiasco of the play symbolizes an impasse in synchronizing many individual consciousnesses. The sense of dissonance is expressed by the state of physical diffusion, when the audience of the play disperses after an unsatisfactory ending, as well as by the characters' inner uncertainty and mental dissipation. Despite the efforts of the play's director, Miss La Trobe, to activate the hidden potential of the collective consciousness and unite the actors in the common enterprise, their breaking up indicates the impossibility of an orchestral synchronicity of consciousnesses. Dispersion also relates to the characters' private tensions and personality dysfunctions. Significantly, the view of Woolf's thematizing collective consciousness through the prism of class distinctions seems to be invalid: “An analysis based around class location giving rise to collective consciousness and privileged insight into history's movement is, however, rejected: the audience is flatly told that ‘The poor are as bad as the rich’ ... and La Trobe's amplified voice asks how the wall of civilization is to be rebuilt by the likes of those caught in the pageants mirrors.”¹⁵ Woolf's endeavor is to investigate a deeper sense of collectivity.

On the one hand, the historical performance in the novel indicates a possibility of consonance based on an appreciation and honoring of the past. On the other hand, though, it is rife with misunderstandings that result in an experience of dissipation rather than in one of togetherness and authenticity. The

¹³ See Schneider, “Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and *Between the Acts*”: 101.

¹⁴ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 62–63.

¹⁵ Ben Harker, “‘On Different Levels Ourselves Went Forward’: Pageantry, Class Politics and Narrative Form in Virginia Woolf's Late Writing,” *ELH* 78, no. 2 (2011): 448–49.

narrative is saturated with phrases that convey failed communication. The pageant participants forget words and lines or mishear what is being said: "Each declaimed some phrase or fragment from their parts.... I am not (said one) in my perfect mind."¹⁶ This metaphorically expresses the misunderstanding that envelops history as well as reveals the potential falseness and distortion of the past due to memory limitations, imperfections, and twists. The audience of the play is also not uniform in their expectations and interpretations of the performance: "The pageant—as perplexing and as little understood as life, something to be lived through and speculated upon, interpreted (though who knows the right interpretation?), riddled with unplanned for and irritating interruptions—recounts a kind of history. But it is a metaphor for existence."¹⁷ Drawing our attention to the characters' lack of agreeableness and to their inability to think and act out societal unity on a small scale, the narrative also points to a vaster problem with political underpinnings, since disunity is viewed as the cause of susceptibility to tyranny and totalitarianism.

The novel in its entirety, and more specifically the scenes of Miss La Trobe's directing of a performance, are permeated with a sense of fragmentation and provisionality. The three recurring words "orts, scraps, and fragments"¹⁸ more than any other in the narrative evoke a fragmented reality. Whatever is happening imprints a sensation of disintegration. Nothing is certain, and everything gives an impression of incompleteness, falsehood, and disillusionment: "That was only *scraps and fragments* [*italics mine*] to all of them, excluding perhaps William Dodge, whom she called 'Bill' publicly—a sign perhaps that he knew more than they did."¹⁹ The feeling of disappointment pervades the play, and the audience members' disjointed speeches amplify a lack of direction, the uncertainty of truth, and disintegrated existence: "The audience turned to one another and began to talk. Scraps and fragments reached Miss La Trobe where she stood, script in hand, behind the tree.... She crushed her manuscript. The actors delayed. Every moment the audience slipped the noose; split up into scraps and fragments."²⁰

Equally importantly, the actors perceive themselves as disparaged and lacking in unity: "Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how's this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilization, to be built by (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?... All you can see of yourselves is scraps, orts and

¹⁶ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 114–15.

¹⁷ Harriet Blodgett, "The Nature of *Between the Acts*," *Modern Language Studies* 13, no. 3 (1983): 27.

¹⁸ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 116.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 23.

²⁰ Ibidem, 75–76.

fragments?"²¹ The experience of fragmentation interweaves with an astute longing for unity and authenticity. Woolf's formulaic "mantra" of scraps and fragments induces an eerie sensation that the pageant participants are continually questioning their sense of temporary oneness: "Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united. And some relaxed their fingers; and others uncrossed their legs. Was that voice ourselves? Scraps, orts and fragments, are we, also, that? The voice died away."²² Exploring the dichotomy of unity and disunity, this and other passages invite the readers to (re)consider the necessity of trust and authentic being-with, as well as the inevitability of falling apart if individuals do not follow the principle of authenticity in communal life. Furthermore, Woolf seems to suggest that disparity inheres in the apparent oneness and in our human striving for it.

Woolf's phenomenology of unity/disunity encourages us to reflect upon the importance of temporality in her modernist aesthetics and to examine how her evocations of the fragmentariness of time are magnified by the narrative's continuous insistence on the significance of the *Now*. The present moment takes on the highest importance in revealing the crux of human existence lived in the shadow of death. Renée Watkins reminds us that Woolf uses the term "dispersal" in her diary of the period when she was writing this novel to stand for physical death.²³ Written shortly before the Second World War and suggestive of the forthcoming military conflict, *Between the Acts* is suffused with a sensation of a momentous, historical time—the *kairological* time. The novel's characters are poignantly conscious of the significance of the passage of time and the instantaneous possibility of death. Not mentioned directly, war casts its shadow on everything that happens in the story. Anticipating war and its calamities,²⁴ the narrative reveals that the intensified awareness of time, which manifests something crucial about a human being's participation in the absoluteness of time, can contain murky undercurrents. The thought of the immanence of something cataclysmic cuts through the flow of time and affects human Dasein.

The subtly present theme of mortality in *Between the Acts*, which expresses the author's anticipation of the impending loss, draws our attention to the historical moment when human annihilation not only belongs to the recent past, but is to be followed by another. The momentous time of the novel's creation can be described in the following way: "Woolf thus wrote *Between the*

²¹ Ibidem, 116.

²² Ibidem, 117.

²³ See Renée Watkins, "Survival in Discontinuity: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*," *The Massachusetts Review* 10, no. 2 (1969): 367.

²⁴ See, e.g., Schneider, "Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and *Between the Acts*": 101.

Acts while torn between two increasingly irreconcilable forces: her impassioned and forceful commitment to a personal and artistic stance against tyranny as manifested in England's own patriarchal culture, and the encroaching apocalyptic demise of that culture by a fundamentally similar but far greater tyranny from abroad."²⁵ Woolf juxtaposes the immanence of the war and its disquiet with the longing for the steadiness and certainty of a life immersed in tradition. Providing the basis for an exploration of human consciousness, the amateurish performance in the novel shows how the apprehension of social and national instability and the menace of death impact the reliability of communal life to the highest degree.

Woolf's examination of collective consciousness accords with Émile Durkheim's line of thinking and his use of the term to explain how we, as unique individuals, are bound together into social groups and societies, and how we think in common, given our shared culture.²⁶ Brought together in the annual performance, the several human consciousnesses are aligned in an experience of something unprecedented. However, Woolf also goes beyond this kind of interconnection between sociality and collectivity, beyond the concept of "the shared mind." In an entry in her diary made when she was twenty one, we can read about her idea of the unity of minds across time and cultures that she would be exploring throughout her literary career: "Our minds are all threaded together.... Any live mind today is of the very same stuff as Plato's & Euripides. It is only a continuation & development of the same thing. It is this common mind that binds the whole world together; & all the world is mind."²⁷

The idea of collective consciousness takes on a special tone and represents a specific modality in Woolf's reflection. Time and space feature as central categories in her understanding of consciousness. To her, human thought mysteriously branches from some center and our minds are connected across time.²⁸ Directing our thoughts to the time factor in relation to collective consciousness in *Between the Acts*, Woolf draws our attention to yet another aspect. At some point, while the performance is in progress, the stage is left empty, everything is suspended, and the utter significance of the present time is powerfully felt. This sudden and unexpected pause heightens the sense of living through *Kairos*.²⁹ *The now* that is pregnant with meaning and partakes

²⁵ Ibidem: 94.

²⁶ For a perceptive and concise explication of Durkheim's investigation of sociality and collectivity, see, e.g., Guy van de Walle, "Durkheim and Socialization," *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes* 14, no. 1 (2008): 35–58.

²⁷ Virginia Woolf, *A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals: 1897–1909*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Hogarth Press, 1990), 178–79.

²⁸ See ibidem.

²⁹ *Kairos* is "a time when conditions are right for the accomplishment of a crucial action: the opportune and decisive moment," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "kairos," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kairos>.

of the dialectic of the individual and the collective, is *the now* that joins the performers together in an unspeakable silence suffused with a sense of something genuine and inevitable. The unsayable is felt rather than heard. Here and now, the overwhelming thought about the precariousness of life becomes central and immanent. The collective voice emerges in the visionary moment—the Heideggerian *Augenblick*.³⁰

Crucially, the linear flow of time in *Between the Acts* is transcended; the ritual of the performance repeated each year suggests the cycle of time.³¹ Recalling the past serves the purpose of establishing something important about the future. However, the continuous danger of destruction in the wake of the forthcoming war shatters the possibility of a coherent vision of human existence, together with the belief in the veracity of progress and one unified worldview. The imagery of the sky's "fierceness" betokens the forthcoming terror: "Did he hear some distant music?... The word was cut in two. A zoom severed it. Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead. That was the music. The audience gaped; the audience gazed. Then zoom became drone. The planes had passed."³² *Between the Acts* sensitizes us to the provisional and temporal nature of human existence. As Almas Khan argues: "The contingent nature of life is encapsulated in the novel's fragmentary language, and through addressing multiple genres simultaneously, the text probes the past in an attempt to comprehend a terrifying present, and to prognosticate about humanity's capacity to endure in an uncertain future."³³ The lexical fragmentariness and the mixing of genres produce a disruptive and impressionistic narrative. Such characteristics help express the lack of

³⁰ In *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes: "Dasein has brought itself back from falling, and has done so precisely in order to be more authentically 'there' in the 'moment of vision' as regards the Situation which has been disclosed." Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 376. For an explication of Heidegger's notion of *Augenblick*, see, e.g., Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (New York: SUNY Press, 2001). As King elucidates: "The authentic present is called by Heidegger 'Augenblick,' which is ordinarily translated by 'moment' or 'instant'.... Augenblick means 'the glance of the eye,' which instantly discloses here being's situation; it is an active 'ecstasis,'.... The authentic present may be called an 'instant attending to ...' or, briefly, an instant." Ibidem: 233.

³¹ Woolf's enactment of the backward-and-forward movement accords with Gadamer's phenomenology of play, through which he explicates what happens in an aesthetic encounter. For more on the affinities between Woolf's keen interest in the back-and-forth paradigm and Gadamer's phenomenology of aesthetic encounter as predicated on the backward-and-forward movement, see, e.g., Małgorzata Hołda, *On Beauty and Being: Hans-Georg Gadamer's and Virginia Woolf's Hermeneutics of the Beautiful* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 125–204.

³² Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 193.

³³ Almas Khan, "Between the Acts: A Modernist Meditation on Language, Origin Narratives, and Art's Efficacy on the Cusp of the Apocalypse," *English Academy Review* 31, no. 2 (2014): 108.

existential certainty, undermine the univocity of truth, and indirectly pinpoint the ethical dilemma the experience of the void entails.

Between the Acts, like Woolf's highly experimental novel *The Waves*³⁴ (1931), investigates the workings of human consciousness, focusing on its composite rather than individualistic dimension. Woolf advocates for a compound, instead of completely autonomous,³⁵ selfhood by interrogating the dissolution of the barriers between separate selves and their co-belongingness.³⁶ Significantly, the form of amalgamated consciousness she espouses is one way of proclaiming and defending an anti-authoritarian, anti-oppressive approach to individuated humans, social groups, and nations. The performance embedded in the narrative, which brings together people of various social classes, ages, and talents, expresses a deeply ingrained sense of collectivity that extends beyond the specificity of human interests. It is the unheard, unspoken voice of the common, in which the unifying elements constitute the very being of human beings—the mysterious oneness reverberates in the heterogeneity of human experiences. Woolf's view of collectivity resonates here with Spinozian thought. According to Spinoza, humans conatively seek to become one mind and one body.³⁷

It is commonly held that Woolf moves from the private to the common sphere of life in *Between the Acts*. However, this standpoint can be challenged by a more nuanced observation that acknowledges the complex, yet subtle configuration of the individual and the collective in the novel: "While attempting to define the collective components of the communal or national identity that

³⁴ See Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Elsa Högberg draws our attention to the interconnections between the rendition of human individual and collective consciousness in *Between the Acts*, the imagery of the sea waves in *The Waves* and the implications of rhythm in the context of the novelist's pacifist thinking expressed in *Three Guineas*. She argues that *The Waves* raises one of the most perplexing questions of how to "distinguish between the unanimity enabling violent action and the unity, the overflow of boundaries, which, according to *Three Guineas*, makes non-violent relations possible." Elsa Högberg, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 171.

³⁵ See, e.g., Högberg, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*, 169–72. Analyzing Woolf's attempt at representing the composite nature of human subjectivity and the significance of the relationship between selfhood and violence, Högberg contends: "In *The Waves*, the dynamic in which group thinking absorbs individual thinking is imagined in terms of rhythm and movement.... The rhythms of aggression, violence, and self-contained subjectivity—the turning of the wheel and the flow of the torrent are countered and disrupted in the novel by another: the movement of waves rising and breaking." Ibidem, 169–70.

³⁶ As mentioned earlier, Woolf's idea of consciousness as detached from individual characters is also present in her other major novels. However, it is her later novels: *The Waves* and *Between the Acts*, that forefront group consciousness in its relationship to communal life.

³⁷ For a comprehensive study of Spinoza's understanding of collectivity, see, e.g., Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

she depicts, Woolf keeps using the figurative language and narrative patterns that pertain to the private perspective. *Between the Acts* exposes the extent to which—even in one of the most political moments in her career—Woolf can imagine and perceive collectivity only in terms of the subjective mind.”³⁸ This, at face value, rather surprising definition of collectivity, perceived in terms of a subjective mind, brings us to the very core of Woolf’s understanding of collective consciousness. She does not treat collectivity as an artificial univocity but, much more profoundly, views it as the possibility of the coexistence and creative amalgamation of individuated voices. Significantly, the individual, separate selves are not shown as subsumed, and the dissolving barriers between them do not result in subordination.

Woolf’s portrayal of the small community of the villagers as representing a larger community of the English nation offers insights into her pacifist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-totalitarian ideals she upholds as the only viable possibility of understanding collectivity.³⁹ Interestingly, as Galia Benziman observes, “Woolf treats her English community as a subject in possession of a body as well.”⁴⁰ Woolf’s portrayal of the community in terms of the subject possessing its own body provides space for a more thoughtful apprehension of how the community works: “This subject’s struggle to construct its own identity is metaphorically depicted as a psychological process performed within an individual consciousness that perceives itself by looking at its own body.”⁴¹ The working of the community as a unified body highlights human beings’ fundamental need for an existence understood as *being-with* rather than *being-apart*. Does the novel invite us to interrogate more deeply the meaning of *being-with*?

While the pageant participants seek oneness and continually stumble against the impossibility of achieving it, the Rev. G. W. Streatfield, the charac-

³⁸ Galia Benziman, “‘Dispersed Are We’: Mirroring and National Identity in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 36, no. 1 (2006): 54.

³⁹ Woolf’s veiled critique of totalitarianism in *Between the Acts* takes on a more overt form in her essay *Three Guineas* (1938), where she focuses on the personal level of human life rather than on the societal and political ones. Reflecting on the male dominance of the public sphere, she points to women’s inaudibility and views the silencing of women as the plight of society, resulting in the rise of various forms of totalitarian regimes. Gender inequality, the uneven distribution of power between males and females, is the first and foremost source of militarism and totalitarianism. It is the exclusion of women from education and participation in other forms of social life, as well as their financial dependence on men that ultimately has disastrous effects. She blames the male politics of dominance for the lack of dignity and balance and the threat of militarism and totalitarianism and sees the patriarchal structures of society as the cause of social disquiet and the obstacle to peace on the international level.

⁴⁰ Benziman, “‘Dispersed Are We’: Mirroring and National Identity in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*”: 54.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

ter to whom the role of the community's spokesperson is ascribed, expresses the exigency of unity but also the ambivalence that envelops the possibility of attaining it:

"Dare we, I asked myself, limit life to ourselves? May we not hold that there is a spirit that inspires, pervades..." (the swallows were sweeping round him. They seemed cognizant of his meaning. Then they swept out of sight.) "I leave that to you. I am not here to explain. That role has not been assigned me. I speak only as one of the audience, one of ourselves. I caught myself too reflected, as it happened in my own mirror..." (Laughter) "Scraps, orts and fragments! Surely, we should unite?"⁴²

The minister pinpoints to the goal of the pageant; it is to show that the villagers are a whole, and it is believed that they truly remain in oneness:

He continued: "Speaking merely as one of the audience, I confess I was puzzled. For what reason, I asked, were we shown these scenes? Briefly, it is true.... A few were chosen; the many passed in the background. That surely we were shown. But again, were we not given to understand—am I too presumptuous? Am I treading, like angels, where as a fool I should absent myself? To me at least it was indicated that *we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole* [italics mine]. Yes, that occurred to me, sitting among you in the audience."⁴³

The artistic performance assumes a religious character, with the audience becoming reminiscent of a church congregation. This is one of the instances of Woolf's embodying her belief that modern societies reach out for art to play the role classically expected of religion.⁴⁴

The actors and audience recognize themselves as longing for and, at the same time, unable to form a genuinely balanced community which is aware of its goals. They seem to be easily persuaded into thinking that oneness is possible. However, the feeling of discordance and disunity—"orts, scraps, and fragments"—infuses the social gathering, which leaves the reader with an open query about the workings of collective consciousness and the possibility of oneness: "'Did you feel,' she asked 'what he said: we act different parts but are the same?'" 'Yes,' Isa answered. 'No,' she added. It was Yes, No. Yes,

⁴² Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 119.

⁴³ Ibidem, 118–19.

⁴⁴ For an exploration of the topic of the intersecting paths of Woolf's secular mysticism and art, see, e.g., Christopher J. Knight, "'The God of Love Is Full of Tricks': Virginia Woolf's Vexed Relation to the Tradition of Christianity," *Religion & Literature* 39, no. 1 (2007): 27–46; Mark Gipa, "An Agnostic's Daughter's Apology: Materialism, Spiritualism, and Ancestry in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 26, no. 2 (2003): 1–41; *Religion, Secularism, and the Spiritual Paths of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Kristina K. Groover (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG and Palgrave MacMillan, 2019).

yes, yes, the tide rushed out embracing. No, no no, it contracted. The old boot appeared on the shingle. ‘Orts, scraps and fragments,’ she quoted what she remembered of the vanishing play.”⁴⁵ The pageant represents the ever-escaping reality of human existence, which is stranded between finitude and infinity, and the impasse of sticking to one and only true worldview.

AUTHENTICITY AND THE QUANDARY OF COMMUNAL LIFE

Exploring the hermeneutic in-between in human acting, *Between the Acts* features individuals who oscillate between sympathy and suspicion as to the possible success of their artistic enterprise. However, a desire for being-with rather than being-apart prevails—the longing for being part of a whole, for belonging to a reality greater than one’s individual being and acting together wins over even if a sense of belonging does not prevent precariousness and destruction. The search for wholeness in *Between the Acts* is shown as invaluable. This is aptly expressed by David Wanczyk, who notices that Woolf’s characters are both “individual fragments and electrically united to one another.”⁴⁶ He supports this view with a reference to Woolf’s diaristic writing and notices that “In a diary entry from the time of the novel’s composition, Woolf encapsulated this idea of frayed unity, writing that we are ‘all waifs & strays—a rambling capricious but somehow united whole.’”⁴⁷ The pervasive sense of fragmentariness leaves an impression of no center and no truth to which the characters might hold.

Many critics have examined the problem of unity and the relationship between an individual and collective consciousness in *Between the Acts*.⁴⁸ However, as Gyllian Phillips argues: “The less explored are the mechanisms by which the ‘I’ expands into the ‘we.’”⁴⁹ This is precisely the area of collective consciousness that Woolf investigates in this novel. Phillips contends that there is a similarity between Woolf’s drawing the audience “from the limbo of suspended Being (or non-being in Woolf’s terms)”⁵⁰ and her showing that they

⁴⁵ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 133.

⁴⁶ David Wanczyk, “‘So They Fidgeted’: The Modernist Twitch of *Between the Acts*,” *Woolf Studies Annual* 17 (2011): 108.

⁴⁷ Ibidem. See also *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, 1936–1941, eds. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Harvest, 1984), 135.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Yaxiao Cui, “Adjacency Pairs and Interactive Consciousness in Virginia Woolf’s Novels,” *Style* 50, no. 2 (2016): 203–22; Gyllian Phillips, “‘Vociferating through the Megaphone’: Theatre, Consciousness, and the Voice from the Bushes in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 40, no. 3 (2017): 35–51.

⁴⁹ Phillips, “‘Vociferating through the Megaphone’”: 37.

⁵⁰ Ibidem: 38.

are called into “an understanding with the world, into a relationship of care”⁵¹ and Heidegger’s philosophy of *thrownness*.⁵² As Phillips accentuates: “Dramatic performance, literature set in motion, is a call to the isolated individual; it is a deliberate attempt to startle that Being’s understanding of the world.”⁵³ The *new* understanding that follows is an understanding that involves care. In the Heideggerian terminology, it is the notion of being the shepherd of Being: “Only when the human being, as the shepherd of Being, waits upon the truth of Being, can he at all expect the arrival of another fate for Being, without being caught up in the mere wish to know.”⁵⁴ The expansion into the “we” is thus an expansion that involves shepherding—caring for what is. This shepherding is an existential call for authentic being with others.

Woolf’s understanding of existentiality and authenticity resonates with Heidegger’s philosophy of facticity, which discloses the significance of being-with as the genuine being. Heidegger’s thought in this respect can be potently presented in his own words: “By reasons of this *with-like* [*mithaften*] being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of [human existence] is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*].”⁵⁵ Woolf’s hermeneutic thinking, which manifests itself in acknowledging the mysterious suggestiveness of the patterns of Being—our relational being is part of the structure of Being—retains an affinity with Heidegger’s recognition of the primary interrelatedness of individuation and sociality: “Even Dasein’s Being-alone is Being-with in the world.”⁵⁶ Heidegger deepens his thought regarding being-with by adding a reflection on authenticity, which is a recurrent idea in his *Being and Time*: “On no account, however, do the terms ‘inauthentic’ and ‘non-authentic’ signify ‘not really,’ as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. ‘Inauthenticity’ does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to a quite distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world-the kind which is completely fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the Dasein with of Others in the ‘they.’”⁵⁷ Heidegger’s intricate understanding of authenticity and inauthenticity stems from his revitalization of the ancient Greek word for truth (*Aletheia*). The continuous interplay of concealment and unconcealment of truth, which *Aletheia* connotes, stands at the center of Heidegger’s ontological hermeneutics.

⁵¹ Ibidem: 37.

⁵² A comprehensive analysis of the intersections between Woolf’s oeuvre and Heidegger’s philosophical hermeneutics is offered by Emma Simone. See Emma S i m o n e, *Virginia Woolf and Being-in-the-world: A Heideggerian Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

⁵³ P h i l l i p s, “Vociferating through the Megaphone”: 37.

⁵⁴ Martin H e i d e g g e r, “Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge,” in Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79, ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 72.

⁵⁵ H e i d e g g e r, *Being and Time*, 118.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, 156–57.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, 220.

The authentic being is not a static entity, rather, it ensues from the dynamic of the veiling and unveiling (*Verbergung/Entbergung*)⁵⁸ of truth. We partake of the revelation of truth rather than master or control it: "It is not we who presuppose the unconcealment of beings, rather the unconcealment of beings determines us in such an essential way that we are always placed after unconcealment in our conceptions."⁵⁹ Woolf's ontologically underwritten way of addressing the issue of authenticity/inauthenticity in *Between the Acts*, which concords with Heidegger's understanding of truth as shining forth in the interplay of concealment and unconcealment, sensitizes us to see the impossibility of controlling or bending truth to our will, of overpowering it. By exposing and simultaneously questioning the verity of the universality of truth via the enactment of a historical truth (in a play), she brings to the mind the ever-elusive nature of truth. More importantly, though, she points to truth as the event of disclosure, in which the true shines forth in the back-and-forth movement of the hidden and the unconcealed, in the language (of the performance) that both presents and misrepresents.

Throughout the novel, Woolf is concerned with the flux of various forms of social conduct. She depicts the multivalence of the possibilities of human strife for unity, its unpredictability, orchestrated responses, and the rather postponed sense of finality:

Like quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united. The tune began; the first note meant a second; the second a third. Then down beneath a force was borne in opposition; then another. On different levels they diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted. The whole population of the mind's immeasurable profundity came flocking; from the unprotected, the unskinned; and dawn rose; and azure; from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface sound alone controlled it; but also the warring battle-plumed warriors straining asunder: *To part? No*. Compelled from the ends of the horizon; recalled from the edge of appalling crevasses; they crashed; solved; united.⁶⁰

The yearning for unity as embodied by Woolf can be defined as the possibility for change and some important capacity for flexibility, since the final union does not materialize. Woolf identifies communion as becoming rather than being. This state of becoming allows for a multivalence of meaning and possibilities for unified forms of sociality and national identity. The sense of oneness and transgression of the limitedness of one's life is succinctly articu-

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 41.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 169–70.

lated in *Between the Acts* by Mrs. Swithin: “‘But we have other lives, I think, I hope,’ she murmured. ‘We live in others.’”⁶¹ The dispersed performers are symbolically reunited when the stage is smitten with the outpour of rain, which echoes a similar, unifying effect of the snow covering the whole of Ireland at the end of James Joyce’s story *The Dead*.⁶²

Woolf, who lived through the First and Second World Wars, recognized how societal unity and solidarity might prevent war. The novelist seems to imply that authenticity, togetherness, and solidarity, even if they do not arise as active and forceful, are the prerequisite for a collective struggle against military conflict. Woolf’s acknowledgement of this minimal requirement for a communal pacifist activity in reference to *Between the Acts* can be put thus: “There is, on one level, the sense of dire fragmentation covered by rhetorical lies and a too transparent veil of ‘tradition.’ There is also a real clinging together. The village lacks any shared body of deep beliefs, but does share an emotional response to this lack.”⁶³ Even an awareness of the lack of consonances can trigger more engaged thinking about the need for sharing and effectuate a seminal change in the long run.

Significantly, the imagery of unity coincides in the novel with that of disruption and fragmentation. And, thus, the dichotomy of oneness and disintegration is more complex than it seems to be at first sight. As Evelyn T. Chan emphasizes, unity in *Between the Acts* can be viewed as paradoxically originating from fragmentation: “Unity is often presented alongside, or even created out of, fragmentation in the novel. The literary allusions throughout, although they crop up seemingly randomly, assume a shared literary history and tradition. Pieces of language and sound are constantly recycled and repeated in different contexts. Snatches of tunes and nursery rhymes create a sense of affinity, resulting in “[m]uscles loosened; ice cracked.”⁶⁴ The reiterative way of presenting literary allusions and “scraps” of history contributes to the overall impression that tradition is ever present. Tradition is not that much about preserving what has been, but more about transferring the past to the present.⁶⁵ Transmitting is about this specific kind of movement wherein the past

⁶¹ Ibidem, 64.

⁶² See James Joyce, *The Dead* (Claremont: Coyote Canyon Press, 2008). In *The Dead*, the falling of the snow effectuates the sensation that people of different social rank are united by the phenomenon that is outside of their control. See ibidem, 70.

⁶³ Watkins, “Survival in Discontinuity: Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*”: 359.

⁶⁴ Evelyn T. Chan, “A Balancing Act: Specialization in *Between the Acts*,” *Woolf Studies Annual* 18 (2012): 29.

⁶⁵ I draw here on Hans-Georg Gadamer’s understanding of tradition developed in *Truth and Method*. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 281–82. His notion of tradition is based on the German word *Überlieferung*, which connotes transmission and movement. See also, e.g., Chris Lawn and

meets the present, informs it, and grants it a new light. And thus, the historical pageant becomes the locus of the intimate conversation between the past and the present. By acting out historical events and expressing sentiments, the characters belong to the vastness of tradition, with its wisdom and follies, its glory and failure.

Although the whole novel is filled with both images of division and the human struggle for unity, there are two elements that more prominently illustrate Woolf's way of evoking the unity/separateness dichotomy. She uses a gramophone and a mirror to convey the duality of the human condition. First, the gramophone, in its subverted form, plays a similar role to that of the chorus in ancient Greek plays. Its repeated discordant wailing, "dispersed are we," heightens the pervasive sensation of unity's irreversible demise. Moreover, the gramophone is a symbolic object used to obscure reality and to execute authority. The audience must make an effort to interpret what is heard and to unravel the truth as the sound is unclear. As Michele Pridmore-Brown points out, Woolf intuitively understands the role of noise used in information technology and is aware of the dangers posed by those who preach authoritarian politics via technology.⁶⁶ Second, when the play comes towards its ending, Woolf uses a mirror as an object that metaphorically represents dispersion. When Miss La Trobe puts mirrors in front of the audience, they focus the characters' attention on themselves, as well as symbolically attest to the power of collective consciousness, only to show later the powerlessness of humans when they get dispersed. Witnessing the characters' diaspora, the mirrors magnify the impact of dispersal: "The looking glasses darted, flashed, exposed.... All evaded or shaded themselves."⁶⁷ For a moment, the stunned performers see the reflection of their "togetherness" in a mirror. Unity is still lingering and ruptured only by a sudden dissipation. The mirrors do not just disclose the truth but indicate the deep sense of the violation of unity on the societal level. The uniform reaction that follows—the collective outcry—signifies regret and a wish to reunite.

The narrative features scattering and assembling not only as co-existent but in their ongoing interplay—one seems to propel the other in a circular manner: "The phrase '[d]ispersed are we' ... played continuously in the intervals and at the end of the pageant, thematically signifies fragmentation, but formally creates the backbone of the pageant. The book seems to suggest the two are different sides of the same coin: after dispersal there can be assembly again, and after assembly, dispersal, which the structure of the pageant, with its

Niall K e a n e, *The Gadamer Dictionary*, s.v. "Transformation into Structure" (New York: Continuum, 2011), 140–42.

⁶⁶ See Michele Pridmore-Brown, "1939–40: Of Virginia Woolf, Gramophones, and Fascism," *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 113, no. 3 (1998): 408.

⁶⁷ W o o l f, *Between the Acts*, 125–26.

many intervals, enacts.”⁶⁸ The continued circle of destruction and construction depicts the communal longing for (be)longing and the opposite drive of retaining individuality. The two sentiments intermingle with and feed one another. Humans are continually and intrinsically enthralled by both autonomy and connection, individuality and community.⁶⁹ Woolf explores the notion of dispersal in its interconnection with collective consciousness by drawing our attention to its more nuanced meanings. Dispersion that is expressive of disunity can be understood as one possible way of being-with. She notices the more subtle form of dissipation when togetherness does not equate to a congregation of like-minded people; when being together is a task that is more demanding than the avoidance of apparent divisions: “People disperse, not only by separating but also by the way they are together.”⁷⁰ Therefore, one can say that Woolf transcends the facile view of community life and touches the elusive sphere of the in-between.

Woolf’s characters neither are enthusiastic about the easy forms of communication nor avoid them on grounds of the impossibility of effective exchange of ideas and transmission of what is vital: “The image is not of vice or violence, but of the condition of people who are neither in or out of communication, neither in or out of mutuality.”⁷¹ In *Between the Acts*, Woolf expresses her deep awareness that, in the face of the forthcoming war, societies are losing their sheltered worldviews and unambiguous truths. The threat of non-existence and the precariousness of daily life permeate human minds; certitudes seem to fade away and lose their vitality, verity, and relevance. The portrait of the communal life she sketches reminds us of the scattered elements of a puzzle game where each small part is disbanded and “waiting” to be put together. It is worth noting that the theme of dispersal takes on further significance when we look at the performance in the novel as an artistic event whose meaning is inherently plural and multi-perspectival. Reflecting on the Dionysian philosophy in *Between the Acts*, Katarzyna Sokołowska draws our attention to the cancellation of “the metaphysical dichotomy of surface and a hidden foundation of being,”⁷² and claims that the pageant “celebrates the dispersal of meaning, defies any attempt to recover its ultimate sense and refuses to be merely a faithful image

⁶⁸ Chan, “A Balancing Act: Specialization in *Between the Acts*,” 29.

⁶⁹ This dual attraction has been potently expressed by Thomas Merton, who writes: “Every other human is a piece of myself, for I am a part and a member of humankind.... What I do is also done for them and with them and by them. What they do is done in me and by me and for me.” Thomas Merton, *No Man Is an Island* (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1967), 16–17.

⁷⁰ Watkins, “Survival in Discontinuity: Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” 367.

⁷¹ Ibidem, 368.

⁷² Katarzyna Sokołowska, “The Dionysian in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” in *Visions and Revisions: Studies in Literature and Culture*, eds. Grzegorz Czemieli, Justyna Galant, Anna Kędra-Kardela, Aleksandra Kędzierska, and Marta Komsta (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2015), 145.

of the dilemmas which threaten to throw the society into turmoil at the time of the impending war.”⁷³ The hermeneutic uncertainty evoked by Woolf awakens us to the fundamentals of the phenomenon of dispersion—its genesis is the dispersal of “meaning” as it relates to our linguistic being-in-the-world.⁷⁴

Between the Acts cogently invokes the ethics of community life as an individual’s “participation with and responsibility towards the larger whole.”⁷⁵ Ashley Forster notices the connection between Quaker spirituality and the kind of pacifism Woolf represents: “A Quaker theoretical frame, is, then, one that roots politics in deep spirituality, an immanent spirituality of living light and goodness that demands an ethics of respect for the individual while realizing humanity’s existential unity and interrelatedness.”⁷⁶ Woolf’s pacifist outlook and its quasi-religious foundations seem to have influenced her view of the necessity of collectivity and constructive interpersonal relationships in a society context. The novelist recognizes the universal pattern of existential unity, which expresses the deeply rooted need for a *bona fide* connectivity. This is the sense of connection that does not disavow autonomy but rather seeks a reconciliation of the individual and the communal.

Woolf appears to treat the pageant as a modern, but embedded in tradition, form of a quasi-religious community, implying that art, like religion, has the power to bring people together. The text of the novel reveals the author’s penchant for replacing the role played by religion with that of art. This is noticeable in her choice of lexical items. For instance, the place where the performance is about to be given is called: “A church without a roof ... an open-air cathedral.”⁷⁷ In Woolf’s book, the material and the spiritual not only coexist but also successfully nurture one another. Her political views of non-aggression, expressed explicitly in *Three Guineas*, take the form of a fervent advocating for the creation of “a new spiritual communion which will recover primitive Christian values.”⁷⁸ In *Between the Acts*, the mystical and the symbolic seem to be on par with reason’s enlightening power. As Herbert Marder notices,

⁷³ Ibidem.

⁷⁴ The hermeneutic uncertainty in *Between the Acts* and Woolf’s other major novels can also be understood as relating to ungended consciousness, and this, in turn, may direct our thoughts to her subtler way of understanding impersonality—T.S. Eliot’s famous notion, coined in relation to authorial consciousness. See, e.g., Paolo Bugliani, “‘Facing the Monolith’: Virginia Woolf, Modernism and Impersonality,” *e-Rea*, no. 15.2 (2018), *e-Rea: Revue électronique d’études sur le monde anglophone*, <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/6232>.

⁷⁵ J. Ashley Foster, “Writing in the ‘White Light of Truth’: History, Ethics, and Community in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*,” *Woolf Studies Annual* 22 (2016): 52.

⁷⁶ Ibidem: 52.

⁷⁷ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 45.

⁷⁸ Herbert Marder, “Virginia Woolf’s ‘Conversion’: *Three Guineas*, *Pointz Hall* and *Between the Acts*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 14, no. 4 (1988): 470.

the spiritual and the natural appear as inseparable and equally prominent in Woolf's fictional world: "Lamp represents spiritual-intellectual powers that guide the devotions of the saint and the artist, a mystical center where 'the whole emerges ... all its parts now visible ... and death disappears; and the moment is forever.'"⁷⁹

The affinity between the communal aspect of the pageant and that of a religious congregation is of no small significance for another reason. The image of the religious gathering implies the continuity of tradition. *Between the Acts*, like Woolf's other modernist narratives, discloses her attempt to unleash the imagination in the search of the new, which is, at the same time, haunted by the inevitability of retaining the conventional:

With the slow, excruciatingly evident return of the war over the course of the 1930s, repetition rather than surprise becomes newly significant in the aesthetic landscape. Writing composed before and during the Second World War in a condition of further disenchantment ("1914 but even without the illusion of 1914") falls often under the sign of the clichéd and already corrupted.⁸⁰

Tradition and repetition feature as central themes in the novel.⁸¹ However, the positivity and univocity of tradition is continually counterbalanced with misunderstanding, distortion of truth, disagreement, and ignorance, which causes one to not feel to the fullest the flow of consciousness as rooted in the richness of tradition. Rather, what remains is the lack of some focal point to which everyone could adhere. The discordant state of English society is not just a potential source of the war but stands as an open hermeneutic query—a dilemma in constant need to be resolved: "What she saw he didn't; what he saw she didn't—and so on, ad infinitum."⁸²

*

The momentous time of global calamities, wars, pandemics, and social uprisings is a period of acutely felt insecurity that calls for a rethinking of the

⁷⁹ Ibidem, 471. See also Virginia Woolf, *Pointz Hall: The Earlier and Later Typescripts of "Between the Acts"*, ed. Mitchell A. Leaska (New York: University Publications, 1983).

⁸⁰ John Whittier-Ferguson, "Repetition, Remembering, Repetition: Virginia Woolf's Late Fiction and the Return of War," *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 2 (2011): 234.

⁸¹ For a rich study of Woolf's unflagging search for the new in the novelistic form see, e.g. Meg Jensen, "Tradition and Revelation: Moments of Being in Virginia Woolf's Major Novels," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 112–25.

⁸² Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 26.

relevance of community, solidarity, and rootedness in tradition. It is a time when the exigency of collective consciousness oriented towards values that can ensure authenticity, stability, and fruitful being-with is felt more severely. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf interrogates the frightful discordance of human actions as well as misunderstandings whose apparent innocence causes social plight. Thematizing an external diaspora, the novelist searches for its roots in the inner dispersion of individuals. Focusing on consciousness that is not restricted to separate individuals, *Between the Acts* explores the grounds for societal unity and the consequences of its violation.

Woolf evokes the state of society when things fall apart, and untruth and nothingness seem to hold their grip on individuals. Proposing a phenomenology of dispersion, she sensitizes us to human brokenness, frailty, and fallenness, whose impact is not limited to individuals, but far more importantly, extends itself to societies and nations. The dominant aura in the novel is one of tremendous tension reflecting the inter-war time. The seemingly idyllic past gets disrupted by deep anxiety caused by the prospect of conflict and the destabilization of the British Empire. The war that forces historical transformations shows that the collective well-being of society should take precedence over individual liberties, which are likely to lead to tyranny and totalitarianism. Woolf does not endorse naïve uniformity but seeks ways of cultivating oneness within diversity. Growing apart and falling apart from a sense of an authentic and unitary existence is what Woolf sees as a threat when consciousness is trapped inside the confines of the particularity of interests, but also when dualistic reasoning prevails and precludes an embracement of the distinctive kind of unity that lets go of false barriers for the sake of the well-being of communities and societies. Exclusionary thinking, inauthenticity of being-with and dispersal go side by side with the uncertainty of truth.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Małgorzata HOLDA, The (In)authenticity of Being-with: Virginia Woolf and Collective Consciousness

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The body of Virginia Woolf’s work is marked by a shifting interest from the nature of individual to collective consciousness. Her most preeminent novels, *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, are mostly exemplars of the former, while *The Waves* and *Between the Acts* demonstrate a progressively deepening inquiry into the significance of collectivity. A deep dive into the dichotomies between unity and disunity, *Between the Acts* explores the intricate texture of collective consciousness. Simultaneously, Woolf encourages us to view authenticity and inauthenticity of being-with as an interweaving profoundly expressive of our human condition. At the core of the binary oppositions the novelist evokes, such as togetherness and separateness, genuineness and falsehood, stands the question of human Dasein. Proposing a hermeneutic-phenomenological investigation of the dialectic of the individual and the collective in *Between the Acts*, I draw on the affinities between Virginia Woolf’s philosophy of existentiality and Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity, and more specifically on his understanding of truth as *Aletheia*. While doing so, I focus on the interlocking nature of social (outer) and personal (inner) meanings of dispersion, encapsulated in Woolf’s laconic but potent statement in the novel: “Dispersed are we.”

Keywords: authenticity, collectivity, consciousness, Martin Heidegger, Virginia Woolf

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Małgorzata HOŁDA, (Nie)autentyczność Bycia-z. Virginia Woolf i świadomość zbiorowa

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Twórczość Virginii Woolf charakteryzuje się przesuwaniem akcentu w zainteresowaniach powieściopisarki ze świadomości indywidualnej w kierunku świadomości zbiorowej. Najwybitniejsze powieści Woolf, *Do latarni morskiej* i *Pani Dalloway*, są przykładami jej koncentracji przede wszystkim na świadomości indywidualnej, podczas gdy późniejsze powieści pisarki, *Fale* i *Między aktami*, ukazują stopniowo pogłębiającą się eksplorację znaczenia świadomości zbiorowej. W *Między aktami*, wnikając w dychotomię jedności i wyobcowania, Woolf poddaje refleksji skomplikowaną naturę świadomości zbiorowej. Jednocześnie powieściopisarka zachęca do postrzegania autentyczności i nieautentyczności bycia-z w ich wzajemnym przenikaniu się, które głęboko wyraża kondycję ludzką. Ontologiczne pytanie o Dasein znajduje się w centrum binarnych opozycji przywoływanych przez Woolf, takich jak wspólnota i odrębność, autentyczność i nieautentyczność, prawda i fałsz. Proponując w artykule hermeneutyczno-fenomenologiczne studium dialektyki jednostkowości i zbiorowości, czerpię z podobieństw między filozofią egzystencji Virginii Woolf a filozoficzną hermeneutyką Martina Heideggera, a w szczególności jego rozumieniem prawdy (aletheia). W artykule skupiam się na zazębiającej się naturze społecznych (zewnętrznych) i osobistych (wewnętrznych) znaczeń rozproszenia, zawartych w lakonicznym, ale przemawiającym stwierdzeniu w powieści *Między aktami*: „Jesteśmy rozproszeni”.

Słowa kluczowe: autentyczność, kolektywność, świadomość, Martin Heidegger, Virginia Woolf

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TOWARDS A RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE INTELLECTUAL PAST
‘Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī and his “al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah”

The account of ‘Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī’s trip to Spain is in some respects unique in the Tunisian literature of the time. Firstly, it is the only description of a journey to Andalusia by a writer from Ifrīqīya, and, secondly, it is the only “riḥlah fī ṭalab al-‘ilm” (account of a trip) to Spain in the entire nineteenth-century Arabic literature. The expedition in which al-Wardānī participated was the first in the series of missions aimed at the scrutiny of the inventory of European libraries and a description of the Arabic items in their possession.

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY TUNISIA

The nineteenth century can be considered as a breakthrough in the political, social, and cultural situation of Tunisia, which, at that time, was part of the Ottoman state.¹ However, the new developments had both positive and negative manifestations. Despite Aḥmad Bey’s (d. 1855) attempts at military and economic reform, following the example of the Egyptian viceroy Muḥammad ‘Alī,² the beylik³ of Tunis was falling into an increasing economic crisis. It was caused by both natural phenomena and the rivalry of European powers, as well as by the evident mismanagement by the authorities, in particular the Prime Minister Muṣṭafā Khaznadār (1817–1878), who significantly contributed to Tunisia’s fall into a debt spiral, which led to the country’s bankruptcy and eventual subordination to France as a result of the Treaty of Bārdaw (Bardo) in 1881 and the Convention of al-Marsá in 1883. Such a turn of events was impossible to prevent even by the attempted reforms of Khayr al-Dīn Pasha

¹ See Kenneth P e r k i n s, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 15–78; Habib B o u l a r è s, *Histoire de la Tunisie: Les grandes dates de la préhistoire à la révolution* (Tunis: Cérès Éditions, 2011), 418–522; Muḥammad al-Hādī a l - S k

^{h a r t f}, *Tārīkh Tūnus* (Tūnus: Dār Sarās li-al-Nashr, 1993), 95–114; Muḥammad Šāliḥ I b n M u ṣ ṭ a f á, *al-Uthmānīyūn fī Tūnus 1505–1957: al-Tārīkh. al-Āthār. al-Nās wa-sulūkātuhum* (Tūnus: Nuqūsh ‘Arabīyah, 2021), 6–192; Andrzej D z i u b i ŋ s k i, *Historia Tunezji* (Wrocław, Warszawa and Kraków: Ossolineum. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1994), 216–77.

² See P e r k i n s, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 19.

³ The beylik was an Ottoman administrative unit.

(ca. 1820–1890),⁴ one of the most enlightened people of his era in the region, who had to return to Istanbul in 1878 and continued his activity there, however, in a different capacity.

On the other hand, Tunisia was following the path of Algeria, though it never became a French colony (it was only a protectorate), which, nevertheless, did not change much: Tunisia lost its autonomy and the ability to independently determine its fate. “The bey state and its administration did not change, but behind them stood the French observers delegated by the resident general, who regulated the actions of both the bey and the chief secretary of the central administration and Tunisian ministers. Civilian observers resided in the *wilāyats* (governorates) to monitor the actions of governors and other officials.”⁵ Only defense and foreign policy issues were fully taken over by Paris. In practice, though, local authorities ceased to have any say in the matters related to the growing aspirations of the Tunisian people to become independent. Thus, gaining political autonomy was yet to be a long process.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw attempts not only at political and economic reforms, but also at social and cultural ones.⁶ Khayr al-Dīn and people who shared his mindset contributed to the Tunisian revival (*al-Nahḍah*), which was obviously modelled on the processes that had already begun in Egypt. Literature, the press, and education were developing, the most important manifestation of which was probably the founding of the al-Ṣādiqīyah College.⁷ The school was officially established in 1875 by Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq

⁴ Khayr al-Dīn Pasha expressed his progressive views in a comprehensive work entitled *Aqḥam al-masālik fī maʿrifat al-mamālik* (The surest path to knowledge concerning the condition of countries). See *The Surest Path: The Political Treatise of a Nineteenth-century Muslim Statesman; A Translation of the Introduction to “The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the Condition of Countries” by Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisi*, ed. Leon Carl Brown (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967). On the subject, see also Gerard S. van Krieken, *Khayr al-Dīn et la Tunisie, 1850–1881* (Leiden: Brill, 1976); Mongi S m i d a, *Khereddine: ministre réformateur, 1873–1877* (Tunis: Maison tunisienne de l’édition, 1970); Magdalena L e w i c k a, *Świat islamu, Europa i reformy: “Prolegomena” Ḥayr ad-Dīna at-Tūnusīego* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2017).

⁵ ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Sharīf, “al-Baḥth ‘an al-makhtūṭāt wa-al-riḥlah al-‘ilmīyah,” in ‘Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī. *Al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Sharīf (Tūnus: al-Dār al-Tūnusīyah li-al-Nashr, 1984), 100. All translations are my own.

⁶ This aspect of the situation in Tunisia in the nineteenth century was best described, in a concise yet comprehensive manner, by Józef Bielawski. See Józef B i e l a w s k i, “Wprowadzenie do historii i kultury Maghrebu,” in Józef B i e l a w s k i, Jolanta K o z ł o w s k a, Ewa M a c h u t - M e n d e c k a, and Krystyna S k a r ż y ń s k a - B o c h e ń s k a, *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska 19 i 20 w.: Literatura arabskiego Maghrebu* (Warszawa: PWN, 1989), 72–78.

⁷ See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 1, s.v. “Al-Ṣādiqiyya” (by M[ansour] Souissi), (Leiden: Brill, 2001, CD-ROM); Nouredine S r a ĩ e b, “Le collège Sadiki de Tunis et les nouvelles élites,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 72 (1994): 37–52; I b n M u ṣ ṭ a f á, *Al-Uḥmāniyyūn fī Tūnus 1505–1957*, 158–61; B i e l a w s k i, “Wprowadzenie do historii i kultury

(1813–1882), the bey of Tunis, but its actual founder was Khayr al-Dīn. Albert Hourani describes that institution as “a secondary school set up on the model of a *lycée*.”⁸ Discussing the school’s profile, Magdalena Lewicka writes that it was modelled on similar European institutions, and its “teaching staff comprised local teachers, who were professors in the college, and lecturers from abroad. The curriculum included subjects such as: the Arabic Language, Arabic Literature, Traditional Muslim Sciences ... but also foreign languages and empirical sciences: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Natural Sciences.”⁹ The school was free to attend and, as it would turn out, many of its graduates became outstanding figures in the history of Tunisia, among them Habib Burgiba, the father of the country’s independence. The Khaldūnīyah scientific institute, founded in 1896, was also of great importance.¹⁰

In the context of the nineteenth-century Tunisia, it is also worth mentioning the *al-Hāḍirah* (The capital), the first independent weekly magazine which was launched in Tunis after the French protectorate had been established. The founders of the *al-Hāḍirah* were ‘Alī Bū Shūshah (1859–1917), a political and cultural activist, and Sālim Bū Ḥājib (1827–1924), the ‘ālim of al-Zaytūnah. The first issue of the weekly was published on August 2, 1888, and the final one in 1911. While the *al-Hāḍirah* was politically moderate, it had a reformist character.¹¹

Such was the political and cultural situation in Tunisia during ‘Alī al-Wardānī’s lifetime.

‘ALĪ AL-WARDĀNĪ

A closer study of the history of Tunisian culture shows that ‘Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905) was among its most outstanding nineteenth-century representatives. And yet, analyses of his output are practically absent from the contem-

Maghrebu,” 73–75; Lewicka, *Świat islamu, Europa i reformy*, 48–49. For the Arabic text of the declaration on the opening of the school, see, e.g., “al-Madrasah al-Ṣādiqīyah,” https://areq.net/m/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A9_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9.html.

⁸ Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 302.

⁹ Lewicka, *Świat islamu, Europa i reformy*, 48–49.

¹⁰ See Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 71.

¹¹ See Bielawski, “Wprowadzenie do historii i kultury Maghrebu,” 73–74; Filīb Tarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-ṣaḥāfah al-‘arabīyah* (Bayrūt: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Adabīyah, 1913), vol. 3, 250; Mohamed Charfi and Patrick Camiller, *Islam and Liberty: The Historical Misunderstanding* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2005), 23; Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia*, 70–71. See also Ons Debbech, *Les voyageurs tunisiens en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2016), 109–12. Debbech writes that the weekly was discontinued in 1910. See *ibidem*, 109.

porary discourse within the field of Arabic studies. Interestingly, though, Arabic travel literature of the period is relatively popular among researchers, however, their interest is usually limited to the study of works of either Egyptians or the inhabitants of Greater Syria. The only references to al-Wardānī in Western research are, apparently, a chapter in Henri Pérès's book from 1937¹² and mere mentions of al-Wardānī's name accompanied by his short biography in Ons Debbech's monograph.¹³ Definitely much more has been written about al-Wardānī in Arabic by Tunisians themselves. However, the information on his life is very scarce.

According to most sources (and as indicated by his *nisbah*), Sīdī 'Alī Sālim al-Wardānī al-Tūnūsī¹⁴ was born in 1861 in the town of Wardānīn¹⁵ or Ukūdah¹⁶ in the al-Sāhil region, whose capital is Sūsah (*Dā'irat Sūsah*). Nothing is known about his childhood. All his biographers say is that he moved to Tunis "at an early age" and began studying in the al-Ṣādiqīyah College. There, he learned Turkish, French, and Italian, which proved crucial to his future career.

As an outstanding disciple of the al-Ṣādiqīyah, he attracted the attention of Khayr al-Dīn Pasha, the prime minister of the beylik of Tunis at the time. The politician invited 'Alī to dine with him on several occasions, and soon employed him in his office (*dīwān*) as his personal secretary.¹⁷ After his forced resignation, Khayr al-Dīn went to Istanbul¹⁸ and took al-Wardānī with him, having hired him as an interpreter. He also provided al-Wardānī with accommodation in his own house. While in Istanbul, Khayr al-Dīn introduced al-Wardānī to many important figures of the political and cultural life of the Ottoman capital, and soon to the sultan himself, recommending him as a trans-

¹² See Henri Pérès, *L'Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 à 1930* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1937), 62–72.

¹³ See Debbech, *Les voyageurs tunisiens en France au XIXe siècle*, 192–93. For the biography of al-Wardānī, see also 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Sharīf, "al-Baḥṭh 'an al-makhtūṭāt wa-al-riḥlah al-ilmīyah," in 'Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Sharīf (Tūnus: al-Dār al-Tūnusīyah li-al-Nashr, 1984), 11–28; al-Ṣādiq al-Zamarlī, *'Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905): al-Fannān, al-'ālim wa-al-shā'ir*, in al-Ṣādiq al-Zamarlī, *A'lām tūnusīyūn* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), 113–20; Muḥammad Maḥfūz, *Tarājim al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986), vol. 5, 128–29; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām* (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ilm li-al-Malāyīn, 2002), vol. 4, 290; Muṣṭafā al-Sattī, "al-Adīb al-tūnusī 'Alī al-Wardānī mukallifan min al-sulṭān bi-himmah 'ilmīyah fī Isbānyā," *Leaders*, August 10, 2018, Leaders, <https://ar.leaders.com.tn>.

¹⁴ This is how his full name is spelled by Henri Pérès. See Pérès, *L'Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 à 1930*, 62.

¹⁵ Wardānīn is a town located south of Sūsah, currently in the Munastīr wilāyah.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Maḥfūz, *Tarājim al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn*, 128; al-Zamarlī, *'Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905)*, 113; al-Sattī, "al-Adīb al-tūnusī 'Alī al-Wardānī mukallifan min al-sulṭān bi-himmah 'ilmīyah fī Isbānyā." Ukūda is located north of Sūsah, currently in the Sūsah wilāyah.

¹⁷ See al-Zamarlī, *'Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905)*, 114; Maḥfūz, *Tarājim al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn*, 128.

¹⁸ From 1878 to 1879, Khayr al-Dīn held the office of Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire.

lator in the planned delegation to Europe, the purpose of which was to search for collections of Arabic manuscripts there.¹⁹

After returning from the expedition, al-Wardānī settled in Istanbul, but due to his mother's illness he soon had to return to Tunis. Immediately on his return, he took the position of a translator at the Ministry of Justice, and then one of a secretary at the State Council.²⁰

Al-Wardānī was also known as a poet, an author of *rubāʿīyats* written in the style characteristic of the classical representatives of this genre. Among his most famous poems was *Qaṣīdat al-Wardānī*, a satire of bey 'Alī III, written after he had signed the Convention of al-Marsā.²¹ Unfortunately, none of al-Wardānī's poems has survived till today. Since he left no descendants, apparently there was no one to take care of his poetic legacy.²² He also published many articles in the local press, mainly in the weekly *al-Ḥāḍirah*. As an active participant in the cultural life of his country, he took part in meetings at the literary salon run by the Egyptian Princess Nāzīlī,²³ who in the mid-1890s moved from Cairo to Tunis and arranged her palace in al-Marsā so as to make it resemble her residence in Cairo. The place became an important center for the reformist cultural movement in Tunisia.²⁴ After al-Wardānī's untimely death, many friends of his dedicated elegies and memoirs to him.²⁵

“AL-RIḤLAH AL-ANDALUSĪYAH”

As is generally recognized, travel literature (*riḥlah*) has been an important part of Arabic literature since its earliest times²⁶ and it gained its classic shape

¹⁹ Such a claim was made, among others, by Maḥfūz. See Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn*, 128. Al-Wardānī himself does not mention the role of Khayr al-Dīn, but states that the person who recommended him was the minister called Munīf Pasha. See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 31.

²⁰ See al-Zamrī, *Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905)*, 119; Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn*, 129. Pèrès writes that al-Wardānī was a translator at the government's General Secretariat. See Pèrès, *L'Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 à 1930*, 63. The terminology provided by the Arab authors is ambiguous.

²¹ See Ezzeddein Knani, “A' lām Ukūda,” Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/Ezzedine.Knani/posts/1146023618769030/>.

²² See al-Zamrī, *Alī al-Wardānī (1861–1905)*, 120.

²³ Nāzīlī Fāḍil (1853–1913) was an Egyptian princess of the house of Muḥammad 'Alī, a controversial reform activist in Egypt and Tunisia. See Umar Riḍā Kahlā, *A' lām an-nisā' fī 'ālamay al-'Arab wa-al-islām*, s.v. “Nāzīlī Bint Muṣṭafā Fāḍil” (Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, n.d.), vol. 5, 158–59.

²⁴ See 'Amr Ṭalāt, “Nāzīlī Fāḍil: A amīrat al-tanwīr am 'āmīlat al-iḥtilāl?” Ravi-Magazine, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180930154100/http://rawi-magazine.com:80/ar/articles/nazlyfadel/>.

²⁵ See Maḥfūz, *Tarājīm al-mu'allifīn al-tūnusīyīn*, 129.

²⁶ See, e.g., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 1, s.v. “riḥla” (by I[an] R. Netton); *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2, s.v. “travel literature” (by Clifford E. Bos-

in the work of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1304–1369),²⁷ who lived in the territory of today's Morocco. In the following centuries, *riḥlah* developed and flourished as a genre already in the entire Maghreb, however, not necessarily taking the shape given to it by Baṭṭūṭa, whose accounts were determined by the background of his travels. Within the genre of *riḥlah*, one can distinguish pieces relating (1) trips for educational purposes (*fīṭalab al-‘ilm*: seeking for knowledge), (2) pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina (*al-riḥlah al-ḥijāzīyah*), and (3) trips for political purposes (traditionally called *sifārah*). Descriptions of various journeys were written down almost from the beginning of Arab-Muslim culture and served the purpose of cultural and political exchange with Europe and other parts of the world. However, as Daniel Newman observes, traveling to Europe for tourism (*siyāḥah*) was discussed in the Arab world perhaps only beginning with the end of the nineteenth century.²⁸

Regarding the modern travels undertaken by Tunisians to Europe, a noteworthy case is the description of Sulaymān Agha's diplomatic journey to France in 1777, which was not written down by the diplomat himself, but by the translator and orientalist Pierre Ruffin, who accompanied him there.²⁹

The nineteenth-century travels of Arabs to Europe and their descriptions of this continent are usually, and rightly so, associated with al-Naḥḍah, the so-called Arab awakening. However, researchers frequently focus their interest merely on the travels of the Egyptian Rifa‘ah Rāfi‘ al-Tahtāwī and the Lebanese Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, disregarding the accounts of travelers from other parts of the Arab world. Moreover, according to Newman, while most nineteenth-century descriptions of Europe written by Arabs were made in Egypt (twelve of them have been published³⁰ and five remain in

worth), ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 778–80.

²⁷ “With the Riḥla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa we reach the peak in the articulation of a genre which we should perceive much more in terms of a literary art form than a formal geography.” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. “riḥla.”

²⁸ See Daniel Newman, “Myths and Realities in Muslim Alterist Discourse: Arab Travellers in Europe in the Age of the Nahda (19th c.),” *Chronos* 6 (2002): 32.

²⁹ See *Le journal de Suleiman agha, envoyé du bey de Tunis à Paris en 1777*, ed. Mehdi Jerard (Tunis: Al Massira, 2020), 5.

³⁰ See Rifa‘ah Rāfi‘ al-Tahtāwī, *Talkhīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ Bārīz* (Būlāq: n.p., 1834); ‘Alī Muḥammad, *‘Ilm al-dīn* (al-Iskandariyya: Maṭba‘at al-Mahrūsah, 1882); Ḥasan Tawfīq al-Adl, *al-Riḥlah al-Birlīnīyah* (al-Qāhirah: Nizārat al-Ma‘ārif, 1887–1889); Muḥammad Sharīf al-Saym, *Riḥlah ilā ‘Urūbā* (al-Qāhirah: 1888–1980); Ḥamza Faṭḥ Allāh al-Miṣrī, *Bākūrat al-kalām ‘alā ḥuqūq al-nisā’ fī al-islām* (Būlāq: n.p., 1890); Maḥmūd ‘Umar al-Bājūrī, *al-Durar al-baḥīyah fī al-riḥlah al-‘urubāwīyah* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba‘at Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, 1891); Yaḳūb Ṣannū, *Maḥāmid al-Faransī wa-waṣf Bārīs* (Paris: Impr. Lefebvre, 1981); Muḥammad Amīn Fikrī, *Irshād al-alibbā’ ilā maḥāsīn ‘Urūbā* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba‘at al-Muqtaṭaf, 1892); Aḥmad Zakī, *al-Safar ilā al-mu’tamar* (Būlāq: n.p., 1893); Aḥmad Shawqī, *Aḥmālī fī al-mu’tamar* (Būlāq: n.p., 1895);

manuscript³¹), Tunisia comes second with five such descriptions published. Their authors were, respectively: Sulaymān al-Ḥarāyirī (1824–1875),³² Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnusī,³³ Muḥammad Bayram V (1840–1889),³⁴ Muḥammad al-Sanūsī (1850–1900),³⁵ and Muḥammad Ibn al-Khūja (d. 1907/8).³⁶ The three remaining works are available only in manuscript.³⁷

Ons Debbech, on the other hand, seeks for the turning point in the attitude of the Tunisians towards the West in Aḥmad Bey's trip to France of 1846. Aḥmad Bey was the first ruler of Tunis to personally travel to Europe. "The year 1846 is a milestone in the collective memory of Tunisian intellectuals because it symbolizes the first attempt to open up to the Other."³⁸ There is no direct account of this journey, but its concise description was provided by the eminent Tunisian scholar Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Ḍiyāf in his historical encyclopedia *Ithāf ahl al-zamān*³⁹ as late as in 1963.

The account of 'Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī's trip to Spain, which is the main theme discussed in this paper, is in some respects unique in the Tunisian literature of the time.⁴⁰ Firstly, it is the only description of a journey to Andalusia by a writer from Ifrīqiya, and, secondly, it is the only *riḥlah fī ṭalab al-'ilm* (account of a trip) to Spain in the entire nineteenth-century Arabic literature. It is not without significance in this context that, in the nineteenth century, Spain was not a popular destination for Arabs, who would usually consider places such as Paris or London as worth visiting.⁴¹ However, Andalusia was visited not only by al-Wardānī, but also by the Palestinian Rūḥī al-Khālidi

'Alī Bāshā Abū al-Fuṭūḥ, *Siyāḥat Miṣrī fī Ūrubā sanat 1900* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭba'at al-Mawsū'āt, 1900); Aḥmad Zakī, *al-Dunyā fī Bārīz: L'Univers à Paris* (Bulāq: n.p., 1900).

³¹ See, e.g., Newman, "Myths and Realities in Muslim Alterist Discourse," 24.

³² See Sulaymān al-Ḥarāyirī, *Arḍ al-Baḍā'i al-'Amm* (Paris: G. Jousset, Clet et Cie, 1867).

³³ See Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnusī, *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma'rifat al-mamālik* (Tūnus: Maṭba'at al-Dawlah, 1868).

³⁴ See Muḥammad Bayram V, *Ṣafwat al-ittibār bi-mustawḍa' al-amṣār wa-al-aqtār* (al-Qāhirah: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ilmīyah, 1887–1889).

³⁵ See Muḥammad al-Sanūsī, *al-Istiṭlā'āt al-bārisīyah fī ma'raḍ sanat 1889* (Tūnus: al-Maṭba'ah al-Rasmīyah, 1982).

³⁶ See Muḥammad Ibn al-Khūja, *Sulūk al-ibrīz fī masālik Bārīz* (Tūnus: al-Maṭba'ah al-Rasmīyah, 1900).

³⁷ Newman, apparently, considers al-Wardānī's journey, together with other such accounts, as unpublished, because they were not published as separate books at the time. See Newman, "Myths and Realities in Muslim Alterist Discourse," 24.

³⁸ Debbech, *Les voyageurs tunisiens en France au XIXe siècle*, 32.

³⁹ See Aḥmad Ibn Abī al-Ḍiyāf, *Ithāf ahl al-zamān bi-akhbār mulūk Tūnus wa-'ahd al-amān* (Tūnus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1963), vol. 4, 92–112.

⁴⁰ While it remains debatable whether the work in question should be classified as an instance of Ottoman literature in Arabic, I have not encountered any objections of the kind.

⁴¹ See al-Sharīf, "al-Baḥṭh 'an al-makhtūṭāt wa-al-riḥlah al-'ilmīyah," 13.

(1864–1913),⁴² the Moroccan Aḥmad al-Kardūdī (ca. 1825–1900),⁴³ and the Egyptian Aḥmad Zakī (1867–1934),⁴⁴ all of whom left written records of their travels. None of these works were published at the time of their origin and they were written for political (*siḡārah*) rather than educational purposes.

However, Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī, with whom al-Wardānī traveled, did not leave a record of his trip. It can be suspected that, back then, the belief that Andalusia was a “paradise lost” for the Muslims was not as common as it is today.⁴⁵ However, the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of this awareness.⁴⁶

Al-Wardānī’s account first appeared in print, as a series of columns, in the issues of the weekly *al-Ḥāḍirah*⁴⁷ published between 1888 and 1890. However, for inexplicable reasons, Ons Debbech describes the pieces as instances of Tunisian epistolary literature,⁴⁸ which is obviously a wrong classification, since they were published after the author’s return from Europe, so they were by no means *travel letters*. Rather, one may get the impression that they are written in the style characteristic of memoirs, which may partly justify the various inaccuracies they contain. The memoirs are written in plain prose, although *saḡ*’ (rhymed prose) was dominant in Tunisian literature in the nineteenth century.⁴⁹

The expedition in which al-Wardānī took part was associated with the figure of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid (1841–1918), who was supposedly very interested in gathering information about Arabic manuscripts in the collections of European libraries⁵⁰ and, since mid-1880s began sending missions to Europe for that purpose. The expedition in which al-Wardānī participated was the first

⁴² See Rūḥī al-Khālīdī, *Riḥlat al-muqaddasī ilā jazīrat al-Andalus*, in Rūḥī al-Khālīdī, *Kutubuh, maqālātuh wa-muntakhabāt min makhṭūṭātih* (al-Quds: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filistīniyah and al-Maktabah al-Khālīdīyah, 2021), vol. 2, 1069–84.

⁴³ See Aḥmad al-Kardūdī, *al-Tuḡfah al-saniyah li-al-ḥaḍrah al-Ḥasanīyah bi-al-Mamlakah al-Iṣbanyūliyah* (al-Ribāt: al-Maktabah al-Malakīyah, 1963).

⁴⁴ See Aḥmad Zakī, *al-Safar ilā al-mu’tamar* (London: al-Hindāwī, 2013), 221–58. The first edition of his work was published in 1893.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Ḥusayn Mu’nis, *Riḥlat al-Andalus. Ḥadīth al-firdaws al-maḡqūd* (Juddah: al-Dār al-Su’ūdīyah li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī’, 1985). Mu’nis’s work also comprises an account of a trip to Andalusia.

⁴⁶ See al-Sharīf, “al-Baḥṡ al-makhṭūṭāt wa-al-riḥlah al-‘ilmīyah,” 14.

⁴⁷ For a list of the issues, see al-Sharīf, “al-Baḥṡ al-makhṭūṭāt wa-al-riḥlah al-‘ilmīyah,” 18.

⁴⁸ See Debbech, 112.

⁴⁹ See *ibidem*, 114.

⁵⁰ Sultan Abdülhamid was famous for his sympathy for the pan-Islamic project. See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, v. 1, s.v. “Abd al-Ḥamīd II” (by Jean Deny); Engin Deniz Akarlı, “The Tangled Ends of an Empire and Its Sultan,” in *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 268–73. The Sultan’s initiative to have European libraries explored in the search for Arabic manuscripts can be seen as part of that effort. Among others, al-Wardānī emphasized the sultan’s interest in science and its advancements. See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 31.

in the series of missions aimed at the scrutiny of the inventory of European libraries and a description of the Arabic items in their possession. A high official suggested that Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī⁵¹ would be the man suitable for such a task, and al-Shinqīṭī accepted the sultan's proposal, but he set several conditions, for instance, he was to be accompanied by a *muezzin* and a cook, and he would receive an appropriate remuneration upon the completion of his task.⁵² The sultan conceded to al-Shinqīṭī's demands. Then al-Wardānī was included in the delegation as an interpreter, but the two men apparently did not like each other, because, as Muḥammad Ibn al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī writes: "They remained hostile to each other all the way."⁵³ The animosity between the two men, as one can read in various sources, might have been the reason why there was no mention, in al-Wardānī's account, of al-Shinqīṭī's participation in the delegation. However, the fact is that al-Wardānī did not mention any other names either. Moreover, based on his account, one might even get the impression that al-Wardānī was himself the most important member of the group. The entire account is written in the first-person plural (*nahnu*), which can mean either "I" (*pluralis maiesticus* or *pluralis modestiae*) or "we" in the plural. All that remains of al-Shinqīṭī's stay in Spain is his notes and remarks on the manuscripts he found in the Escorial, Seville, and Granada, as well as three poems in a work about his various research travels.⁵⁴ His notes are stored in the collection of manuscripts in the National Library in Tunis.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ibn al-Talāmīd al-Turkuzī al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1904) was a scholar, writer, and poet of Mauritanian descent. After returning from a trip to Europe, he moved to Egypt, where he successively held several high positions in the field of science and education. He collected a large library of valuable manuscripts, which was included as a separate collection in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah in Cairo. See P é r è s, *L'Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 a 1930*, 55–61; Khayr al-Dīn al-Zirikli, *al-Aḷām* (Bayrūt: Dār al-ʿIlm li-al-Malāyīn, 2002), vol. 7, 89–90; Hamāh Allāh Wuld al-Sālim, *Ḥujāj wa-muhājirūn (ulamā' bilād Shinqīṭ—Mūrītānyā—fī al-bilād al-ʿarabīyah wa-Turkīyā)* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīyah, 2011), 181. For a most extensive biographical note on Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ibn al-Talāmīd al-Turkuzī al-Shinqīṭī, see Muḥammad Ibn al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, *al-Wasīṭ fī tarājīm udabā' Shinqīṭ* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1989), 381–96.

⁵² See al-Shinqīṭī, *al-Wasīṭ fī tarājīm udabā' Shinqīṭ*, 392.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ See Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī, *al-Ḥamāsah al-saniyah al-kāmilah al-mazīyah fī al-riḥlah al-ʿilmīyah al-Shinqīṭīyah al-Turkuzīyah* (al-Qāhirah: Maṭbaʿat al-Mawsūʿāt, 1901), part 1, 19–24. The first and third poems are dedicated to Andalusia, and the second one to Paris. The ones inspired by Andalusia were translated into French by Pérès, who also discussed al-Shinqīṭī's notes on the manuscripts he had found in Spain. See P é r è s, 58–61.

⁵⁵ Catalogue number 18675. See *Fatāwā al-Imām al-Shāṭibī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Ajḡān (al-Riyāḡ: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2001), 344. According to Muḥammad Ibn al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī, having returned from the expedition, Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī demanded the promised remuneration for his work. As he did not receive it, he did not hand over the results of his work to the sultan, who then ordered him to go to Medina. See ibidem, 392–93.

Although the title of al-Wardānī's account invokes Andalusia, the narrative itself includes extensive sections also on the other regions through which its author has traveled. The route of the expedition led through Izmir, Messina and Marseille, Bordeaux, Irun, Madrid, Toledo, Seville, Granada, Córdoba, Valencia, Barcelona, and Paris. Since al-Wardānī does not describe the expedition's return home from Barcelona in more detail, the account can be divided into three parts, the first comprising a description of the route from Istanbul to the French-Spanish border (in Irun),⁵⁶ the second exclusively on Spain,⁵⁷ and the third relating the group's return to Turkey, including, among others, a slightly longer description of Paris.⁵⁸ Thus the section discussing specifically Andalusia is rather concise, and not even half the account is focused on that part of the journey.⁵⁹

The expedition left Turkey on September 8, 1887, and reached Irun on September 19. Having embarked on their return journey, the participants in the mission arrived in Paris on November 28 and reached Constantinople on December 25. Interestingly, although a stay in London was planned,⁶⁰ the group did not reach Great Britain, and al-Wardānī does not explain the reasons for the change in the original plan.

Here, I shall focus on the Spanish part of the journey precisely for the fact that, as already mentioned, Spain was rarely a destination of the nineteenth-century Arab travelers.

Having arrived in Spain in September 1887, the group took a direct train from Irun to Madrid (*Madriḍ*) and reached their destination in fifteen hours. In his description of the scenery of the railway line, al-Wardānī writes about the numerous tunnels they passed and about the dangers the landscape posed for the travelers, making it easy for robbers to attack them, a problem with which the Spanish government was not able to cope.⁶¹ The expedition arrived in the Spanish capital on September 20. Al-Wardānī mentions a visit to the Ottoman embassy and continues with a description of Madrid, a city located in the central part of Spain and surrounded by a desert (*ṣaḥrā'*). He then briefly notes the Arabo-Islamic past of the city, called *Majrīt* in Arabic. Back then, he writes, Madrid was a small village, and it was only King Philip II (who reigned from 1556 to 1598) who made it the capital of Spain. Describing the city's modern, European-style buildings, al-Wardānī mentions that some of them have historic inscriptions in Arabic. He emphasizes the good condition of the city's streets,

⁵⁶ See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 33–39.

⁵⁷ See *ibidem*, 39–74.

⁵⁸ See *ibidem*, 75–76.

⁵⁹ See *ibidem*, 53–70.

⁶⁰ See *ibidem*, 31.

⁶¹ See *ibidem*, 41.

noting that some are very wide, while others resemble the streets of Arabic cities; however, there are no Arab monuments there.

The Arab visitor describes the city's inhabitants as nice and open to foreigners, but he is surprised by the number of the poor and beggars. At this point he criticizes Europeans who disapprove of the presence of beggars in Middle Eastern cities and observes that the situation is even worse in Europe.⁶²

On the next three pages, al-Wardānī relates his impressions of the places he visited while carrying through his mission. The first institution where he did his research was the Public Library (*al-Maktabah al-'Umūmīyah*). He briefly describes the way it is organized and states that he has found about five hundred Arabic books there, of which, however, only a dozen or so caught his interest. After visiting the Public Library, he stopped at a museum which he calls *Dār al-Tuḥaf al-Filibīnīyah* (Museum of Philippine Collections).⁶³ While his description of the museum exhibits the usual characteristics of his style and focuses on the facts rather than expresses the emotions he experienced, it is more than likely that it was his first visit to a place of that kind and that Philippine collections as such were also new to him.⁶⁴

Interestingly, his style changes to more emotional as he proceeds to describe a bullfight (*corrida*)⁶⁵ he witnessed. Al-Wardānī's account of the event introduces his first socio-political remarks about Spain, some of which relate to the psychology of bullfighting (political and sociological observations recur throughout his *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*).

Al-Wardānī's vivid description of the bullfight is likely to be the first attempt at a characterization of such entertainment in Arabic literature. The passage in question is among the more extensive ones focused on a single, particular topic. Having studied the entire text of the *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, one may even get the impression that the bullfight he saw was what interested al-Wardānī most in Spain, or rather what he found most disturbing, yet simultaneously astonishing. Much as it is emotional, one can see in his description of bullfighting an effort to distance himself from the actual events he saw: he does relate the course of the show in detail, but also characterizes its clearly defined rules that must not be broken. Then he proceeds to discussing the economic aspect of bullfighting, which, in his opinion, has a negative impact on the development of the country, since it distracts the Spaniards from work. They take too too many days off to watch *corridas* and are more interested in such

⁶² See *ibidem*, 42.

⁶³ Today's Naval Museum of Madrid. See Museo Naval, <https://armada.defensa.gob.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspannola/cienciaorgano/prefLang-es/01cienciamuseo>.

⁶⁴ See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 42–44.

⁶⁵ See *ibidem*, 45–49.

spectacles than in the development of their homeland.⁶⁶ However, al-Wardānī sees one positive socio-psychological effect of bullfighting: it builds up boldness and courage in the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, “which, however, should be properly channeled.”⁶⁷ While al-Wardānī does not elaborate further on this point, one may read his remark as a suggestion that the bravery and the endurance of the Spanish are not, in his opinion, put to good use.

From Madrid, al-Wardānī went to the Royal Site of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. He describes the royal palace in some detail⁶⁸ and moves on to the characteristics of its Arabic collections. He sees a recurring error in his contemporary studies which frequently describe these collections as coming from Andalusia. Al-Wardānī points out that they actually originate from Morocco. He also notes that the Arab-Muslim Collection in El Escorial includes not only manuscripts, but also coins.

On October 19, the delegation left the Spanish capital for Toledo (*Tulay-tula*). Al-Wardānī’s description of the city is very sparse,⁶⁹ if not encyclopedic. While his attention is directed to the few traces of former Muslim presence in the city, he does not fail to notice the very poor condition of the streets. Not only does he find the city neglected, but his hopes for interesting manuscript collections there do not turn out realistic: in fact, there is almost nothing left of them. The next day the Arab visitors returned to Madrid to leave for Seville (*Ishbīlīya*), which took place on October 20.

On the way, al-Wardānī noticed a poor condition of the olive trees when compared to those in Tunisia.⁷⁰ However, his description of Seville and its monuments covers only one-and-a-half pages⁷¹ even though the party stayed there until October 26. In fact, al-Wardānī’s description of the city is as perfunctory as was that of Toledo, the only buildings that attracted his attention being the Giralda tower (which was a former minaret) and the castle. A walk around the castle and its gardens brought to his mind fragments of two poems he quotes directly in the text of his account.⁷² The collections of Arabic books al-Wardānī found in Seville’s libraries turned out to be very modest.

The next place the visitors explored was Granada (*Gharnāṭa*). Its description, or rather that of the Alhambra, is quite extensive in *al-Riḥlah al-*

⁶⁶ See *ibidem*, 49.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸ See *ibidem*, 50–51.

⁶⁹ See *ibidem*, 53–55.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, a similar observation was made in Spain by the Moroccan Aḥmad al-Kardūdī, who also compared the poor olive trees there to the lavish ones in his homeland. See al-Kardūdī, *al-Tuḥfah al-saniyah li-al-ḥadrah al-Ḥasanīyah bi-al-Mamlakah al-Ishbanyūliyah*, 79.

⁷¹ See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 56–57.

⁷² See *ibidem*, 57.

Andalusīyah and it covers almost eight pages.⁷³ After giving encyclopedic details about the city, al-Wardānī continues with a lengthy, detailed passage on the Alhambra.⁷⁴ The description of the greatest Muslim monument in Spain was certainly interesting to the Arab readers of his *riḥlah*. He gives (sometimes very detailed) information on the most important parts of the architectural complex, quotes some of the inscriptions carved in the walls,⁷⁵ and includes many historical details. The passages in question almost read like a tourist guide.⁷⁶

On October 29, the travelers set off for Córdoba (*Qurtuba*). Al-Wardānī begins his description of the city by saying that it is “the home of the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate and [has been] under the Andalusian government for about five centuries; it had many diligent scholars, legendary sages, and early theologians. Yet no places of theirs are left and there are no narrations about them. If the Muhammadan [sic!] came, he will see only mere traces, and the ruins will speak to him in the language of extinction.”⁷⁷

Al-Wardānī’s impressions of Córdoba take almost five pages.⁷⁸ He says that the city is built partly in the European and partly in the Arabic styles. Having reached the main destination of his journey, he was surprised to find that nothing remained in Córdoba of the formerly rich Arab libraries. Among the preserved Muslim architectural monuments, he describes the famous bridge and the mosque. The passage on latter is very detailed and takes one-and-a-half pages.

The last Andalusian city visited by the delegation was Valencia (*Balinsīyah*).⁷⁹ Al-Wardānī describes it primarily as an important port and trading center of Spain and, again, mentions its remaining Muslim architectural monuments: two gates and the adjacent defensive buildings.

The final “Spanish” chapter of the *riḥlah*, entitled *Barshilūna* (Barcelona),⁸⁰ is particularly interesting even though al-Wardānī’s impressions of Barcelona take merely nine lines, in which he emphasizes the diligence of the Barcelonians, whom he contrasts, in this respect, with the inhabitants of the other parts of Spain (*dā’imat al-shughl wa-al-a’māl bi-’aks sābiqatihā*). He also mentions that he found neither Arabic monuments nor Arabic books in the city. However, the chapter in question comprises his interesting observations of

⁷³ See *ibidem*, 58–65.

⁷⁴ Before stopping at the Alhambra, al-Wardānī visited the city’s libraries, where there were only few Arabic books. However, he found seven of them worthy of attention. See *ibidem*, 58.

⁷⁵ al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 65.

⁷⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that al-Wardānī’s description of the Alhambra most closely resembles the classical Arabic *prosimetrum*.

⁷⁷ al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 65.

⁷⁸ See *ibidem*, 65–69.

⁷⁹ See *ibidem*, 69–70.

⁸⁰ See *ibidem*, 71–74.

a more general nature. He has discovered Arabic influences on the Spanish language,⁸¹ on the way women dress, and on certain customs of the Spanish society.⁸² Equally interesting are al-Wardānī's observations regarding the domain of political life. As he phrases it, he has noticed a "strange custom"⁸³: after a political party seizes power, there is a complete replacement of the administration, which causes instability, because it is the administrative circles which are responsible for the condition of the state.⁸⁴ The second political issue al-Wardānī raises is the excessive role of the Church. He observes that while the clergy constitutes a higher social class and is well-educated, it impedes progress in science as well as the dissemination of knowledge in the society.⁸⁵ He also complains that, due to their high role in the Spanish society, Catholic priests are forceful towards the followers of other religions and would like to convert everyone to Christianity. Al-Wardānī himself was an object of such an attempt.⁸⁶

The Moroccan scholar Bū Shu'ayb al-Sāwirī described al-Wardānī's trip to Andalusia as "two journeys in one."⁸⁷ The first was real and took place in a specific historical situation; the other was symbolic: it was a journey deep into the history of Arab-Muslim Spain and, to al-Wardānī, it revived spiritual links between his conceptual universe and Spain's Muslim past. However, al-Sāwirī's interpretation may be considered in terms of wishful thinking, since al-Wardānī does not express a longing for the Andalusia of the past and describes the region matter-of-factly, without a special nostalgia for its Muslim past.

In fact, al-Wardānī's description of Andalusia is not only cursory and simplistic, but it is also laden with errors, which Pérès discusses in detail.⁸⁸ Al-Wardānī points to the Arab-Muslim past of Andalusia in a very balanced manner, somewhat sentimentally stating that the fate of civilization is such that in one epoch it prevails and in another it falls into ruin, or even oblivion. He expresses also some regret about such a course of history, for instance, in the description of Córdoba.⁸⁹

Al-Wardānī is very pleased that the sites in Andalusia which are testimonies to the Muslim glory are visited with such interest by Europeans, in

⁸¹ See *ibidem*, 71.

⁸² See, *ibidem*, 71–72.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 73.

⁸⁴ See, *ibidem*.

⁸⁵ See *ibidem*, 74.

⁸⁶ See *ibidem*.

⁸⁷ Bū Shu'ayb al-Sāwirī, "Sūrat Isbānyā fī al-riḥlāt al-maghribīyah," *Īlāf*, <https://elaph.com/Web/ElaphLiterature/2005/6/70875.htm>.

⁸⁸ See Pérès, *L'Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 à 1930*.

⁸⁹ See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 66.

particular by the English,⁹⁰ and that these places, as well as Arabic manuscripts, are subject to extensive study by Western scholars.⁹¹ He does not refer directly to the scholarly work of Gustave Le Bon, but it is most probably Le Bon's *La Civilisation des Arabes*⁹² he has in mind.⁹³

However, I do not see in al-Wardānī's *riḥlah* many traces of such a "double journey" in the sense the Moroccan researcher apparently implies.

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Al-Wardānī's account is considered by Tunisian scholars among the most important literary works of the period not only in the context of travel literature, but also as an important contribution to the history of Tunisian culture. Al-Wardānī himself is regarded as a leading figure of the nineteenth-century intellectual life of the country. However, his accomplishments and his modest but important work have not been subject to extensive research in Western scholarship. Therefore, it is important to bring out the specific value of his book, which lies in that the reader will find in it, on the one hand, a unique view of Spain, differing significantly from other known Arab images of Europe of the time, for instance those compiled by Egyptian travelers. On the other hand, the reader will be confronted with a balanced image of Andalusia and its Muslim monuments, an image devoid of unnecessary emotions or dreams of a return to the lost lands of Islam.

Although al-Wardānī's account is not a comprehensive work, it deserves more attention also from Western scholars studying the Arab world's relations with Europe. However, I tend to believe that, in this aspect, scholarly attention should be paid primarily to the parts of the text which are not related to Andalusia. One can even hold that the passages of *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah* which directly refer to the title-theme of this work are its rather weak segment, as are al-Wardānī's remarks concerning the main goal of the expedition he relates, i.e., researching European libraries to find which Arabic manuscripts they have in their collections. In fact, from the vantage point of the intended research, the expedition in which he participated turned out to be not very successful. In their inventories, al-Wardānī and al-Shinqīṭī included over four hundred interesting manuscripts. The manuscripts were mainly located in the Public Library in Madrid and in the Escorial Library (there were four hundred and

⁹⁰ See *ibidem*, 58.

⁹¹ See *ibidem*, 50.

⁹² See Gustave Le Bon, *La Civilisation des Arabes* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884).

⁹³ See al-Wardānī, *al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*, 59.

seven of them in total, according to al-Shinqīṭī). Contrary to the expectations, Andalusia turned out to be a rather poor source of Arabic manuscripts, as they found only three of them in Seville and seven in Granada.⁹⁴ Al-Wardānī does not provide any information about the Parisian libraries, but probably the travelers did not do any research in the French capital.

Although al-Wardānī does not devote much space to discussing political or social issues in the countries he is visiting, he shows himself as a keen observer of the social and political life, primarily in Spain, but also in France. In general, his work hardly manifests an admiration of the West, which has been emphasized by the Arab commentators of his book.⁹⁵ Al-Wardānī does not seem to be easily astonished by what he encounters in Europe, which may be related to the fact that he was a student of Khayr al-Dīn, who had probably passed on to him his knowledge of the European civilization of the period. Al-Wardānī does not emphasize the civilizational differences between the Arab world and Europe, although he is certainly aware of them. At the same time, however, he does not cut himself off from reality, as was the case with al-Kardūdī, who, contrary to the facts, would point to the superiority of the Arab-Muslim civilization over the Western one, also in terms of technology, because, in his opinion, technological advancements would soon lead to the collapse of the West.⁹⁶ Al-Wardānī manifests his dignity by not falling to his knees before Europe but at the same time does not indulge in self-admiration, and therein lies the great value of his somewhat forgotten work.

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⁹⁴ For a list of thirty seven manuscripts, see P é r è s, *L’Espagne vue par les voyageurs musulmans de 1610 a 1930*, 63. See also al - W a r d ā n ī, *al-Riḡlah al-Andalusīyah*, 77–79.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., al - S a t t ī, “al-Adīb al-tūnusī ‘Alī al-Wardānī mukallifan min al-sultān bi-him-mah ‘ilmīyah fī Isbānyā.”

⁹⁶ See al - K a r d ū d ī, *al-Tuḡfah*, 92.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Marek M. DZIEKAN, Towards a Reconstruction of the Intellectual Past: ʿAlī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī and His *Al-Riḥlah al-Andalusīyah*

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The aim of the paper is a presentation and analysis of the account made by ʿAlī al-Wardānī, a Tunisian official and writer, of his trip to Spain in 1887. While the nineteenth-century Arab travel literature is quite rich and an object of extensive research, al-Wardānī’s journey was only briefly discussed in 1937 by Henri Pérès and has not been studied more deeply since that time. Al-Wardānī came from Tunisia and arrived in Istanbul together with Khayr al-Dīn, who highly appreciated his talents. During his service in Turkey, Sultan Abdülamid sent a group of intellectuals to study collections of Arabic manuscripts in Eu-

rope. Al-Wardānī found himself as a translator in a group led by Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Shinqīṭī, which had the aim of examining, among other things, the Arab collections at El Escorial and in Andalusian libraries. The result of the expedition was a report prepared for the sultan by al-Shinqīṭī and a memoir of the journey written by al-Wardānī, the latter originally published in parts in various issues of the journal *al-Ḥaḍīrah* from 1888 to 1890 and as a separate, fully edited book only in 1984.

Keywords: ‘Alī al-Wardānī, Tunis, Spain, Andalusia, journey

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Marek M. DZIEKAN, Ku rekonstrukcji przeszłości intelektualnej. ‘Alī Ibn Sālim al-Wardānī i jego *Ar-Rihla al-Andalusiyya*

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Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie i próba analizy relacji ‘Alego al-Wardānīego, tunezyjskiego urzędnika i pisarza, z jego podróży do Hiszpanii w roku 1887. Chociaż dziewiętnastowieczna arabska literatura podróżnicza jest dość bogata i pozostaje przedmiotem badań naukowych, podróż Al-Wardānīego pomijana jest w arabistyce i została jedynie omówiona (dość pobieżnie) przez Henri Pérèsa w roku 1937. Al-Wardānī przybył z Tunezji do Stambułu wraz z Hayr ad-Dīnem, który wysoko cenił jego umiejętności. Podczas służby Tunezyjczyka w Turcji sułtan Abdülamid wysłał grupę wykształconych ludzi do zbadań europejskich zbiorów rękopisów arabskich. Al-Wardānī znalazł się jako tłumacz w grupie kierowanej przez Muḥammada Maḥmūda aš-Šinqīṭīego, której celem było zbieranie między innymi zbiorów w Escorialu i w bibliotekach andaluzyjskich. Efektem tej wyprawy był raport sporządzony dla sułtana przez Aš-Šinqīṭīego oraz dokonany przez Al-Wardānīego opis podróży, wydrukowany pierwotnie w gazecie „Al-Ḥaḍīra” w latach 1888-1890, a zredagowany w całości i opublikowany jako książka dopiero w roku 1984.

Słowa kluczowe: ‘Alī al-Wardānī, Tunezja, Hiszpania, Andaluzyja, podróż

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THE CHALLENGE OF POST-TRUTH

Sylwester ZIELKA

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 Sassower, “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 Zimmemann, *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 Grygienc, *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. Löffstedt (London: Routledge, 2019), 26–43.

³³ See Anthony Pratkins 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 Ptaszek, *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. Archer, *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

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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

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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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“GUARDIANS OF THE TRUTH” Journalists’ Resistance to the Algorithmization of Journalism

In defending their identity, journalists put professional values, such as objectivity, to the fore and argue that people are better than machines in view of cognitive, affective and moral abilities. They emphasize that algorithms are data-driven and inherently error-prone, leading to unexpected and unintended results and, in general, that algorithmic journalism is low-quality journalism. Furthermore, journalists take it for granted that society needs them as journalists to speak the truth and act ethically.

FAKE NEWS AND POST-TRUTH

Fake news refers to intentionally designed and presented false information or misleading statements¹ disseminated through planned channels and manipulating the cognitive processes of the recipient. In this interpretation, fake news is a modern version of disinformation related to cyberspace and social networks,² but it differs from disinformation in that its distribution channels are purposefully designed and planned.

Fake news comes in the form of images, texts, and videos. Among all these forms, those whose content is the most difficult to confirm include urgent information with very high propagation and reports and opinions on socially important issues that fit into conspiracy theories.³ Fake news is one of the elements of the so-called post-truth.⁴ “Post-truth” is a term illustrating the falsification of reality in the media space in order to build the popularity of an

¹ See Axel Gelfert, “Fake News: A Definition,” *Informal logic* 38, no. 1 (2018): 84.

² See Edson C. Tandoc, Joy Jenkins, and Stephanie Craft, “Fake News as a Critical Incident in Journalism,” *Journalism Practice* 13, no. 6 (2019): 686.

³ See Victoria L. Rubin, Yimin Chen, and Nadia K. Conroy, “Deception Detection for News: Three Types of Fakes,” *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 1 (2015): 4.

⁴ See Maciej Flader, “Postprawda jako efekt błędnego poszukiwania prawdy,” *Teologia i Człowiek* 44, no. 4 (2019): 41.

individual or a political party,⁵ as well as falsifying other areas of social life. Understood in this way, it reduces truth to a derivative of popularity, and man to a verifier of content.⁶

TRUTH IN JOURNALISM IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

In the light of the rich tradition of scholarly research devoted to truth in journalism, post-truth and fake news signal the end of the project of shaping knowledge by promoting the scientific model as the only legitimate one.⁷ They also challenge the normative vision of journalism as an important, fact-based, and rational element of democratic public life.⁸ For decades, this idea was based on the belief in an “open mind” that enables one to take an authoritative position on reality. The consensus of the elites on issues fundamental to the functioning of societies included a “regime of truth” based on scientific knowledge. This post-ideological way of thinking was supposed to supplant totalitarian ideologies and signify the triumph of science.⁹ Knowledge was anchored in scientific principles defining truth-telling, and scientific truth was the core of the post-ideological doctrine.

The hegemony of this scientific “regime of truth” was based on the scarcity of information available to the end recipients of media messages. The ideal of “professional journalism,” understood as an important part of the truth-forming system, was gaining in popularity. The professional aspirations of journalists grew at that time, and the hierarchical division of knowledge flowing from the elites and experts consolidated the status of journalists as selectors and providers of information and its interpretation.¹⁰

This post-ideological order is no longer valid. The crisis of the technocratic liberal order consists, among other things, in an erosion of trust in facts and in journalism, and in the politicization of science. Moreover, the popularity of the Internet has destroyed the vertical structure of knowledge production and

⁵ See Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, s.v. “Post-truth,” <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/post-truth>.

⁶ See F l a d e r, “Postprawda jako efekt błędnego poszukiwania prawdy,” 41.

⁷ See Silvio W a i s b o r d, “Truth Is What Happens to News,” *Journalism Studies* 19, no. 13 (2018): 1869.

⁸ See Mats E k s t r ö m, Seth C. L e w i s, and Oscar W e s t l u n d, “Epistemologies of Digital Journalism and the Study of Misinformation,” *New Media & Society* 22, no. 2 (2020): 209–10.

⁹ See Jami C o h e n - C o l e, *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 243.

¹⁰ See W a i s b o r d, “Truth Is What Happens to News.”

dissemination.¹¹ The frontiers of knowledge have become fluid, and dispersed communities, anchored in beliefs and ideologies, have unlimited opportunities to communicate, free of journalistic intervention. In the digital environment, the presence of fake news and post-truth shows that truth is the result of the social interpretation of reality, and collective sense-making in an environment of digital platforms and social media, and only a fraction of the content passes through the filters of modern journalistic “arbiters of truth.”¹² Such general conditions are conducive to destabilizing the narrative of truth dissemination by professional journalists, and concepts of factual and reasonable truth-telling are challenged or simply ignored.

ALGORITHMIC JOURNALISM

Today’s technological innovations contribute to an uncontrolled and virtually infinite stream of information.¹³ Artificial intelligence algorithms are able to create readable content through data analytics (deep data analysis, data mining).¹⁴ Their potential is growing, not least because access to data is constantly increasing; every day mankind produces more than 2.5 quintillion bytes of data.¹⁵ To a large extent, algorithms can autonomously create textual and visual journalistic content in many formats, including long articles, headlines, tweets, and industry reports with graphic visualizations, as well as multiple versions of the same article for specific client needs.

Thus in practice, we are dealing with a new type of journalism: algorithmic journalism in which the content is created and distributed using algorithms, various types of data, and natural language generation and processing techniques. This type of journalism is referred to as “robot journalism”¹⁶ or “automated

¹¹ See Mats Ekström and Oscar Westlund, “The Dislocation of News Journalism: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Epistemologies of Digital Journalism,” *Media and Communication* 7, no. 1 (2019): 263–65.

¹² See Waisbord, “Truth Is What Happens to News.”

¹³ See Gregory P. Perreault and Patrick Ferrucci, “What Is Digital Journalism? Defining the Practice and Role of the Digital Journalist,” *Digital Journalism* 8, no. 10 (2020): 1219–20; Jan Krefť, *Władza algorytmów: U źródeł potęgi Google i Facebooka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2019).

¹⁴ See Noam Lempelshtrich Latař, “The Robotic Journalist in the Age of Social Physics: The End of Human Journalism?” in *The New World of Transitioned Media*, ed. Gali Einav (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 68.

¹⁵ See Bernard Marr, “How Much Data Do We Create Every Day? The Mind-Blowing Stats Everyone Should Read,” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2018/05/21/how-much-data-do-we-create-every-day-the-mind-blowing-stats-everyone-should-read/?sh=6ab9ca4c60ba>.

¹⁶ See Arjen van Dalen, “The Algorithms behind the Headlines: How Machine-Written News Redefines the Core Skills of Human Journalists,” *Journalism Practice* 6, nos. 5–6 (2012): 648.

journalism.”¹⁷ For the purposes of further argument, it is assumed to be “the advanced use of computing, algorithms and automation to gather, evaluate, compose, present and distribute news.”¹⁸

ALGORITHMIC JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC IDENTITY

Although individuals may consider themselves to be part of many different social groups, social identities often manifest themselves in occupations and professions.¹⁹ This is no different in the media environment, where the practiced profession seems to form the basis of a large part of the identity of journalists²⁰; an occupation is understood as a set of characteristics, beliefs, and values that people use to define themselves in specialized, skill- and education-based activities.²¹

This professional identity determines work-related attitudes and ethical behavior. It includes self-acceptance based on traits, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences²² and is built around normative practice, professional boundary-setting, and the concept of roles.²³ In this context, it should be emphasized that journalists are very proud to be members of their own professional community and strongly guard the definition of who can and cannot be part of this group.²⁴ Research also confirms that the professional identity of journalists is not very flexible.²⁵

As for ethics, in the context of the expansion of algorithmic journalism, the “shifting of responsibility” is noteworthy. An individual human being working

¹⁷ See Matt Carlson, “The Robotic Reporter: Automated Journalism and the Redefinition of Labor, Compositional Forms, and Journalistic Authority,” *Digital Journalism* 3, no. 3 (2015): 416.

¹⁸ Neil Thurman, Konstantin Dör, and Jessica Kurnert, “When Reporters Get Hands-on with Robo-Writing: Professionals Consider Automated Journalism’s Capabilities and Consequences,” *Digital Journalism* 5, no. 10 (2017): 1241. All translations are our own.

¹⁹ See Glen E. Krenner, Elaine C. Hollensbe, and Mathew L. Sheep, “Where Is the ‘Me’ among the ‘We’? Identity Work and the Search for Optimal Balance,” *Academy of Management Journal* 49, no. 5 (2006): 1031.

²⁰ See Carlson, “The Robotic Reporter,” 422–24.

²¹ See Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior,” in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. Stephen Worchel and William G. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 7–24.

²² See *ibidem*.

²³ See Mark Deuze, “The Changing Context of News Work: Liquid Journalism for a Monitorial Citizenry,” *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 855–57.

²⁴ See Patrick Ferrucci and Tim Vos, “Who’s In, Who’s Out? Constructing the Identity of Digital Journalists,” *Digital Journalism* 5, no. 7 (2017): 869.

²⁵ See Dominic L. Lasorsa, Seth C. Lewis, and Avery E. Holton, “Normalizing Twitter,” *Journalism Studies* 13, no. 1 (2012): 23–24.

as a journalist is no longer the only “moral agent.” Numerous other actors (journalists and non-journalists) are involved in creating content, such as media users and algorithms, programmers, data collectors and managers.²⁶ Still, journalists claim a special position and power in establishing the truth,²⁷ although such claims are increasingly difficult to defend. Many platforms shape communities, which in turn determine the meaning and veracity of messages without the help of conventional truth-keepers. Journalists and their weakening institutions are confronted with governments and opinion-makers waging propaganda wars and fighting for control over news and its interpretation. Above all, however, they are confronted with users creating and sharing content, and platforms managing the main streams of information.²⁸ The traditional information order is collapsing.

TRUTH AND THE NORMATIVE PRACTICE OF JOURNALISM

The basic normative practice, namely the verification of veracity before publication, remains the core of journalistic identity. This underlies the status of authority in describing and defining reality. The commitment to telling the truth is also part of journalists’ discursive strategy in presenting their expertise. Such a commitment is the “essence of journalism,” distinguishing it from propaganda, entertainment, and art.²⁹ Commitment to the pursuit of truth is the first criterion for evaluating any work described as journalism. It is a basic “principle of journalism”³⁰ and an ethical duty.³¹

However, as Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel note in their classic work on the basics of journalism, it is a peculiar truth because truths are subject to revision, but meanwhile we act on them because they are necessary, and

²⁶ See Marko Milošavljević and Igor Vobič, “Human Still in the Loop: Editors Reconsider the Ideals of Professional Journalism Through Automation,” *Digital Journalism* 7, no. 8 (2019): 1112.

²⁷ See Marcel Broersma, “The Unbearable Limitations of Journalism,” *International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 1 (2010): 23; Barbie Zelizer, “When Facts, Truth, and Reality Are God-terms: On Journalism’s Uneasy Place in Cultural Studies,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 101.

²⁸ See Jan Kreft, *Władza platform: Za fasadą Google, Facebooka i Spotify* (Kraków: Universitas, 2022).

²⁹ See Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007): 71.

³⁰ See Marek Chyliński, “Prawda jako zasada dyskursu dziennikarskiego,” *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 15, no. 2 (2014): 153.

³¹ See Katarzyna Konarska, “Media i prawda—czy mit prawdy?,” *Colloquia Anthropologica et Communicativa* 3 (2011): 203.

therefore journalism seeks a practical and functional form of the truth. This is not true in an absolute, philosophical or scientific sense, but is rather a pursuit of truth that can be acted upon in everyday life. Therefore, journalistic truth is a process that begins with the professional collection and verification of facts, then journalists try to provide a reliable description of their meaning.³² Such fact-checking gives the profession a unique status as one that confers a special kind of authority on journalism and establishes professional jurisdiction over news (although in practice there is no clear-cut procedure for consistently checking information).³³ Along with authority and expertise, journalistic identity is related to the central role of journalists in directing media production and circulation processes.³⁴

JOURNALISTS TOWARDS ALGORITHMIC JOURNALISM CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHANGE

Research on journalists’ attitudes towards algorithmic journalism interprets journalistic identity as a source of resistance, but also as encouragement towards change under the pressure of efficiency, and as a resource for coping with uncertainty.³⁵

Algorithmic journalism is perceived as particularly destructive to journalistic professional activity, especially to journalists’ sense of job security.³⁶ In addition, journalists generally reject solutions that undermine their exercise of control over media content and appear to be a conservative community protecting its professional boundaries and rejecting solutions that violate the principle of the journalist deciding what the audience sees, hears, and reads.³⁷ Information created by a machine is therefore seen as a threat to the profession itself, as well as to journalists’ employment, and fears of technology are inherent in their work.³⁸

³² See Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, 36.

³³ See Michael Schudson and Chris Anderson, “News Production and Organizations: Professionalism, Objectivity and Truth-Seeking,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2009), 96.

³⁴ See Seth C. Lewis, “The Tension between Professional Control and Open Participation,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 6 (2012): 837.

³⁵ See Tamara Witschge and Gunnar Nygren, “Journalistic Work: A Profession under Pressure?,” *Journal of Media Business Studies* 6, no. 1 (2009): 56.

³⁶ See van Dalen, “The Algorithms behind the Headlines,” 652.

³⁷ See Carlson, “The Robotic Reporter,” 429.

³⁸ See Pablo J. Boczkowski, *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 25.

In defending their identity, journalists put professional values, such as objectivity, to the fore and argue that people are better than machines in view of cognitive, affective and moral abilities.³⁹ They emphasize that algorithms are data-driven and inherently error-prone, leading to unexpected and unintended results and, in general, that algorithmic journalism is low-quality journalism.⁴⁰ Other research shows that journalists also underestimate the importance of algorithmic journalism.⁴¹ Furthermore, journalists take it for granted that society needs them as journalists to speak the truth and act ethically.⁴²

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHOD

With the emergence and spread of expansive automated journalism, the role of the journalist is fundamentally changing. In these circumstances, the following general research questions were formulated: (1) How do journalists perceive algorithmic journalism in the light of professional values? (2) How do journalists define their identity in the face of algorithmic journalism? (3) What arguments do they give for their reasons?

Other issues, such as economic pressures and the possibility of journalists losing their jobs in the face of the expansion of algorithmic journalism, were not considered in the study. Despite the awareness of their importance, it was recognized that these issues go beyond the established research framework.

A semi-structural interview was chosen as the research technique. The choice was dictated by the need to access data not available through indirect observation.⁴³ In addition, interviews are a time- and economically efficient way of investigating complex and subtle phenomena. The choice of an interview allowed for the open exploration of the topic and the possibility for the interlocutors to express their opinions and ideas in their own words, and to control the course of the conversation while being free to continue individual

³⁹ See Richard Susskind and Daniel Susskind, *The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150–53.

⁴⁰ See Jaemin Jung, Haeyeop Song, Youngju Kim, Hyunsuk Im, and Sewook Oh, “Intrusion of Software Robots into Journalism: The Public’s and Journalists’ Perceptions of News Written by Algorithms and Human Journalists,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 71 (2017): 293.

⁴¹ See Mary Lynn Young and Alfred Herida, “From Mr. and Mrs. Outlier to Central Tendencies: Computational Journalism and Crime Reporting at the Los Angeles Times,” *Digital Journalism* 3, no. 3 (2015): 382.

⁴² See Lewis, “The Tension between Professional Control and Open Participation,” 845.

⁴³ See Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2002); Mirosława Kaczmarek, Iwona Olejnik, and Agnieszka Springer, *Badania jakościowe – metody i zastosowania* (Warszawa: CeDeWu, 2018).

threads, and to ask all the interlocutors the same questions.⁴⁴ The interview data were transcribed verbatim and grouped, then analyzed for common patterns and themes. Some of the interviewees asked to remain anonymous.

The research was conducted among 18 respondents working for media organizations located in Poland. The respondents were journalists with over ten years of experience in the media. Their role was limited to the creation of content, and, in their work, they were confronted with content creation algorithms (mainly in the sports and financial sections) and recommendation algorithms. In order to diversify the workplaces of the interviewees, journalists representing the so-called traditional media (press, radio, television) and the media created in a digital environment were selected for the research. Some of the journalists were also employed in various editorial offices dealing with information, politics, economics, sports, culture, religion, automotive issues, lifestyle, science, tourism, health, art, entertainment, music, and so-called premium content.

The interviews were conducted from 2020 to 2021 (the full list of interviewees is included in Appendix 1). The interlocutors were assigned reference designations with consecutive numbers. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Board of Research Federation of WSB & DSW Merito Universities.

Before the study, the journalists were informed about the possibilities of content creation and distribution as part of algorithmic journalism. Based on the initial conversations, most of the interlocutors have heard about the work of advanced technologies based on artificial intelligence. They had general knowledge of the technological possibilities of innovation and knew about the existence of simple algorithms or templates for content such as the weather forecast, the stock market or sports news. The journalists had no programming skills.

RESULTS

Data analysis allowed for the identification of key topics, which were divided into three broad categories: (1) the potential for creating and distributing fake news, (2) defending the status quo: the strengths of the journalist vs. the disadvantages of algorithmic journalism, (3) journalists on their superiority: a catalogue of qualities. Each of these categories is outlined below.

⁴⁴ See Kristin G. Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods in Social Research* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002).

FAKE NEWS CREATION AND DISTRIBUTION POTENTIAL

Algorithmic journalism is presented by journalists primarily in the context of it posing a threat to the fundamental journalistic principle, which is to provide true information. The potential for the creation and distribution of fake news is in the foreground: “Artificial intelligence, all mechanizations and robots can generate more harmful and false content, such as fake news, than reliable content, i.e., that which is verified by the human mind, not an algorithm. I believe that a machine cannot be taught morality and ethics.” (Int. Int.).

There were also references to specific mechanisms affecting an increase in the risk of disinformation: “If artificial intelligence begins to ‘suck in’ information, for example, from publicly available sources, it may also learn that the cellular network is carrying the Covid pandemic virus. If it is not able to sift out this type of information, it can become a source of disinformation in a moment.” (Int. GN). “If some information appears very often, an algorithm might prompt that this is true ... the algorithm may not distinguish between truth and lies, and accept a false theory which is strongly sponsored in posts, and cause disinformation.” (Int. Rz).

Deepfake was considered as a serious danger: “This is a much more convincing and dangerous phenomenon than falsifying a text itself. From what I read, it may be a major problem for journalism in the coming years.” (Int. Onet).

Another threat is that regarding responsibility for posted and distributed fake news, especially if its original source is attributed significant credibility. One of the interlocutors notes: “The main disadvantage is the issue of ethical responsibility for the material generated by artificial intelligence. This may have social consequences, because, for example, it will change people’s behavior. Providing false information will result in someone making a bad decision or it may cause panic, an artificial threat, etc. Who bears responsibility in such cases? Not a machine, not artificial intelligence. Is it the person who pressed the Enter key or the one who is the head of the given media organization? This is a fundamental problem for me: the danger that among the ethical issues to deal with will be the question about the responsibility for the consequences of using artificial intelligence.” (Int. F1).

DEFENDING THE STATUS QUO

THE STRENGTHS OF THE HUMAN JOURNALIST

AND THE WEAKNESSES OF ALGORITHMIC JOURNALISM

Referring to ideal journalism, the interlocutors compared what they considered to be human qualities, which testify to the advantage of journalists, with the defects of algorithmic journalism. They indicated that their basic competences involve critical thinking and action which meet the standards of relevance and adequacy and they compared those qualities with the unreflec-

tive thinking of a machine, described by them as thoughtless, or deprived of the ability to connect cause and effect. "No automated tool can reach the level reached by real journalists who write the truth." (Int. TVN).

The interlocutors attributed credibility only to humans. It was described as a "precious currency" which "cannot be automatically obtained, because it is something that journalists work for for years." (Int. R). Among the advantages of journalists (and the disadvantages of automatic content creation), the unique possibility of the verification of content was emphasized: "It seems to me, however, that verification by a real journalist and sticking to the basic rules regarding information verification, taking responsibility for these publications—this cannot be done by any machine, automaton or program." (Int. TVN).

"CATALOGUE" OF THE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF HUMAN PERFORMANCE JOURNALISM

A catalogue of the unique qualities of human performance journalism emerged from the analyses of the data on the characteristics that interviewees believe determine the superiority of traditional journalism over algorithmic journalism. The following characteristics recurred in the statements:

(a) Sensitivity and empathy: "Humanity, after all, has a greater empathy, and sensitivity, which I don't think even the best machine will ever develop. It will be possible to entrust the machine with a number of different tasks, but certainly not with the assessment of reality, sensitivity, empathy, and making analyses that are peculiarly human." (Int. KAI).

(b) Spirituality: "A true journalist is not only a sensitive person, but a specifically spiritual one. By this I mean that he or she is a creator of cultural goods and at the same time has a mission to change the world for the better, simply guided by a higher good. It may sound exalted, but I believe that this is something unique that makes this profession different from others." (Int. TVP).

(c) Following the truth: "The very idea of truth seems to me to be unique to journalism. I can't imagine that algorithms will follow it. Maybe one day, but I hope I won't live to see it, because it would shatter my whole world." (Int. RZ).

(d) Morality and ethicality, which algorithms "cannot be taught." (Int. Int.).

(e) Operating with particular stylistic devices: "When writing articles or books, a machine would not render certain modes of expression correctly. After all, it is not able to convey energy, a joke, humor, a certain writing style." (Int. R).

(f) Creativity: "Creativity is needed in journalism, but also sensitivity, and probably no machine will have this." (Int. TK). "I believe that this is something that a computer will not be able to do—it is about human creativity. The intention with which Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, for example." (Int. Onet).

(g) Social engagement: “Robots will create a message and maybe it will even be perfect in form, it will have commas well inserted, because algorithms are really capable of creating a lot, but they will never create a socially engaged text.” (Int. WP).

(h) Imagination: “(A machine) will never replace the products of human imagination. It is not about creating fiction, especially in agency journalism, but about imagination understood as a certain predisposition and sensitivity attributed only to man.” (Int. KAI).

The above mini-catalogue consists of unique characteristics, indicated by the respondents, of the profession practiced by the “human” journalist. Since individual respondents gave different justifications for their position, in individual cases more than one statement related to an individual feature was presented.

DISCUSSION

In previous studies relating to the potential of artificial intelligence in creating and identifying information, both threats and opportunities were observed.⁴⁵ Our interviewees focused on the disadvantages, especially on the potential for creating and distributing fake news. Such interpretations seem natural, because the development of algorithmic journalism concerns the most important element of journalists’ professional identity—the verification of the veracity of information before publication. In addition, the use of hard-to-analyze algorithmic systems in content creation and distribution leads to problems with transparency as a key principle of journalistic ethics.⁴⁶

These issues were approached from different perspectives: the journalists looked for further arguments that would sanction the preservation of the status quo, i.e., professional identity built around their control over content and defining what is the truth. This is related, for example, to responsibility (including moral responsibility) for the content produced, which is one of the most significant problems of the gradual delegation of moral issues to artificial intelligence.

The journalists focused their statements on the uniqueness of the human journalist, an attribute which, in their opinion, is to ensure protection against being replaced by an “automaton/robot.” Sensitivity and empathy were emphasized as well as other features (the mini-catalogue) that journalists consider to be exclusively human. One of the key strengths is the ability to distinguish the

⁴⁵ See Young and Hermda, “From Mr. and Mrs. Outlier to Central Tendencies: Computational Journalism and Crime Reporting at the Los Angeles Times.”

⁴⁶ See Nicholas Diakopoulos and Michael Koliska, “Algorithmic Transparency in the News Media,” *Digital Journalism* 5, no. 7 (2017): 809–28.

truth, because in their opinion, the distinction between truth and lies is beyond the reach of artificial intelligence and seems to be the greatest challenge.

*

With the development of algorithmization, the processes of content selection, filtration, and dissemination are evolving. While earlier journalists had a key influence on the above-mentioned processes, they gradually lost control over the process of creation and, even more so, of distribution of content; the control in question was transferred to programmers and managers of digital organizations, especially media platforms. The loss of such a control also contributes to an evolution from “fact-checking journalism” to deprofessionalization of journalism⁴⁷. Users and programmers play an increasingly important role, while the role of professional journalists decreases, and algorithmic journalism is generally free from the obligation to prove the credibility of sources.

At the same time, a discourse is emerging around issues such as content quality, access to and provenance of data, the “authority” of algorithms and their objectivity,⁴⁸ and responsibility for algorithmically created and distributed content.⁴⁹ These and other issues, for example, the accuracy of reported facts, constitute ethical challenges to algorithmic journalism. The algorithmization of journalism shifts the responsibility for content. The journalist is no longer the primary moral actor, as other agents,⁵⁰ of a journalistic and non-journalistic nature, such as, for example, algorithms, media organizations, NLG programmers/service providers, and data managers are involved in news creation at various levels. Thus, the importance of the individual decreases, while the importance of media organizations and the media system as moral agents increases.

Although qualitative research does not allow for generalizations, the interviews reveal tendencies to defend journalistic professional identity in the face of the expansion of algorithmic journalism. This defense, on the one hand, focuses on emphasizing the shortcomings of algorithmic journalism, and on the other hand, on emphasizing the unique competences of a “real” journalist. Importantly, none of the interviewees mentioned fake news created by journalists. What emerges

⁴⁷ See Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*.

⁴⁸ See Matt Carlson, “News Algorithms, Photojournalism and the Assumption of Mechanical Objectivity in Journalism,” *Digital Journalism* 7, no. 8 (2019): 1117–18.

⁴⁹ See Nicholas Diakopoulos, “Algorithmic Accountability,” *Digital Journalism* 3, no. 3 (2015): 401–2.

⁵⁰ See Barbara Trybulec, “Podmiot czy agent? Rozumienie podmiotowości w erze artefaktów poznawczych,” *Filozofia i Nauka* 2, no. 8 (2020): 89–115.

from the research is a picture of high competence (and good intentions) of “human truth journalism,” and potentially flawed algorithmic “fake news journalism.”

The identity of journalists in the context of their profession was constructed by our respondents around the declared care for the standards of public discussion, including, above all, care for presenting the truth. Journalists identified themselves as advocates of the quality of discourse, alluding to the (imaginary) role of “journalists as guardians of the truth” and depositaries of unique professional competences.

Annex 1

In-text reference	Media	Journalistic specialization
Television		
(Int. TVP)	Telewizja Polska (TVP)	News journalist
(Int. Polsat)	Polsat	News journalist
(Int. TVN)	TVN	News journalist
News service		
(Int. Onet)	Onet	Cultural journalist
(Int. WP)	Wirtualna Polska	News journalist
(Int. Int.)	Interia.pl	News journalist
Press/website		
(Int. R)	Rzeczpospolita	News journalist
(Int. GW)	Gazeta Wyborcza	News journalist
(Int. TK)	Tygodnik Katolicki	Religious journalist
(Int. GN)	Gość Niedzielny	Science journalist
(Int. E)	Eurosport	Sports journalist
Radio		
(Int. RZ)	Radio Zet	News journalist
(Int. RMF)	RFM FM	News journalist
News agency		
(Int. IAR)	Informacyjna Agencja Radiowa	News journalist
(Int. KAI)	Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna	News journalist
(Int. PAP)	Polska Agencja Prasowa (PAP)	National journalist
Freelancer		
Int. F1	Freelancer	Religious journalist
Int. F2	Freelancer	Cultural journalist

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Jan KREFT, Monika BOGUSZEWICZ-KREFT, and Mariana FYDRYCH, “Guardians of the Truth”: Journalists’ Resistance to the Algorithmization of Journalism
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Regardless of the term used, be it “robot journalism,” “automated journalism,” “algorithmic journalism” or “machine-written journalism,” the process of automatic content creation and distribution is progressing in the newsrooms. Meanwhile, exercising control over the creation and distribution of news is considered a fundamental element of journalists’ professional identity. The article presents the results of research on the perception of algorithmic content creation conducted among journalists in the context of their professional values and identity. The research was conducted with a qualitative method using a semi-structured interview technique with 18 journalists employed in leading Polish media. According to the study, algorithmic journalism is perceived by journalists primarily in the context of posing a threat to the fundamental journalistic principle of providing true information: what they bring to the fore is the potential for creating and spreading fake news. The respondents, who defended their journalistic professional identity, compared the disadvantages of algorithmic journalism with the unique competences of “human” journalists,

perceiving the latter as advocates of concern for the quality standards of social discourse and as “guardians of the truth.”

Keywords: truth, post-truth, journalistic identity, algorithmic journalism

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Jan KREFT, Monika BOGUSZEWICZ-KREFT, Mariana FYDRYCH, „Strażnicy prawdy”. Opór dziennikarzy przed algorytmizacją dziennikarstwa

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Bez względu na użyte terminy – od „dziennikarstwa zrobotyzowanego” (robot journalism), „zautomatyzowanego” (automated journalism), „algorytmicznego” (algorithmic journalism) i „pisanego maszynowo” (machine-written journalism) – w redakcjach postępuje proces automatycznego tworzenia i dystrybucji treści. Tymczasem sprawowanie kontroli nad tworzeniem i dystrybucją wiadomości jest uznawane za podstawowy element tożsamości zawodowej dziennikarzy. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań dotyczących postrzegania przez dziennikarzy algorytmicznego tworzenia treści w kontekście wartości zawodowych oraz własnej tożsamości. Badania przeprowadzono metodą jakościową wykorzystując technikę częściowo ustrukturyzowanych wywiadów z 18 dziennikarzami zatrudnionymi w czołowych polskich mediach. Jak wynika z badania, dziennikarstwo algorytmiczne jest odbierane przez dziennikarzy przede wszystkim w kontekście zagrożeń dotyczących fundamentalnej zasady dziennikarskiej, jaką jest przekazywanie prawdziwych informacji, ponieważ na pierwszy plan jest wysuwany potencjał tworzenia i dystrybucji fake news. Badani, broniąc dziennikarskiej tożsamości zawodowej, konfrontowali wady dziennikarstwa algorytmicznego z unikatowymi kompetencjami „ludzkich” dziennikarzy, postrzegając ich jako orędowników dbałości o standardy jakości dyskursu społecznego i „strażników prawdy”.

Słowa kluczowe: prawda, postprawda, tożsamość dziennikarska, dziennikarstwo algorytmiczne

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OVERCOMING UNTRUTH

Adam FITAS

PATHS TO THE TRUTH On the Key Value in the Works of Józef Mackiewicz

For Mackiewicz, the most important mission of literature was transmission of anthropological knowledge, that is, the knowledge of man, in particular that provided in the twentieth century, which abounded in new, often extreme or limit situations. According to the author of the “Road to Nowhere,” the literary ideal consists in writing which, on the one hand, is—like science—sensitive to factual detail and, on the other, remains close to man owing to the author’s use of his personal testimony, experience, and, above all, literary evocation of the world.

A motto repeatedly invoked in various contexts by one of the most outstanding Polish writers of the twentieth century states that “only the truth is interesting.”¹ It seems that if we associate this declaration with works representing literary realism, such as those authored by Józef Mackiewicz, the meaning of the quoted words is rather unambiguous. However, once we study Mackiewicz’s novels more carefully, it turns out that the question of truth in them is by no means obvious and that the truth the writer constantly pursues embraces several different elements. In this paper, I will try to outline these elements and then argue that, according to Mackiewicz, objective (natural), or even transcendent truth, while it may not be attainable, provides the necessary intellectual horizon for a proper creative approach.

THE TESTIMONY

Józef Mackiewicz was a prose writer and a journalist whose main genres of literary expression were reportage, novella, and novel. A vast majority of his output is connected with a specific place and time, namely, with Central and Eastern Europe (the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania) of the first half of the twentieth century. Mackiewicz was particularly interested

¹ Józef Mackiewicz, “Literatura contra faktologia,” in Józef Mackiewicz, *Wielkie tabu i drobne fałszerstwa* (London: Wydawnictwo Kontra, 2015), 334. The article was first published in the Parisian monthly *Kultura* (Culture) (1973, nos. 7–8). Unless stated otherwise, all translations are by Dominika Bugno-Narecka.

in the ways the so-called little homelands² developed and absorbed the new ideologies of the time, specifically the communist totalitarianism. Today he is considered among the most important anti-communist writers.³ However, Mackiewicz also analyzed—with equal keenness—the consequences of the German Nazism, as well as those of more particularistic (e.g., Polish, Lithuanian, and Belarusian) nationalisms.⁴

His output is largely based on personal testimony. Born in 1902, in St. Petersburg, Mackiewicz spent his childhood in Vilnius (which, at the time, was still in the Russian Empire), and, as a young man, fought in the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1919–1920. His writers's skills were shaped during the time he worked as a journalist and reporter for the Vilnius-based newspaper *Słowo* (The Word) who traveled to almost every corner of the north-eastern lands of the then Polish Republic (including the territories of today's eastern Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia). In September 1939, after World War II began, he also witnessed Vilnius occupied by, respectively, the Lithuanians, the Soviets, and the Germans.

Thus describing the truth whose source is his own eyewitness testimony became one of the main tasks of Mackiewicz's prose. Occasionally he shows the events he witnessed in non-fiction texts, albeit ones not devoid of important literary qualities. An instance of such prose might be Mackiewicz's pioneering monograph on the Katyn massacre and his shocking reportage depicting the mass murder of Jews in Ponary near Vilnius.⁵ The two testimonies in question

² A little homeland is a place of residence, usually in one's childhood and youth, which profoundly shapes one's identity, especially the creative awareness of writers and artists. The concept of little homelands is particularly useful with reference to the inhabitants of Central and Eastern European countries, especially in the context of the twentieth-century Polish writers in exile. In addition to Józef Mackiewicz, patriotism related to a little homeland can be found, among others, in the works of Czesław Miłosz, Stanisław Vincenz, Jerzy Stempowski, Józef Wittlin, and Andrzej Chciuk.

³ See Włodzimierz Bolecki, *Ptasznik z Wilna: O Józefie Mackiewiczu; Zarys monograficzny* (Kraków: Arcana, 2022).

⁴ See, in particular, Katarzyna Bałżewska, "Losers, Winners, and Their Crimes in the Context of the Themes of Józef Mackiewicz's *Selected Works*," *The Polish Review* 58, no. 4 (2013): 71–79; Katarzyna Bałżewska, "Anticommunism as a Paradigm of Thinking: On the Works of Józef Mackiewicz," *The Sarmatian Review* 34, no. 1 (2014): 1799–811; "Eastern Europe in the Shadow of a Propaganda War: Józef Mackiewicz and Totalitarian Propaganda," in *War and Semiotics: Signs, Communication Systems, and the Preparation, Legitimization, and Commemoration of Collective Mass Violence*, ed. Frank Jacob (London: Routledge, 2021), 282–98.

⁵ See Józef Mackiewicz, *The Katyn Wood Murders*, trans. Lew Sapieha (London: Hollis and Carter, 1951; London: The World Affairs Book Club, [1952]; New York: British Book Centre, 1952). See also "Testimony of Joseph Mackiewicz (through Roman C. Pucinski, Interpreter)," in *The Katyn Forest Massacre: Hearings before the Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation of the Facts, Evidence, and Circumstances of the Katyn Forest Massacre*, Eighty-Second Congress, No. 2505 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), Part 4 [London, 16–19 April 1952], 867–81; Józef Mackiewicz, "The Ponary 'Base,'" trans. Julian J. Bussgang, in: *Polish*

were considered by Czesław Miłosz as specific mementoes of the twentieth-century and instances of literature that strives to be as faithful to the historical reality as possible.⁶ Writing about Mackiewicz in his book on the history of Polish literature, Miłosz noted: “His descriptions have the power of an eye-witness report.”⁷

Hence, it is not only the two mentioned testimonies, but a majority of Mackiewicz’s work which is based on his personal experience. This characteristic is certainly evident in the case of his activity in the twentieth-century interwar period when, as a reporter, he portrayed the north-eastern lands of the Second Polish Republic in a new and hitherto unknown way. However, the same can be said about his fiction. A good example of a novel based directly on the author’s personal experience is the *Road to Nowhere*,⁸ a book well-known to English readers. By expressing his personal testimony through the experience of various characters, Mackiewicz included in the novel one of the most shocking—not only in Polish literature—images of the devastation caused by the Soviet occupation.

Thus, to Mackiewicz, testimony, conceived as a means to reconstruct the truth and make it possible for the reader to experience it tangibly, in an almost sensory way, is the primary literary tool. However, it is not the only one he uses for that purpose.⁹

THE EXPERIENCE

Closely related to testimony, as it also concerns his autobiographical perception of the external world, personal experience is the second component part of the truth sought by Mackiewicz. The author of *Road to Nowhere* did

Jew—Polish Soldier (1939-1945), eds. Stanisław Borkowski and Hugo Schlesinger (Warsaw: The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2010), 127–34.

⁶ See Czesław Miłosz, “Koniec Wielkiego Xięstwa (o Józefie Mackiewicz),” *Kultura*, no. 5 (1989): 114.

⁷ See Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), 536; see also: Katarzyna Bałewska, “Józef Mackiewicz—Czesław Miłosz: The Story of Their Relationship in the Context of Émigré Disputes,” *The Polish Review* 63, no. 4 (2018): 3–22.

⁸ See Józef Mackiewicz, *Road to Nowhere* (London: Collins Harvill Press, 1963; Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964). See also Katarzyna Bałewska, “Sovietization as an Experience of Violence: Everyday Life and its Significance During the Occupation of the Vilnius Region (1940–1941) in Józef Mackiewicz’s Novel *Road to Nowhere*,” *The Polish Review* 65, no. 2 (2020): 59–82.

⁹ See Adam Fitas, “Testimony and Literature: The Prose of Józef Mackiewicz,” *The Sarmatian Review* 36, no. 1 (2016): 197–85.

not emphasize this element very often. However, he refers to it directly in one of the texts included in the recent extended edition of his works.¹⁰ Following German scholars, Mackiewicz traces the genesis of the valorization of experience as an important cognitive tool back to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. He also quotes the famous words of Patrick Henry, one of the founding fathers of the United States: “I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience.”¹¹ Mackiewicz then elaborates on the maxim by adding that experience “can only be gained by coming into contact with as many people as possible, thus expanding the circle of light coming from the lamp.”¹²

Indeed, Mackiewicz’s many-thousand-kilometers-long travels through the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the period between the two world wars combined into a unique anthropological journey which gave him an opportunity to mix with the high, the low, and the lowest of this world, as well as to visit capitals and rural areas, cities and even the tiniest villages. No wonder that the rich, multifaceted personal experience he then gained became—side by the side with personal testimony—an important aspect of the truth, “the only interesting thing” he wished to put into words. Personal experience is the only tool we have at our disposal that makes it possible for us, on the one hand, to appreciate the diversity of the world and, on the other hand, to juxtapose various events and human destinies in order to compare them.

Thus it was experience—together with an eyewitness view and tangible contact with reality—that sharpened Mackiewicz’s instinctive opposition to communism, a system in which human life bears “nothing of knowledge, nothing of curiosity, nothing of experience.”¹³ “Truth must not be sought there, nor must it be drawn from experience, but from *Prawda* (Truth) or from *Krótki kurs historii Partii Komunistycznej Bolszewików* (A short course in the history of the Bolshevik Communist Party).”¹⁴

Mackiewicz’s way of experiencing various aspects of the world around him, the non-anthropomorphic ones (nature being not merely the scenery for people’s actions) as well as those related to the human life and activity (in time

¹⁰ See Józef Mackiewicz, *Dziela*, vols. 1-36 (Londyn: Kontra, 1993–2024).

¹¹ Patrick Henry, “Give me liberty or give me death”: *Speech to the Second Virginia Convention Meeting at Henrico Parish Church (now St. John’s Episcopal Church, in Richmond, Virginia) (1775)*, Red Hill: Patrick Henry National Memorial, <https://www.redhill.org/primary-sources/give-me-liberty-or-give-me-death/>.

¹² See Józef Mackiewicz, “Sowiecka równość,” in Mackiewicz, *Wrzaski i bomby* (Londyn: Wydawnictwo Kontra, 2021), 337. The article originally appeared in *Lviv and Vilnius*, a Polish emigration magazine published in London. See Józef Mackiewicz, “Sowiecka równość,” *Lviv and Vilnius*, no. 92 (1948): 2.

¹³ Mackiewicz, “Sowiecka równość,” in Mackiewicz, *Wrzaski i bomby*, 338.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

of war and in time of peace, in their urban and rural settings), became another means for him to approach objective truth independently. It was Mackiewicz's ambition to capture the actual, objectively existing states of affairs in his prose.

THE DOCUMENT, OR THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While the two already described approaches Mackiewicz used to grasp truth in his prose were related to his individual biography and his personal experiences it embraced, the other two, which he would frequently adopt, may be considered as part of the public and institutionalized domain.

The first such trustworthy medium of historical truth is history and its sources. The author of *The Katyn Wood Murders* shows an awareness of this fact already in his earliest journalistic pieces, which include not only transcripts of his conversations with people and his own comments, but also references to specific official letters, documents, and all kinds of written sources (articles, books, brochures, etc.). Relating historical facts, his novels frequently include bibliographies of texts which the writer used while constructing the plots.

Indeed, a method Mackiewicz often used first as a reporter, and then as a novelist consists in comparing various types of testimonies and lived through experiences with the existing historical documentation. Such a practice, intensified by Mackiewicz's belief that the twentieth century, in particular the period after the Bolshevik revolution, is characterized by a proliferation of historical documents, resulted in his case in a conscious writing strategy which aimed to show that the fate of hundreds of thousands of people depended on such documents, while circulars and orders issued in secluded chancelleries or government offices shifted the borders of countries and changed the fate of entire societies and nations. In the text in which Mackiewicz confesses that "only the truth is interesting," he formulates the following thesis regarding the essence of his own work: "In the novels set against the background of historical events, I am fascinated with what I call the confrontation of the human fate with the historical document."¹⁵

As a result of the "invasion of the document," he witnessed Mackiewicz's works do not resemble a traditional historical narrative, but impress the readers as instances of modern writing exposing intertextual relationships as well as relations between history we know from recorded sources and its existential course inherent in testimony and lived experience.

¹⁵ See Mackiewicz, *Literatura contra faktologia*, 330.

THE EVOCATION, OR THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

A society (nation) wishing to explore the truth has still another means at its disposal, albeit one approached rather suspiciously, namely, literature. Continuing his argument quoted above, Mackiewicz adds: "Why, then, not limit yourself to the document itself? Why additionally use a novel? It seems to me that it is to express this truth in its entirety. For how else can we not only present things in another form, but also express the spiritual side (*Geist*), the emotional side of past events? Which is not only the other half of documentary truth, but sometimes even the more important one. It will not be replaced by even the most precise, albeit dry set of facts."¹⁶

It is worth noting that, according to Mackiewicz, the best way to show existential truth (in its spiritual, emotional or experiential aspect) is embedding it in a literary work. Only literature has means, such as evocation or imagery, which enable not only cognitive, but also polysensory communication. Only thanks to literature can personal testimony, personal experience and, in particular, the document be passed on to be co-experienced.

The two quotations I will use will illustrate the above thesis. The first one comes from Mackiewicz's monograph about Katyn, the second from *Road to Nowhere*.

I shook my head and stood watching. Before me lay the opened pit, and at the bottom of it, layers and layers, packed tightly like sardines in a tin—corpses. Uniforms and overcoats—Polish uniforms—"Sam Browne" belts, buttons, boots, ruffled hair on the skulls, now and then a mouth open in a distorted gasp. The rain had stopped by now, and a pale sun thrust through the branches of the pines. Tit-pi-tit! The little bird raised its voice in joy. The sun shone right into the bottom of the pit, and for a second glinted on a golden tooth which stuck out from an open mouth of one of the corpses. They had forgotten to knock out that one... Tit-pi-tit! It was ghastly! Arms and legs entangled, everything pressed down as if by a roller. Row after row, faded and dead, hundreds and hundreds of innocent defenseless soldiers. A Virtuti Militari Cross on the breast of a body in the top row, with its head pressed under the boot of a comrade. The next one lay face downwards, still in his cap, which was an exception. All the others in overcoats, their shapes scarcely discernible in that sticky, slimy mass. Mass! A word beloved in the Soviet Union!¹⁷

It reminds me of the pond that belonged to my father-in-law, God rest him. It was a small pond. I still remember when I came out at dawn and looked at the water and it was as blue as frozen fingers; the night turned pink... and later on fine days it became clearer and clearer, till at noon if the sun was out, it would shine like a monstrosity.... When it fell into shadow it became as green as a leaf, and in the

¹⁶ Ibidem, 335.

¹⁷ Mackiewicz, *The Katyn Wood Murders*, 147.

evenings it was different again.... When it rained the pond looked like lead; it was dull and heavy. Now if something were to happen which caused that pond to be like lead at dawn, and like lead in the midday sun, and like lead in the glow of sunset, as well as being like lead in the rain, if it were always the same leaden color and you knew that it would never change, then I for one wouldn't want to live near such a pond, not even if it were full of fish, not even if I could catch them in my hands.¹⁸

It does not take a skilled literary eye to recognize the above excerpts as Mackiewicz's first attempts at literary writing or to notice not only the cognitive, but also the emotional, pictorial, and experiential character of his text. In fact, we are dealing here with literature at its best, where communicative aspects are combined seamlessly with elements of artistic language. The immensity of the Soviet crime and the grayness of life in the communist system are expressed by means of a polysensory evocation, which—insofar as it is possible in language—brings us closer not only to dry facts, but above all, to their pictorial and existential dimension.

For Mackiewicz, the most important mission of literature was transmission of anthropological knowledge, that is, the knowledge of man, in particular that provided in the twentieth century, which abounded in new, often extreme or limit situations. According to the author of the *Road to Nowhere*, the literary ideal consists in writing which, on the one hand, is—like science—sensitive to factual detail and, on the other, remains close to man owing to the author's use of his personal testimony, experience, and, above all, literary evocation of the world.

THE NATURAL TRUTH

One can rightfully say that the writing ideal described above is utopian and practically unattainable. Interestingly, although Mackiewicz's thinking went along similar lines, he would never deviate from his chosen path leading to truth. His approach can be described as maximalist: he was determined to be as close as possible in his writings to fully objective truth which he described as natural truth. For that purpose he would use all the available means, which was tantamount to recourse to the literary practices described above. In the prologue to the novel *Kontra*, one of the most beautiful instances of his prose, the writer captures the following image of truth:

There are two truths in the world. The first is that which tightly encircles the Earth and faithfully mirrors in water the cirri swimming above. It reverberates with the

¹⁸ Mackiewicz, *Road to Nowhere*, 347.

echo in the mountains. It registers accurately the sough of the forest and of reeds on the lake. It knows where each stone ought to lie in a shallow brook and why such a stone foment a murmur of perpetual purl. This truth hears the lightest rustle of an insect and the most trivial word of man. It never smiles, however, even when it shines with the sun through the petals of an apple tree in the spring. But it does not frown either, it does not twist its face in anger even when it forms clouds from cirri and drives them above the flat earth, auguring a tempest. It shows neither love nor hate. It does not mock anything, because it does not consider anything on earth risible. It does not bewail anything, because nothing on earth seems to deserve such lament. It does not change anything and does not distort anything. He who killed a fly killed a fly. He who killed a man killed a man. It is perfectly indifferent, because it is perfectly impartial. It is the complete truth, because it is natural.¹⁹

The author realizes that such truth (knowledge) is unattainable by man (including by himself as a writer), because its nature is transcendent and resembles the omniscient gaze of God. However, this does not mean that such truth does not exist or that efforts need not be intensified to get as close to it as possible. Our duty to strive to attain this truth can even be called fundamental, since our mission in this world—and particularly in present-day reality—is, among others, to expose opportunist interpretations of truth clad to look like truth itself. In the cited prologue to *Kontra*, Mackiewicz portrays the other, i.e., falsified truth:

This other truth apparently consists solely of good and evil. But anyone who believed it would be mistaken, because its good and evil are relative concepts. This truth never rests, and, as a result of this, it seldom reflects things accurately. This is why its face often contorts with a wry sneer or an angry grimace. As it is constantly on the move, it can barely follow a mass of human words and gestures. It maintains that it tries to register these as accurately as the first truth, but in reality it tries only to adapt them to its relative purposes, and in the rush of life it distorts a great deal. It might appear that this truth is as superficial as a morning haze, which will be dispersed by the first sunrays or scattered by a morning wind. But this is not so, because it stays on the surface, clinging to scraps of the first truth. Spreading over the earth, it invokes the same woods, fields and sources, calls on witnesses, whether the trills of a bird, the cry of a torn cat, or a man's blood, skillfully summoned before the tribunal of human imagination, yet always omits other witnesses.... This second truth cajoles, dissembles, raises arms to the sun, swears at the rain and tempest. It promises everything, but seldom honours its promises.²⁰

Ultimately, the mission of not only a writer, but also any human being who aspires to independent thinking should be to strive for the best possible knowledge

¹⁹ See Józef Mackiewicz, *Kontra* (Londyn: Wydawnictwo Kontra, 1988), 9. Translated by Nina Karsov. Special thanks to Mrs. Nina Karsov for the opportunity to use this unpublished translation.

²⁰ Ibidem, 9–10.

of the natural truth.²¹ For Mackiewicz, the search for and the recognition of this truth is not merely a mission of an individual writer, but the essence of culture constituted by it. Any other purpose, or horizon, of inquiry amounts to accepting falsehood and to a negation of man's nature. It was predominantly in the twentieth century ideological aberrations that Mackiewicz saw symptoms of the cognitive collapse of man.

The author of *Road to Nowhere* believed that objective truth is so diverse and so rich (and therefore so interesting!) that everything else pales in comparison with it or in its light. For this reason, probably not quite fairly, he appreciated only realistic writing and disregarded any recourse to fantasy, grotesque or abstraction. He believed that all such methods of expression—when juxtaposed with tangible reality—are inevitably bound to impoverish the theme they are meant to examine. Throughout his literary and journalistic work, Mackiewicz focused on the most faithful (veristic, even photographic) approach to the natural truth. A study of his literary explorations reveals that personal testimony and experience, as well as his historian's and writer's expertise, were particularly relevant to his style and marked his journey towards the truth.

In his pursuit of truth, however, Mackiewicz was aware of (and repeatedly emphasized) the cognitive limitations of an individual human being. Therefore, he never claims a license for truth or argues that the truth he expounds is exclusive. Rather, he invites his readers to a lively debate and welcomes polemics. His output manifests exceptional open-mindedness and underscores the freedoms of thought and speech as the fundamental values on the path to truth.²²

²¹ Interestingly, what Mackiewicz calls "natural truth" is similar to the classical understanding of truth. The classical concept of truth originates from the thought of Aristotle: "This will be plain if we first define what truth and falsehood are: for to say that that which is is not or that which is not is, is a falsehood; and to say that that which is is and that which is not is not, is true." Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV, 7, 1011b 25-28, trans. Christopher Kirwan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 23–24. The concept was reformulated by St. Thomas Aquinas as the correspondence of a judgment with the state of affairs to which the judgment refers: *Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 16, a. 1, co., Corpus Thomisticum, <https://www.corpusthomisticum.org/sth1015.html>). "Truth is a correspondence between the intellect and the thing." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso, University of Notre Dame, <https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddoso/summa-translation/TOC-part1.htm>).

²² See Józef Mackiewicz, *Triumph of Provocation*, trans. Jerzy Hauptmann, S. D. Lukac, and Martin Dewhirst (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). The book gives an outline of Mackiewicz's worldview and points to the coincidence of the pursuit of truth and the freedom of speech as the key characteristic of his output.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Adam FITAS, Paths to the Truth: On Truth as the Key Value in the Works of Józef Mackiewicz

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Truth is the key value in both the journalistic and the artistic prose of Józef Mackiewicz (1902–1985), one of the most outstanding Polish writers of the 20th century and a classic of the anti-communist thought. The author of the article shows the paths Mackiewicz follows in his attempts to approach objective (natural) truth. The paths in question include testimony, experience, history, and literature. Each of the paths is presented in the article in detail and illustrated with examples drawn from the writer's works.

Keywords: Józef Mackiewicz, truth, testimony, document, history, literature

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Adam FITAS, Drogi do prawdy. O kluczowej wartości w dziele Józefa Mackiewicza
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Prawda jest kluczową wartością zarówno w prozie publicystycznej, jak i artystycznej Józefa Mackiewicza (1902–1985), jednego z najwybitniejszych

polskich pisarzy dwudziestego wieku oraz klasyka myśli antykomunistycznej. Autor artykułu pokazuje, jakimi sposobami (drogami) Mackiewicz stara się zbliżyć do prawdy obiektywnej (przyrodzonej). Są to: świadectwo, doświadczenie, historia i literatura. Każda z tych dróg jest w artykule szerzej zaprezentowana oraz zilustrowana wybranymi przykładami z twórczości pisarza.

Słowa kluczowe: Józef Mackiewicz, prawda, świadectwo, dokument, historia, literatura

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TRUTH VERSUS “THE POSTWAR TRUTH”
Jerzy Peterkiewicz against the Idealization
of the Communist Ideology in Postwar Great Britain

In post-war British society, the ideology of communism was accepted as a philosophical thought based on the lofty ideas of equality, sharing, and working for the case of the common good which were understood literally. Geographically and politically distant from the countries where communism became a factually incorporated system, the Left in Britain endeavored to propagate their ideology by adapting it to the British reality.

What is post-truth? The relatively new term, which has been in use for about thirty years now,¹ does not necessarily describe a newly emerged phenomenon. However, unlike in the case of numerous other words, such as “postwar,” “postcolonialism” or “postcovid,” the prefix in “post-truth” does not denote a chronological order, neither is its meaning the same as that of “after”. Thus “post-truth” is not tantamount to “after truth.” Rather, the term in question is used to describe a social and political situation in which truth is no longer crucial, having become antiquated and dominated by a new reality.²

The *Cambridge Dictionary* provides the following definition of post-truth: “relating to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts,”³ as well as some relevant sentence examples (“The referendum was the first major vote in the era of post-truth politics.” “He dubs the current administration a ‘post-truth’ White House.” “The world has entered an era of post-truth politics”⁴). Indeed, the last of the quoted examples may be considered as essential for interpreting the events, discussions and manipulations taking place in the world of politics, whether we look at it from the contemporary or the historical perspective. While our particular viewpoints may certainly differ, depending on our nationalities, the cultures we live in, and on our experience, as well as on

¹ For the first recorded use of the term, see Steve T e s i c h, “The Watergate Syndrome: A Government of Lies,” *The Nation* 254, no. 1 (1992): 13.

² See Vittorio B u f a c c h i, “Truth, Lies and Tweets: A Consensus Theory of Post-truth”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 47, no. 3 (2020): 347.

³ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “post-truth,” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pl/dictionary/english/post-truth>.

⁴ Ibidem.

our outlook upon the world, the idea of post-truth as such has become universal in Western politics and essential for analysis of the mechanisms it uses.⁵ The concept of post-truth is also not without significance in the context of research and discussion of the origins of various totalitarian systems.⁶ Indeed, “post-truth” as a semantic tool can be employed in an analysis of the historical past and, specifically, the phenomena of nations who, tempted with fake visions of wealth and prosperity, would built political systems of enslavement and oppression. Hannah Arendt writes: “Totalitarian politics—far from being simply antisemitic or racist or imperialist or communist—use and abuse their own ideological and political elements until the basis of factual reality, from which the ideologies originally derived their strength and their propaganda value—the reality of class struggle, for instance, or the interest conflicts between Jews and their neighbors—have all but disappeared.”⁷

The aim of the article is to outline the perception of the communist ideology as interpreted by representatives of certain social movements in post-war Great Britain on the one hand, and by Polish émigrés who—mainly for political reasons—settled there after the war, on the other. The contrast between these perceptions is acutely visible in the works of the émigré poet, novelist and translator Jerzy Pietrkiewicz,⁸ one of those who—after the war was over—decided not to return to the communist Poland.

⁵ See Frieder V o g e l m a n n, “The Problem of Post-truth: Rethinking the Relationship between Truth and Politics,” *Behemoth: A Journal on Civilisation* 2, no. 11 (2018): 19–21. See also John A m b r o s i o, “Problematising Truth-telling in a Post-truth World: Foucault, *Parrhesia*, and the Psycho-social Subject,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 54, no. 12 (2022): 2133–44; Stuart S i m, *Post-Truth, Scepticism & Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 11–41; Janusz G r y g i e n c, *Democracy in the Post-truth Era: Restoring Faith in Expertise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 2–21.

⁶ See Rudy A l b i n o d e A s s u n ç ã o, “Joseph Ratzinger e o primado da verdade na política: um confronto com Hannah Arendt,” *Lumen Veritatis* 6, no. 24 (2013): 89–110; Francisco Javier A n s u á t e g u i R o i g, “Post-verità e menzogna: Variazioni su Hannah Arendt,” *Governare la paura*, April 2019: 19–34.

⁷ Hannah A r e n d t, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973), xv.

⁸ Jerzy Pietrkiewicz, who since 1958 used the surname Peterkiewicz, was born in 1916 in Fabianki, Poland, and died in 2007 in London. As a young poet, he was influenced by the poetic group called the Authentists, who focused on nature and personal experience in their works. After the outbreak of World War II, Pietrkiewicz fled Poland and, in 1940, arrived in Great Britain. He graduated from the University of St. Andrews and then defended his doctoral thesis at King’s College, London. In 1953, his first English novel, *The Knotted Cord*, was published. See Jerzy P i e t r k i e w i c z, *The Knotted Cord* (London: Heinemann, 1953). In the following years, he wrote seven more novels, including: *Loot and Loyalty*, *Future to Let*, *Isolation*, *The Quick and the Dead*, *That Angel Burning at My Left Side*, *Inner Circle*, and *Green Flows the Bile*. See Jerzy P i e t r k i e w i c z, *Loot and Loyalty* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Heinemann, 1955); Jerzy P e t e r k i e w i c z, *Future to Let* (London, Melbourne and Toronto: Heinemann, 1958); Jerzy P e t e r k i e w i c z, *Isolation* (London:

To most Polish people who found themselves in Great Britain after the war, the decision whether to stay there or travel back to their homeland was in a way obvious: only few dared to go back. In fact, at least half a million Poles who had fled their country during the war remained in exile in Western European countries. Moreover, many of them considered those who did return as traitors who accepted the Soviet rule. Even Stanisław Mikołajczyk, during the war Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile, who took the risky decision to go back, was not spared such disparaging remarks. Yet the issue of whether to return or not was not merely a matter of political affiliation. To the ex-soldiers, those who had fought in the Allied forces, it was a grave risk: once they came back, they could be arrested, sent to prison or otherwise persecuted, unless they declared full cooperation with the newly established communist regime.⁹

It was against such a background that serious antagonisms appeared in the circles of Polish intellectuals in London. Addressing, in 1945, the situation of the Poles in exile, Tymon Terlecki, a literary critic and historian of Polish literature, emphasized their disappointment and the huge shock they experienced at the political decisions taken in Yalta, which he described as a "gigantic

Heinemann, 1959); Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Quick and the Dead* (London: Macmillan, 1961); Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *That Angel Burning at My Left Side* (London: Macmillan, 1963); Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *Inner Circle* (London: Macmillan, 1966); Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *Green Flows the Bile* (London: Michael Joseph, 1969). Jerzy Peterkiewicz is also the author of, among others, a volume of essays *The Other Side of the Silence* and a monograph *The Third Adam*. See Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Other Side of the Silence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Third Adam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975). He compiled anthologies of Polish poetry. See *Polish Prose and Verse*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (London: Athlone Press, 1956); *Five Centuries of Polish Poetry*, eds. Jerzy Peterkiewicz and Burns Singer (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960). He was the only authorized translator of the poetry of Pope John Paul II. His translations of the poems of Karol Wojtyła–John Paul II were published in the volumes: "Easter Vigil" and *Other Poems*, *Collected Poems*, and *Roman Triptych: Meditations*. See Karol Wojtyła, "Easter Vigil" and *Other Poems*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (London: Hutchinson, 1979); Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (New York: Random House, 1982); John Paul II, *Roman Triptych: Meditations*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003). On the output of Jerzy Peterkiewicz, see Alicja H. Moskalo, "Jerzy Peterkiewicz (Peterkiewicz) i jego wkład w literaturę angielską," *Zeszyty Naukowe PUNO*, no. 5 (2017): 161–69.

⁹ The case of Stanisław Skalski, one of the Polish "flying aces," a master of military aviation, is symptomatic in this respect. In 1940, Skalski fought in the Battle of Britain. He then became a flight commander in No. 316 and in No. 317 (Polish) RAF Squadrons. Having returned to Poland in 1947, he was accused by the pro-Stalinist authorities of treason and sentenced to death penalty. The sentence was changed to life imprisonment, but eventually, in 1956, he was exonerated and released from prison. See Katarzyna Ochab ska, *Stanisław Skalski*, (Gliwice: Triada, 2007); Grzegorz Sojda and Grzegorz Śliżewski, *General pilot Stanisław Skalski: Portret ze światłościem* (Warszawa: Alma-Press, 2015).

cataclysm.”¹⁰ In his opinion, they were equal to a violation of moral norms and “committing a civilizational, moral murder.”¹¹ Among Polish intellectuals, many were well aware of the tragic position of the exiles who chose to return to their—now communist—homeland. Numerous members of the Polish diaspora were against the Soviet rule in Poland and—like Józef Mackiewicz, who declared that his “nationality was an ‘anti-communist,’”¹² did not consider coming back to their country of origin. To others, including Antoni Słonimski, who considered himself as a left-wing poet, Poland still meant their homeland and a better existence. Their initial approval of the Polish government-in-exile eventually evolved during the war and was gradually replaced by mistrust. Consequently, the Polish emigrant community was increasingly antagonized, which had an impact even on the literary preferences of the writers who were among its members. Słonimski’s socialist sympathies collided with the “open” attitude of Mieczysław Grydzewski, who published, in the magazine *Wiadomości*, texts of various authors, among them contributors who opposed the Polish government-in-exile. Such differences of opinion among the intellectuals resulted in misunderstandings and fierce debates.¹³

However, a general perception of communism in post-war British society was utterly different. The ideology of communism was accepted as a philosophical thought based on the lofty ideas of equality, sharing, and working for the case of the common good which were understood literally. In 1945, the Labor Party was not the only socialist party to contest for the general election. For various reasons, the war had spawned a new left-wing party, the Common Wealth, and allowed the Communist Party to grow on an unprecedented scale,¹⁴ with its leaders proclaiming notions of equality also in the face of waves of immigrants from former colonies arriving *en masse* in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the Communist Party’s anti-racist slogans were associated with the

¹⁰ Tymon Terlecki, “Do emigracji polskiej 1945,” in: *Emigracja naszego czasu*, ed. Nina Taylor-Terlecka and Jerzy Święch, (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2003): 29. All translations are my own.

¹¹ Ibidem, 30.

¹² Quoted in Marian Stępień, “*Jak grecka tragedia*”: *Pisarz polski w sytuacji wyboru (1944-1948)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2005): 31.

¹³ See ibidem: 184–85. See also Monika Ładoń, “‘Jak my kiedyś wrócimy? Którymi drogami?’ Antoniego Słonimskiego droga do kraju,” in *Dialogi z romantycznym kontekstem: Szkice o poezji polskiej*, ed. Joanna Dembińska-Pawelec and Adam Dziadek, (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 128–51, and Katarzyna Cieplińska “‘Polski Londyn’ – środowisko polskiej emigracji w Londynie w pierwszych latach po II wojnie światowej w przekazie Jerzego Pietrkiewicza,” in *Spółeczność międzynarodowa w obliczu przemian: ujęcie wieloaspektowe*, vol. 6, ed. Aleksandra Kordonska and Roman Kordonski (Olsztyn and Lwów: UWM, 2020), 48–58.

¹⁴ See John Callaghan, “Common Wealth and the Communist Party and the 1945 General Election,” *Contemporary Record* 9, no. 1 (1995): 62–79.

idea of equality for all people.¹⁵ Such ideals appealed in particular to younger generations, advocating for the causes of social justice¹⁶. For instance, the Left Book Club, founded by Victor Gollancz,¹⁷ which propagated radical left-wing policies, gained popularity, and its main idea was to revitalize and educate the British Left.

Geographically and politically distant from the countries where communism became a factually incorporated system, the Left in Britain endeavored to propagate their ideology by adapting it to the British reality. The situation was different in Russia, the homeland of Lenin and Stalin. In Polish historiography, there are two perspectives on the policy of "war communism" in Soviet Russia during the civil war (1917–1923). Some scholars argue that it was a policy of crisis, dictated mainly by the external circumstances. Others contend that it was rather a strategy based on the utopian Marxist vision, a mad struggle to instantly implement the communist ideology.¹⁸

Skepticism about and hostility towards Bolshevik politics, recurring in Polish historical discourse, were popular among ordinary Poles; yet, the source of their knowledge was not books, but experience.

Thus, Polish émigrés in the United Kingdom and their families in Poland knew another dimension of communism, unfamiliar to the Brits, which took the form of Stalinist terror and surveillance. The popularity of the communist ideology in Britain aroused considerable indignation among the Polish dia-

¹⁵ "The Communist Party of Great Britain, as the largest organization to the left of the Labour Party and an influential body within the trade union movement, occupied an important position in the anti-racist and anti-colonial movements in Britain from the 1920s until the 1970s. As black immigration from the Commonwealth flowed into Britain between the late 1940s and early 1960s, the CPGB was involved in campaigns against racism and for colonial independence. However, it continually encountered the difficult task of situating its anti-racist activities within the wider class struggle. At the same time, the Party's traditional Marxist understanding of the issues of racism and colonialism were altered significantly by the decolonization process and the rise of new social movements. The CPGB viewed the issues of 'race' and racism, within a Marxist framework, and this had implications for the practical issues in the struggle against racism. At the core of this problem was overcoming the traditional view on the white left of black workers as still 'colonials' or 'outsiders,' whose problems had been subsumed within the wider class struggle." Evan Smith, "Class before Race: British Communism and the Place of Empire in Postwar Race Relations," *Science & Society* 72, no. 4 (2008): 455. See also Jon Lawrence, "Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 2 (1992): 163–86.

¹⁶ On youth policies in various national contexts, see Matthew Worley and Leo Goratti, "Communist Youth, Communist Generations: A Reappraisal," *Twentieth Century Communism: A Journal of International History*, no. 4 (2012): 5–13.

¹⁷ See Gordon Barrick Neavill, "Victor Gollancz and the Left Book Club," *Library Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1971): 197–215; Stuart Samuel, "The Left Book Club," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 2 (1966): 65–86.

¹⁸ See Bartosz Wójcik, "Utopia i kryzys. Lars T. Lih i rozważania wokół komunizmu wojennego," *Civitas: Studia z Filozofii Polityki* 22 (2018): 71–141.

spora. The growing approval of the left-wing political movements was hard to accept for Jerzy Peterkiewicz, who was strongly against any collaboration with the communist institutions, refused to publish his books in Poland, and opposed the idea of returning to his homeland. However, he did not want to remain silent in the face of evil, and he would openly express his outlook in his essays and autobiography, but above all in his novels, of which the *Future to Let* and *Green Flows the Bile* are most interesting in this respect.

In his autobiography, Peterkiewicz referred to the 1920 Soviet invasion of Poland, bringing out the brutality of the events it triggered. His narrative was based on the recollections of his parents. He wrote: "1920 shook the awareness of the [Polish] peasants; they learnt they belonged to a family which was a nation. 'Seize the squire's land,' the invading Red Army soldiers told them; but soon the peasants saw their own horses being requisitioned, their cattle killed, their wives and daughters raped."¹⁹

Anti-Soviet undertones come to light even more clearly in Peterkiewicz's *Future to Let*.²⁰ Set in London in the 1950s, the novel is a satire on the lives of Poles in exile. It reflects the dilemmas they faced in the new and complex political situation. Peterkiewicz describes the relations among the Polish community in London, an important center for the Polish diaspora. Their dominant feelings of having been betrayed by the Western political forces and, as a result, isolated, are acutely depicted by the writer. Unable to come to terms with their situation, they found different political parties, conflicted and fighting with each other. The idea of forming a new government in exile is vital, yet none of the parties is willing to compromise. The utopian vision of another world war, establishing the borders of Poland as they were before 1939 and making the country free from Stalinist influences seems to be the only common ideal. The choice to return to Poland some have taken is a vividly disputed subject.

Side by side with the Polish characters, the author presents English ones, such as Lancelot Thawroe, who has returned to Great Britain after a ten-year sojourn in Spain and now wants to sell a newly inherited house. However, the situation becomes complicated when he discovers that the house has a tenant, a Polish exile Celina Ogarek, who needs time to find new lodgings. Her initially perfunctory conversations with the new house owner in time turn into a passionate affair. In love with Celina, Lancelot gets involved in the political struggle between various political factions active among the Polish émigrés.

¹⁹ Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *In the Scales of Fate: An Autobiography* (London: Marion Boyars, 1993), 12.

²⁰ For an extensive analysis of the novel, see Rafał Moczko, "Satyra, paszkwil czy arcydzieło? Jerzego Pietrkiewicza 'Przyszłość do wynajęcia,'" in *Jerzy Pietrkiewicz – inna wersja emigracji*, ed. Barbara Czarnecka and Jerzy Kryszak (Toruń: Regionalny Ośrodek Studiów i Ochrony Środowiska Kulturowego, 2000), 169–88.

There are three main plots in the novel, namely, the romantic one focused on Lancelot's affair with Celina, the political one concerning Celina's father, Adam Gruda, and the moral one, related to the character of Julian Atrament, a communist spy sent to London from Poland.

Future to Let undoubtedly brings the Western reader closer to the experience of Poles living in exile on the British soil after the end of the war. The novel was even said to do it "much better than any politicians' speeches."²¹ Written in a satirical-grotesque convention, it touches upon the subject of the tragic situation of the exiles, cut off from their homeland, for whose freedom they had fought. However, the political aspects of the novel were not appreciated by critics and even earned negative comments from the author's compatriots, who pointed to Peterkiewicz's overly emotional presentation of political issues. Among them are references to the Stalinist repressive mechanisms, such as those of imprisonment and torture, to which political prisoners were subjected in the communist Poland, or the surveillance of the Polish community of exiles in London.

One of the characters in the novel, whose prototype was apparently Wincenty Witos,²² is Adam Gruda.²³ Gruda is an old man exhausted by many years of imprisonment; he is physically and mentally devastated by the communist repressions. After being kept in prison in the Stalinist Poland he is transported to London by communist secret agents (working under cover as employees of a company called Pollexport). Just as formerly, in prison, Gruda, who wants freedom and unity for the Poles, is now (in the headquarters of the Pollexport in England) administered mind-altering drugs. Under their influence, he raves and hallucinates. His pre-death vision, in which he sees a parade of skeletons, is a parody of the marches organized in communist countries to celebrate the first of May and it may be interpreted as an allegorical representation of the political situation in the Stalinist Poland where the skeletons symbolize the Polish nation. The vision begins with an introduction: "Between the happy land of the Dead and the happy land of the Blood-donors lay a state, and it lay there in state like the other two, nearly as happy and nearly as dead."²⁴ The state of "Blood donors" is visited by two honorable guests, General Knout and Marshal Pogromov (an allusion is made here to the fascist Germany and the communist Russia). The marching dead carry banners which say, "We thank

²¹ Regina Wasiał Taylor, *Ojczyzna literatura: O środowisku skupionym wokół Związku Pisarzy Polskich na Obczyźnie* (Londyn: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 2013), 107.

²² Wincenty Witos (1874–1945) was a Polish statesman and a leader of the Polish People's Party. In the 1920s, he served three times as the Prime Minister of Poland.

²³ It might be the case that the name of the character is not accidental, but a deliberate reference to Karol Wojtyła, who in the 1950s published under the pseudonym Stanisław Andrzej Gruda.

²⁴ Peterkiewicz, *Future to Let*, 202.

you for the concentration camps.’ ‘Forgive us that we cursed you in the hour of our death.’ ‘What is forgotten is forgiven. Help us to forget.’”²⁵ Soldiers shoot rifles at the dead walking with the banners, and then the living march behind them, represented by children who carry flags with yet another slogan: “We are grateful for future suffering and humiliation.”²⁶ The last group in the parade are peasants and workers. They march and sing: “We know the happiness of hunger, we know the glory of dirt, we know the wisdom of prisons, we know the smile of hell.”²⁷ Gruda’s vision expressed Peterkiewicz’s open protest against the Stalinist regime and its methods in Poland. However, the descriptions he included in his novel clashed with the overall positive sentiments about the communist ideology dominant in the British society at the time, and might be perceived as radical: therefore, they were not well received.

Another character in the novel who is directly related to the power apparatus in the communist Poland is the secret agent Julian Atrament. It is with his example that Peterkiewicz illustrates the dilemma faced by many Polish exiles, that is, whether to return to their homeland or permanently settle in a foreign country. In Atrament’s case this is also the choice between, on the one hand, subordination and servility to the inhuman regime and, on the other, freedom, which, however, brings the prospect of a life in exile and cutting the bonds with his homeland. A secret collaborator of the communist government, Atrament indeed faces a difficult decision, but, after long hesitations, decides to stay in England. To achieve his goal, he makes up a cunning plan, because the only way for him to avoid deportation is to get imprisoned. At the critical moment—pursued by agents of the Stalinist regime—he throws his dog into the river. This act arouses such indignation among the passers-by that they call the police. Thanks to his arrest, Julian avoids deportation to Poland. A British detention center paradoxically becomes his place of refuge, where he is finally free from the pressure of the communist secret service and, instead of writing denunciation letters, can now focus on a respectable occupation: that of a columnist writing for British newspapers on topics related to Polish issues.

Another novel in the political fiction series by Jerzy Peterkiewicz is *Green Flows the Bile*. Its main character, Gerald Gull,²⁸ better known as G.G., a co-

²⁵ Ibidem, 207.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem, 208.

²⁸ One may associate the protagonist’s name with the way Hanna Arendt wrote about totalitarianism: “A mixture of gullibility and cynicism had been an outstanding characteristic of mob mentality before it became an everyday phenomenon of masses. In an ever-changing, incomprehensible world the masses had reached the point where they would, at the same time, believe everything and nothing, think that everything was possible and that nothing was true. The mixture in itself was remarkable enough, because it spelled the end of the illusion that gullibility was a weakness of unsuspecting primitive souls and cynicism the vice of superior and refined minds. Mass propaganda discovered that

median and celebrity living in London, is fascinated with the Soviet Union and the communist system. The surname Gull reflects the author's attitude to the protagonist's worldview and ridicules the gullibility of individuals like him: those easily manipulated by hypocritical activists. Gull makes a dizzying career in the media by preaching the communist ideology, although privately he enjoys a life of fame and earns a fortune.

In fact, Gerald is an ex-comic who is loved by the media not for his artistic career, but for being a leading communist figure in Britain. He is regarded as the greatest propagator of equality among people and has been presented the People's Prize for Peace: “An historic week fell upon us: Labour won, Khrushchev lost, and G.G. was stranded with world peace certified in his pocket, on a handsome document he had received with his prize money.”²⁹ One day he gets a message from Moscow and goes on a tour visiting the Eastern Bloc countries, starting with Romania.³⁰ Accompanied by Miron Wilber, his secretary and biographer, he travels northwards, driving his *Volga* into the Carpathians, eastwards to Moldavia. It appears to be a sentimental journey: Gerald comes back to the places which inspired him as a young man, when he was visiting communist countries and meeting the most significant political leaders of the time: Lenin, Mussolini, Madame Lupescu, Comrade-Madame Pauker, Bierut, Rakosi, and Khrushchev.

Gerald publicly declares that the “Age of Ideological Affluence”³¹ has passed and manifests his contempt of possessions by the public destruction of other people's goods. He reads popular magazines to look for his victims and finds the right candidates for “Ideological Demolition”³² among celebrities. “Ah! There's a good chap! He found a youngish actor who claimed to be earning 330,000 dollars per film. His views were, of course, much to the Left, as good taste demanded.”³³ Having picked out the right (i.e., wealthy enough)

its audience was ready at all times to believe the worst, no matter how absurd, and did not particularly object to being deceived because it held every statement to be a lie anyhow. The totalitarian mass leaders based their propaganda on the correct psychological assumption that, under such conditions, one could make people believe the most fantastic statements one day, and trust that if the next day they were given irrefutable proof of their falsehood, they would take refuge in cynicism; instead of deserting the leaders who had lied to them, they would protest that they had known all along that the statement was a lie and would admire the leaders for their superior tactical cleverness.” A r e n d t, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 382.

²⁹ P e t e r k i e w i c z, *Green Flows the Bile*, 35.

³⁰ On the links between the British Labor Party and the government of the communist Romania, see Gavin B o w d, “The British Labour Party and communist Romania,” *Historical Yearbook* 18 (2021): 109–23.

³¹ P e t e r k i e w i c z, *Green Flows the Bile*, 146.

³² See *ibidem*, 147.

³³ *Ibidem*, 147–48.

person, Gull will trace the celebrity's address, enter their house and start breaking stuff. His rule is: the more luxurious the house, the more spectacular the show. Accompanied by his secretary, Miron, he traces the actor, whose house has been chosen as "a gem of aesthetic diversity, a style of imperial and Chinese."³⁴ Another of his rules is to ask whether the selected house has been insured. Then comes the Ideological Demolition. "Miron, we must be consistent, mustn't we? You'd better smash a few bourgeois relics in here, I am too tired to do it myself,"³⁵ says G.G. and they start smashing most valuable things in the house. Being a "darling" of the public opinion, Gerald is never criticized, arrested or sued to court. On the contrary, the journalists admire his honesty and actions disclosing the hypocrisy of "Marxist millionaires," those who claim to be for communism, but have adopted the Western style of life characteristic for the aristocracy. Still, nobody mentions the fact that Gerald himself has become a rich person and lives in a luxurious apartment. One day he comes to a paranoid reflection and considers a demolition in his place to make his actions more authentic.

Not only does G.G. perform local actions, but he goes international. His ideal would be to introduce communism all over the world, and his political struggle involves sending anonymous, provocative messages to the governments of capitalist countries of the West, saying: "We [the] undersigned demand immediate recognition of [the] German Democratic Republic by your government,"³⁶ "Long live united Korea. Death to Yankee imperialists gull,"³⁷ or "Grant legal aid to Pontecorvo."³⁸

Again, the strong political overtones of the novel, Peterkiewicz's overt allusions to the Stalinist Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and his mockery of the communist ideology were not well received by British literary critics, which did not help the book's success.³⁹ Yet the value of *Green Flows the Bile* lies in that it depicts the traps of communism. The protagonists who believe in an idealized vision of the communist society are in fact greedy, hypocritical crooks who take advantage of the gullibility of others. Although they publicly propagate the sharing of possessions, they privately gather for themselves as much as they can. Peterkiewicz describes ways in which they play with

³⁴ Ibidem, 148.

³⁵ Ibidem, 149.

³⁶ Ibidem, 71.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem. Bruno M. Pontecorvo (1913–1993) was an Italian physicist who fled to the Soviet Union in 1950. He worked there on the construction of a nuclear bomb.

The texts of the telegrams are written in capital letters in the novel and don't include punctuation.

³⁹ See Katarzyna Cieplńska, "Jerzy Pietrkiewicz's Two English Novels: *Loot and Loyalty* and *Green Flows the Bile*," *Archiwum Emigracji*, no. 3 (33) (2023): 79–93.

ideology and ways in which they play with truth, considering both the former and the latter as symptoms of dangerous social and political phenomena.

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The two novels discussed in this paper convey their author's disillusioned image of a model communist society. Writing in English, Jerzy Peterkiewicz wished to reach out to the British readers at the time when the growing popularity of the left-wing thinking in the United Kingdom seemed alarming to him. Based on the Polish experience, he pointed out the traps of the communist system implemented in post-war Stalinist Russia and in Poland. He believed that adopting the communist ideology and promoting it will only contribute to the emergence of corrupt structures and ruthless leaders, consequently turning a democratic country into a totalitarian one.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Katarzyna CIEPLIŃSKA, Truth versus "the Postwar Truth": Jerzy Peterkiewicz against the Idealization of the Communist Ideology in Postwar Great Britain

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The aim of the article is to present the idea of truth, the postwar post-truth, and manipulation in the perception of the communist ideology as interpreted by some social movements in postwar Britain in contrast to the experience of the Polish émigrés. The problem is discussed in relation to two novels by Jerzy Peterkiewicz (*Future to Let* of 1958 and *Green Flows the Bile* of 1969), a Polish émigré poet, novelist, and translator. Peterkiewicz juxtaposes the Polish perspective on communism, based on the actual experience of the Stalinist terror persecutions, with the view, popular in postwar Britain, that communism be accepted as a philosophical idea incorporating the lofty ideals of equality, sharing, and working for the common good. Peterkiewicz depicts "playing with ideology" as a dangerous socio-political phenomenon. In his view, blinding people with slogans may lead to a distortion of the meaning of words and to deviation from the actual ideals, which naturally gives way to the rise of a totalitarian system, where manipulation of truth and variously conceived post-truth results in the destruction of a democratic society.

Keywords: Jerzy Pietrkiewicz (Peterkiewicz), postwar Britain, post-truth, communism

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Katarzyna CIEPLIŃSKA, Prawda przeciw prawdzie okresu powojennego: Jerzy Pietrkiewicz (Peterkiewicz) przeciwko idealizacji ideologii komunistycznej w Wielkiej Brytanii po drugiej wojnie światowej

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Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie idei prawdy, postprawdy i manipulacji w postrzeganiu ideologii komunistycznej w interpretacji niektórych ruchów społecznych w powojennej Wielkiej Brytanii w kontraście do doświadczenia polskich kręgów emigracyjnych dysponujących wiedzą na temat stalinowskich prześladowań w kraju. Problem przeanalizowany został w nawiązaniu do dwóch powieści Jerzego Pietrkiewicza (*Future to Let* z roku 1958 [wyd. pol. *Przyszłość do wynajęcia* (2016)] i *Green Flows the Bile* z 1959), polskiego pisarza, poety i tłumacza emigracyjnego. Pietrkiewicz zestawia polskie spojrzenie na tragiczną rzeczywistość komunizmu, obejmujące faktyczne doświadczenie jego skutków, z popularnym w powojennej Wielkiej Brytanii postrzeganiem tego systemu przede wszystkim w kategoriach myśli filozoficznej, opartej na wzniosłych ideałach równości, dzielenia się i pracy dla wspólnego dobra społeczności lokalnych i całego narodu. Pietrkiewicz przedstawia igranie z ideologią jako niebezpieczne zjawisko społeczno-polityczne i ostrzega, że zaślepianie ludzi wzniosłymi, acz nie mającymi realnego przełożenia na życie praktyczne hasłami może prowadzić do wypaczania sensu słów i odbiegania od ideałów, a zatem skutkować systemem totalitarnym, w którym manipulacja prawdą i różnie pojmowanymi postprawdami może prowadzić do zniszczenia społeczeństwa demokratycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: Jerzy Pietrkiewicz (Peterkiewicz), Wielka Brytania po drugiej wojnie światowej, postprawda, komunizm

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KAROL WOJTYŁA—JOHN PAUL II
INSPIRATIONS

Piotr S. MAZUR

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF UNDERSTANDING HUMAN ACTION Hannah Arendt and Karol Wojtyła

For Arendt, action is “the one miracle-working faculty of man,” through which he initiates something new and enters the human world, while for Wojtyła, action is the ability to perform acts (agency). Arendt sees action as the individual’s readiness to manifest his individuality and uniqueness in the human world, while Wojtyła considers action as the manifestation of man’s personal status and dignity.

Hannah Arendt and Karol Wojtyła, twentieth-century philosophers interested in man and his practical activity, developed, independently, two different philosophical conceptions based on their different scholarly toolkits. They presented their respective reflections in *The Human Condition* (1958)¹ and *Person and Act* (1969),² the former being a classic work in political philosophy, while the latter a classic work in personalist ethics and anthropology. Both philosophers were well acquainted with the classical tradition and referred to it in their understanding of man and his dynamism. Arendt found the key to revealing the human condition in her analyses of the dynamisms of practical life (*vita activa*), such as labor, work, and action. Through his analyses of “man acts” (*actus humanus*)—as opposed to everything that “happens in man” (*actus hominis*)—Wojtyła sought to precisely describe the nature of the human person as an acting subject. There is no doubt that the two conceptions of action—worked out independently of each other, distinct, and in many respects antithetic—complement each other in their understanding of man and his actions.³

¹ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). Paul Ricoeur observes that although *The Human Condition* is a classic of political science, it can also be categorized as a work representing the field of philosophical anthropology, if it is understood to “mean an inquiry aimed at identifying the most enduring features of the temporal condition of man—those which are the least vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the modern age.” Paul Ricoeur, “Action, Story and History: On Re-reading *The Human Condition*,” in “On Hannah Arendt,” special issue, *Salmagundi*, no. 60 (1983): 60. The analysis of Arendt’s concept proposed here will be limited to these anthropological aspects.

² See Karol Wojtyła, “*Person and Act*” and *Related Essays*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021). See also Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Boston: D. Reidel, 1979); Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, trans. Theresa H. Sandok (New York: Peter Lang, 1993). In the present article, Grzegorz Ignatik’s translations of Wojtyła’s works will be the basis for the references.

³ There is no reference to Arendt’s work in Wojtyła’s study, which means that the two books were written independently of each other.

THE DYNAMISM OF ACTUS HUMANUS

Both Arendt and Wojtyła emphasize the fact that man's dynamism has different forms and manifestations, depending on its source, focus, and aim. In their works, both thinkers strive to characterize the activities that make up human dynamism and describe the interdependencies between them as comprehensively as possible⁴. Their distinct approaches to the intellectual grasp of such activities can be seen in that they define them by using different opposing concepts: practical activity (*vita activa*) versus theoretical activity (*vita contemplativa*) on the one hand (Arendt), and "man acts" (*actus humanus*) and "something happens in man" (*actus hominis*) on the other (Wojtyła). Both authors use these classical distinctions (albeit in different ways) to structure and develop their reflections.

According to Wojtyła, human dynamism as such is manifested in man's experiencing what happens both when "man acts"⁵ and when "something happens in man."⁶ Action is an expression of conscious and voluntary human activity, whereas what happens in man consists of a set of various dynamisms, among which Wojtyła distinguishes the somatic-vegetative dimension and the psycho-emotive dimension, as well as the drive for self-preservation, the sexual drive, and the reproductive one.⁷ Man is aware of his sundry dynamisms to varying degrees. The somatic-vegetative dynamism is manifested essentially outside consciousness, whereas the psycho-emotional one involves a participation of consciousness and is subordinate to it, although sometimes it can dominate consciousness. The dynamism of man's act is not possible without consciousness. Moreover, each form of the dynamism realizes in its own way the activity of the human being as the entire structure.⁸ Since they are activities of one and the same ontic subject, the dynamism of the fact "man acts" and the dynamism of the structure "something happens in man" oppose and complement each other. Referring to Aristotle, Wojtyła interprets the fact "man acts" as an active dynamism through which the subject manifests his self-determination, and interprets the structure "something happens in man" as a passive dynamism to which man is subjected.⁹ These dynamisms are not

⁴ See João J. V i l a - C h ã, "The Plurality of Action: Hannah Arendt and the Human Condition," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 50, no. 1/3 (1994): 477–84.

⁵ Karol W o j t y ł a, "Person and Act," in Wojtyła, *"Person and Act" and Related Essays*, 163.

⁶ Ibidem. See ibidem 163–64.

⁷ See ibidem, 324–29.

⁸ See ibidem, 164.

⁹ See Jerzy W. G a ł k o w s k i, "The Place of Thomism in the Anthropology of K. Wojtyła," *Angelicum* 65, no. 2 (1988): 189–90.

separate from each other. According to Wojtyła, their reciprocal relationship can be grasped with the use of two fundamental categories, namely: transcendence and integration.¹⁰

In a human act, the transcendence of the person—in the sense of the person transcending his self—is manifested in two ways. Firstly, it is the person's intentional crossing his boundary toward an object in his various acts of cognition and volition (i.e., "horizontal transcendence"¹¹). Secondly, any act of choosing a specific value-end by the person (or, as Wojtyła calls it, the person's self-determination) demonstrates the person's freedom in his choice of the specific object of his cognition or volition. This freedom stems from the inner reference of human volition to truth, which ensures the person's control over his dynamism (i.e., "vertical transcendence"¹²). This is particularly evident in an act of conscience, in which the person, guided by the recognized truth about the good, stands above all his volition or action and, at the same time, gains control over them. According to Wojtyła, a human act is also an expression of the integration of the person, since it transforms the plurality and diversity of dynamisms inherent in his somatic and psychological life into a superior dynamic unity.¹³ "The human act is not only a simple summation of those dynamisms, but also a new and superior dynamism in which they acquire new content and new quality: the content and quality that is properly personal."¹⁴ Thus, it is an act that links the dynamism of what happens in man with the dynamism of action and makes the entire human dynamism personal.

The person's transcendence and integration are complementary: they condition and justify each other. According to Wojtyła, transcendence is related to the active side of the dynamism of the person, which is manifested in his experiencing agency ("I am the agent"¹⁵). The components of the structure of this experience of self-determination are self-governance and self-possession, since an act can only be performed by someone who is capable of self-governance and self-possession.¹⁶ This active side of human activity corresponds to man's passive side because the subject's self-possession corresponds in him to what is possessed, and his self-governance corresponds to being governed. Undoubtedly, the conception of the thus-conceived dynamic unity of man,

¹⁰ The concepts of transcendence and integration as referred to the human person are analyzed in these considerations in relation to the theme of the dynamism of man.

¹¹ Wojtyła, "Person and Act," 221.

¹² Ibidem, 241.

¹³ See ibidem, 304.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem, 168.

¹⁶ See ibidem, 295.

which is achieved through action, is of vital importance to Wojtyła's entire anthropology.¹⁷

THE DYNAMISM OF VITA ACTIVA

Hannah Arendt is interested in the dynamism of man's action, but she understands this dynamism more broadly than Wojtyła. Apart from action, she also analyzes labor and work, focusing on the characteristics and the interactions between them.¹⁸ In her opinion, work and labor belong among "the most elementary articulations of the human condition"¹⁹ and—because of their specificity and interdependence—it is them that make this condition dynamic and historical at the same time.

Each of the aspects of the dynamism of man has its own specificity and is a response to specific challenges posed by the human condition. Labor is a result of the biological conditions of human existence and, at the same time, a response to them. Labor serves the needs of the human body as a living organism. As such, labor is oriented towards human life in general and therefore it is marked by the fragility of human existence. Work, conceived as man's activity, goes beyond both his biological dimension and the cyclical process of sustaining the survival of the human species. Work results in a world of cultural artefacts which constitutes the space of life that is proper to man: this world differs from the things that exist in nature and, as such, manifests the "unnaturalness"²⁰ and "worldliness"²¹ of human existence. The most important among the practical activities analyzed by Arendt is action, which is a response to human existence being ingrained between birth and death. Action occurs directly between people and finds expression in the public sphere, in particular in

¹⁷ See G a ł k o w s k i, "The Place of Thomism in the Anthropology of K. Wojtyła": 189.

¹⁸ Wojtyła was also interested in the issues of labor and art and he reflected on them more extensively—albeit only to a limited extent from a philosophical perspective—as Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* of 1981 and in his Letter to Artists of 1999. See J o h n P a u l I I, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html; "Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists," The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letter-s/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html.

¹⁹ A r e n d t, *The Human Condition*, 5. As Roy T. Tsao explains, Arendt's point is that "labor, work, and action derive from what she takes to be the fundamental (and numerically finite) ways in which we are able to comprehend the basic kinds of continuity and change that human beings are able to effect through their own activity." Roy T. T s a o, "Arendt against Athens: Rereading *The Human Condition*," *Political Theory* 30, no. 1 (2002): 102.

²⁰ A r e n d t, *The Human Condition*, 7.

²¹ Ibidem.

politics.²² Relationships which are specific for action are intermediated neither by things nor by matter, which distinguishes them from those characteristic of work. "Action" denotes a unique way in which individuals initiate something new, enter the human world, and manifest their freedom. The relationality inherent in action makes human existence manifest and actualize itself in the world in a network of interactions with other people. Because of this, the human condition is marked by plurality both quantitatively (the concrete human being exists among other human subjects) and qualitatively (these subjects exist in singular and unique a way). "We are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who has ever lived, lives or will live,"²³ writes Arendt. As Tsao observes, for an activity to be considered action, it must meet the most important and necessary condition: when it enters the network of social relations as a new event, story, or narrative, it must express the readiness of the person who acts to reveal who he is and what he is doing or intends to do. Otherwise, it is not possible to treat such activity as action. At the same time, other subjects involved in action must be willing and able to recognize an activity as action.²⁴

According to Arendt, in addition to its social character, human action as a process is characterized by unpredictability and irreversibility. The unpredictability of action does not mean that it is impossible to predict all logical consequences of activities undertaken by man but that it is impossible to capture the meaning of action before it is completed. Unlike work, whose results can be assessed as it progresses by referring to a given model, the meaning of action is more apparent to those who describe it than to those who participate in it.²⁵ The German philosopher links the irreversibility of action to "being unable to undo what one has done."²⁶ As Conovan observes, the social nature, unpredictability, and irreversibility of action make it impossible for anyone to ever be in control of the events of his life.²⁷ Because of the unpredictability and irreversibility of action, which for Arendt, as for Wojtyła, is a manifestation of human freedom, a paradox arises: "Nowhere ... neither in labor, subject to the necessity of life,

²² Margaret Conovan points to Arendt's distinction between the "'world' of civilisation" and the "public realm" of which the former is merely a part. Margaret Conovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 111. "The public realm is a place of discourse and action," writes Conovan. Ibidem. It is there that human beings exercise their freedom and can act spontaneously. See ibidem.

²³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8.

²⁴ See Tsao, "Arendt against Athens: Rereading *The Human Condition*": 104–5. See also Mark Button, "Arendt, Rawls, and Public Reason," in "Religion and Politics," special issue, *Social Theory and Practice* 31, no. 2 (2005): 265.

²⁵ See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 192.

²⁶ Ibidem, 237.

²⁷ See Conovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, 132.

nor in fabrication, dependent upon given material, does man appear to be less free than in those capacities whose very essence is freedom and in that realm which owes its existence to nobody and nothing but man.”²⁸

Arendt and Wojtyła share the conviction that human action is a way of manifesting who the subject that emanates it is and, at the same time, a way of the subject’s communication with other people and the world. For Arendt, action is “the one miracle-working faculty of man,” through which he initiates something new and enters the human world, while for Wojtyła, action is the ability to perform acts (agency). Arendt sees action as the individual’s readiness to manifest his individuality and uniqueness in the human world, while Wojtyła considers action as the manifestation of man’s personal status and dignity. They both see not only the positive aspects of action, but also the challenges that accompany it. According to Wojtyła, action requires man to integrate what happens in him into his personal life and to respect the axiological order in his acts. According to Arendt in turn, action requires coping with the irreversibility and unpredictability of its results. Both Arendt and Wojtyła are also aware of the paradoxes occurring in human action. Wojtyła holds that although human freedom is manifested through action, self-determination as the fulfilment of freedom consists in auto-determination. Arendt, on the other hand, points out that the unpredictability and irreversibility of action makes it more limited than work or labor.

Thus Arendt and Wojtyła direct their analyses of the human dynamism towards its two complementary aspects in an attempt to grasp, on the one hand, the permanent elements that constitute its foundation and, on the other, the dynamic and changeable elements that are its consequence. One might say that, as a result, an analysis of the dynamism of action from the individual perspective is complemented by an analysis of the same dynamism from the social or public perspective, and the quest to better understand the nature of the human subject corresponds to the quest to reveal his condition.

POLITICS BEFORE ETHICS

In their respective conceptions, Arendt and Wojtyła take into consideration various aspects of human action falling within Aristotle’s *praxis*, in which he included ethics, economics, and politics. According to Aristotle, ethics is part of broadly understood politics as a realm of human affairs.²⁹ However,

²⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 234.

²⁹ See Aristotle, *The Great Ethics*, 1181a, in *The Great Ethics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter L. P. Simpson, (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 5–6.

proper participation in political life requires having moral skills and respect for moral principles, which does not allow politics to be detached from ethics. In their works, neither Arendt nor, still less, Wojtyła breaks with the unity of human *praxis* understood in such a way, although they are interested in its various aspects and are aware of the distinctness of these aspects. Like Aristotle, Arendt considers ethics and economics (also in Karl Marx's understanding) as a sphere of private activity, while politics as the domain of public action,³⁰ and it is precisely the public sphere and politics that become the fundamental focus of her cognitive analyses of the human condition. Wojtyła studies action from the ethical perspective; he does not contrast activity in the private and public spheres or the public and social spheres as sharply as Arendt does but rather sees in social relations an extension and expansion of the personal agency of a concrete man.

What is apparent in Arendt's conception is her linking political action with the human condition as such. The omission of activities in the private sphere is the result of her conscious intention to characterize the human condition and not the condition of a particular concrete man or the condition of a particular group of people. She consistently excludes individual issues from her analyses and takes into account the conditions of action shared by all human subjects, both those that are immutable (ontological or biological) and those that are changeable and appear and disappear at a given time (technical-civilizational or cultural-social). In her opinion, such an approach to the human condition in a universalized and objectivized form can be provided only by analyses of actions of individual subjects which take place in the public sphere.

Although reflections on the moral character of action occupy a marginal place in *The Human Condition*, morality, according to Arendt, plays an irreducible role in the case of political action.³¹ She argues that morality is not limited to the sum total of the habits and customs of human behavior. However, the claim that political activity should be linked to morality differs from justifying the validity of certain principles or laws in the public sphere. In Arendt's opinion, in politics, the only source of this validity is the good will

³⁰ See Ricoeur, "Action, Story and History: On Re-reading *The Human Condition*": 66.

³¹ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt points to the presence of radical or "absolute" evil that emerges in the last stages of totalitarianism and that is not limited to the enslavement of individuals from without but also interferes in their inner world and destroys human spontaneity and social and political activity. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harvest Book, 1979), viii and 245. In her *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she in turn scrutinizes the case of German criminal Adolf Eichmann and his trial, focusing on the "banality" or even ridiculousness of evil caused by Eichmann's thoughtlessness and career drive, which predestined him to become one of the most heinous Nazi criminals. See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006), 287–88. See also Conovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, 158–64.

of acting subjects which results from their understanding of the specificity of man's action, which is subject to two fundamental flaws: irreversibility and unpredictability.³² The response to the irreversibility of action is the willingness to forgive and be forgiven, while the response to its unpredictability is the willingness to make and keep promises. According to Arendt, rules are ingrained in action and do not come from the outside of action itself, i.e., from some other faculty or from some other experience than action itself.³³ Their source is the "will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking."³⁴ Rather than being founded on external deontology, these precepts are founded on pragmatism which stems from the awareness that human action is associated with considerable risk and is thus imperfect. The postulative nature of these precepts does not mean that they are not necessary. Arendt justifies the need to respect them in political action on the grounds that they condition the continuity and permanence of human relations. "The two faculties belong together in so far as one of them, forgiving, serves to undo the deeds of the past, whose 'sins' hang like Damocles' sword over every new generation; and the other, binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationships between men."³⁵

Arendt contrasts willingness to forgive and to make promises with the traditional approach to assessing political actions from the perspective of the relationship between the means and the ends of action. In her opinion, the practice of political action reveals that all means that lead to the achievement of a chosen end are considered both permissible and justifiable. Restrictions on the use of these means always stem from a previously adopted moral system, and it is by no means certain that such a system will be adopted at all. Moreover, the very restriction of the means for the sake of the end leads to a paradox which stems from "the definition of an end being precisely the justification of the means."³⁶ Therefore, she states quite sharply that "as long as we believe that we deal with ends and means in the political realm, we shall not be able to prevent anybody's using all means to pursue recognized ends."³⁷ Her critique of the approach to assessing political action from the perspective of the fairness of the means used does not invalidate the question of the presence of moral

³² In Arendt's concept of good will, the peculiar autonomy of action, and the postulative nature of rules can be viewed as a clear reference to Kant's ethics.

³³ See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 246.

³⁴ See *ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 237.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 229.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

rules in action. The rejection of moral rules in political action motivated by pragmatic considerations does not undermine the significance of those rules, just as killing does not undermine the moral significance of the prohibition of killing. It shows the state of morality in the public sphere and the limited impact on human action of any moral precepts, including those that come from within action itself, which ultimately depend on good will to obey them.

ETHICS BEFORE POLITICS

As a personalist, Wojtyła focuses his reflections on the person, seeing in action a manifestation of the permanence and continuity of human nature. Action (an act) is an expression of this permanence and continuity; an act manifests not only freedom, but also the moral responsibility of man as its subject-agent. Due to this agency, a concrete act not only entails certain consequences, but is also subject to moral evaluation, since it is subordinated to the good of the person as the subject and goal of action. Morality—and, through it, ethics—is necessarily inscribed in the specificity of every human action which takes the form of an act, whether it occurs in the individual or in the social sphere. Wojtyła grounds his analyses in everything that morally and pragmatically conditions the action of an individual subject. This also applies to the understanding and moral or ethical evaluation of actions in the public—social or strictly political—sphere. Consequently, political action is subject to the same moral norms as action in the private sphere.

In “Person and Act,” Wojtyła does not devote much space to analyses of ethical issues in the area of social action. This is because he does not intend to enumerate or examine in detail all principles that define the conditions for morally right action in the public sphere. His main concern is to show from the metaphysical and phenomenological perspectives that every act—because of who performs it (the personal subject) and why he fulfils it (the good of the person)—is the key to understanding the dynamic nature of the person. Thus, as Tadeusz Ślipko notes, Wojtyła takes the “data of the moral experience”³⁸ as the starting point of his conception and recognizes that “our intellectual apprehension of the person in and through his actions are derived in a particular way from the fact that actions have a moral value: they are good or bad.”³⁹ As a result, Wojtyła focuses so much on explaining the dynamic aspect of moral values (the dynamic *feri*) that he even does not specify which moral

³⁸ Tadeusz Ślipko, “The Concept of Value in the Ethical Thought of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła,” *Forum Philosophicum* 1 (2006): 11.

³⁹ Ibidem.

values he has in mind.⁴⁰ This reveals that although his analyses refer to moral experience, at the same time, from the point of view of ethics, they are rather selective. The same also applies to his approach to the relationship between ethics and politics.

Wojtyła has no doubt that within social and political action it is necessary to provide such conditions that will allow the person to be an authentic agent of his actions, both from the subjective side (an agent himself) and from the objective one (the way in which social relations are arranged). According to Edward Barrett, Wojtyła derives this conviction from a more general anthropological fact: “We are social beings not only in the senses that we are affected by our human environment or need the contributions of others to secure the goods necessary to (using Aristotle’s typology) mere life and the good life. Human sociality includes these aspects but is most deeply understood as our vocation to love—to will the good of the other.”⁴¹ With this in mind, Wojtyła approaches the aforementioned problem of participation and alienation as two extreme modes of participation of the person in social action.⁴²

Following Aristotle, both Arendt and Wojtyła differentiate between the ethical and the political aspects of action, so in their analyses they basically restrict themselves to one or the other. However, this does not mean that, for Arendt, moral issues are less important than political ones; nor does it mean that Wojtyła, while focusing on morality, neglects the role played by politics and social issues. A comparison of Arendt’s and Wojtyła’s conceptions demonstrates that ethics neither replaces nor undermines the importance of political actions and, similarly, politics does not replace ethics. These are two complementary and, at the same time, interpenetrating aspects of man’s practical life within his *vita activa*. Hence, these concepts do not justify separating the public sphere and politics from morality.

It is worth mentioning that Arendt and Wojtyła came from the generation and the countries which were drastically affected by the Second World War and genocide. Despite these tragic experiences, Wojtyła’s approach strongly resonates with a belief in the validity of moral principles in the public sphere, which are viable coefficients of action. Hence, it is evident in his works that he seeks to consolidate these principles in the social and political spheres. The fundamental principle is to ensure that every person is endowed with

⁴⁰ See *ibidem*.

⁴¹ Edward Barrett, *Persons and Liberal Democracy: The Ethical and Political Thought of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 26–27.

⁴² On participation and alienation, see Alma S. Espartinez, “Karol Wojtyła on Participation and Alienation,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 12, no. 1 (2023): 33–59; Dean Edward A. Mejos, “Against Alienation: Karol Wojtyła’s Theory of Participation,” *Kritikē* 1, no. 1 (2007): 71–85, *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_1/mejos_june2007.pdf.

subjective agency and self-determination in social activity, through which his personal dignity is expressed. From the experience of her generation, Arendt draws the conclusion that traditional approaches to the moral assessment of action in the public sphere have failed. In her opinion, moral principles have little impact on the goals, motives, and *modus operandi* in politics, hence she looks for these principles in action itself and appeals to man's will to adhere to them for pragmatic reasons. Arendt and Wojtyła thus agree that moral rules for action and assessments of action can come from both without action itself (for instance, from an understanding of who the acting subject is) and from within action itself (for instance from an understanding of what conditions cooperation between different subjects). However, the two philosophers differ in their assessment of the universality of these principles and have different opinions on the possibility of justifying their validity in public life and on, most importantly, their enforceability.

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Two different—though in many places complementary—views on man and his action meet in Arendt's and Wojtyła's conceptions. The common point of reference for their analyses is the classical tradition with its Aristotelian distinction between the theoretical and practical spheres. The practical sphere is further divided into action directed towards products (art) and towards man (politics), the latter being divided into moral, economic, and political action. Wojtyła complements this division of human activities with a scholastic distinction between *actus humanus* and *actus hominis*, whereby it is clear that politics as a public domain is an expression of "man acts" rather than of "what happens in and with man." Arendt and Wojtyła know perfectly well what aspect of human activity they are analyzing and why. In their analyses of man and his action, they also share the desire to synthesize the classical philosophical tradition, whose roots lie in ancient Greece, with contemporary thought.

In his studies, Wojtyła focuses primarily on analyses of individual acts that reveal the nature of man as their agent, although he also takes social aspects into account. Arendt recognizes the importance of individual actions and assumes the subjective agency of man in action, since it is only individual subjects who act rather than the generically understood man or mankind. However, she is primarily interested in the public domain and in the political aspect of action, which significantly affects the shape of social life and the human condition. According to Wojtyła, all human action—as the action of a being who is guided by reason and free will—is moral action. Regardless of whether it takes place in the individual, social, or political spheres, it is a way of realizing the good

and is subject to moral law. According to Arendt, the action of a concrete man, as an activity distinct from work, is directed towards other people. As such, it occurs in relationships with other individuals and is conditioned by this fact. Therefore, also morality—as it involves action of the individual towards another individual—takes on a public form, and it contains a seed of political action, even though it belongs to the private domain.

A juxtaposition of Arendt's and Wojtyła's conceptions reveals their differences, as well as complementarity in their understanding of the various aspects of human action: ethical and political; ontic and socio-cultural; permanent (which manifests nature) and changeable (which manifests condition); conditioned subjectively and conditioned objectively; analyzed from the perspective of the source and from the perspective of conditions and effects. However, such an approach may give rise to an erroneous opinion that these conceptions are themselves rather one-sided. Thus, it should be emphasized that their complementarity does not stem from some fundamental lack but is a consequence of their authors' deliberate choice of the main aspect of their considerations, on which they elaborate in their other works. Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, *On Violence*,⁴³ and also *The Life of the Mind*,⁴⁴ which deals with *vita contemplativa*, can be regarded as complementary to her reflections presented in *The Human Condition*. Obvious complements to "Person and Act" are Wojtyła's essays that accompany it, including "The Personal Structure of Self-Determination,"⁴⁵ "The Person: Subject and Community,"⁴⁶ "Participation or Alienation,"⁴⁷ and "Theoria and Praxis in the Philosophy of the Human Person."⁴⁸ The subject matter of these and other works by Arendt and Wojtyła reveals that there is sufficient basis for a much broader or more detailed comparison of their views. The far-reaching parallelism of Arendt's and Wojtyła's views invites not only their comparison but also an attempt to synthesize them.

The comparison of Arendt's and Wojtyła's views presented here does not cover their diagnoses of the state of culture and the state of civilization, which together characterize the human condition in the past as well as in the times the two philosophers witnessed. It also does not cover their diagnoses of the

⁴³ See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970).

⁴⁴ See Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1981).

⁴⁵ See Karol Wojtyła, "The Personal Structure of Self-Determination: A Lecture for the Conference on St. Thomas," in Karol Wojtyła, *"Person and Act" and Related Essays*, 457–66.

⁴⁶ See Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," in Karol Wojtyła, *"Person and Act" and Related Essays*, 467–513.

⁴⁷ See Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation," in Karol Wojtyła, *"Person and Act" and Related Essays*, 514–31.

⁴⁸ See Karol Wojtyła, "Theoria and Praxis in the Philosophy of the Human Person," in Karol Wojtyła, *"Person and Act" and Related Essays*, 567–74.

state of social life, politics, and culture, or their assessment of history and the processes that take place in it. Neither does it fully describe their understanding of politics or their assessment of political, social, and cultural processes. However, including these issues in the analyses would be difficult because, firstly, Arendt died over thirty years earlier than Wojtyła, who witnessed and participated in previously unforeseeable socio-political events, such as his election to pope and the fall of communism, and, secondly, because the nature of his works changed. As head of the Catholic Church, he addressed cultural, social, political, and economic phenomena primarily from the perspective of a theologian who shaped the entire doctrine of a religious institution. At the same time, as a religious leader, he initiated certain actions and processes that had a far greater impact on social and political life than would have been the case had he been an “ordinary” man.

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Piotr S. MAZUR, Two Conceptions of Understanding Human Action: Hannah Arendt and Karol Wojtyła

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Hannah Arendt and Karol Wojtyła were two prominent philosophers of the twentieth century who sought to comprehend man by analyzing his action. Both philosophers referred to the classical tradition, but they focused on different aspects of the dynamism of human action. Arendt, by analyzing action as a practical activity aimed directly at another human being, showed the dynamic dimension of human existence. Wojtyła, through his analyses of an act, attempted to understand the nature of the human person as the subject of action. The article demonstrates that these two different and, in many respects, oppositional conceptions of human action in many places complement each other. The oppositions and complementarity of the two concepts can be seen in Arendt’s and Wojtyła’s approaches to the issues of *vita activa* and *actus humanus*, as well as ethics and politics.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, Karol Wojtyła, human action, ethics and politics, *vita activa, actus humanus*

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Piotr S. MAZUR, Dwie koncepcje ludzkiego działania: Hannah Arendt i Karol Wojtyła

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Hannah Arendt i Karol Wojtyła to dwoje ważnych filozofów dwudziestego wieku, którzy dążyli do poznania człowieka poprzez analizę jego działania. Choć oboje odwoływali się do dziedzictwa tradycji klasycznej, to biorąc pod uwagę różne aspekty dynamizmu działania, doszli do odmiennych koncepcji antropologicznych. Arendt, analizując działanie jako aktywność praktyczną skierowaną bezpośrednio na drugiego człowieka, ukazała dynamiczny wymiar ludzkiego istnienia, jakim jest kondycja ludzka. Wojtyła poprzez analizę czynu chciał wnikać w naturę osoby ludzkiej jako podmiotu działania. Artykuł wykazuje, że te dwie odmienne i przeciwstawne koncepcje podejścia do ludzkiego działania w wielu miejscach wzajemnie się dopełniają. Opozycje między omawianymi koncepcjami oraz ich wzajemnie dopełnianie się widoczne są w rozumieniu przez Arendt i Wojtyłę działania, w ich postrzeganiu natury i kondycji człowieka, a także w ujęciu przez filozofów podmiotu działania i etycznego oraz politycznego wymiaru ludzkiej aktywności.

Słowa kluczowe: Hannah Arendt, Karol Wojtyła, działanie ludzkie, etyka i polityka, *vita activa, actus humanus*

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THINKING ABOUT THE FATHERLAND...

Teresa MALECKA

THE SACRED IN HENRYK MIKOŁAJ GÓRECKI'S OEUVRE AND THE GREATNESS OF JOHN PAUL II Inspirations and Context

In an attempt to approach the issue of the sacred in Górecki's output, it seems natural to concentrate on the sacred word which is in a relationship to music, principally on how the word connects with the music, on its semantic content, message, and the contribution of music to the creation of the message. On the one hand, one can speak of a predominance of vocal-instrumental music; on the other hand, in Górecki's greatest works the word sometimes plays merely the role of a clarification, infusing with semantic content the drama created by instrumental, i.e., pure music.

Of the manifestations of the human spirit, music has a sublime task, unique and irreplaceable. When music is truly beautiful and inspired, it tells us of goodness, of the value of peace, of the sacred and divine things better than other arts do.¹

John Paul II

For me, music springs from religious concentration and meditation: from seeing clear water, green grass, wholesome forests, breathing in clean air and writing for it.²

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki

THE SACRED IN MUSIC

When the sacred in music—or the sacred dimension of music, for that matter—is contemplated, two main tendencies can be observed. A representative of the first is, for example, Thrasybulos Georgiades for whom music is essentially the profane³ but “it becomes sacred in its connection with the sanctifying

¹ J o h n P a u l I I, Discorso ai componenti del coro Harmonici Cantores, December 23, 1988, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1988/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19881223_harmonici-cantores.html. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are my own.

² Cited after: Barbara L a s e k, *Kwartety smyczkowe Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego*, Master's thesis presented at Akademia Muzyczna in Cracow in 2007 (unpublished), 215.

³ See Thrasybulos G e o r g i a d e s, *Sakral und Profan in der Musik* (München: Max Hueber, 1960), 98

word of God.”⁴ A parallel position, yet concerning literature, is held by Stefan Sawicki, who writes that “the first area [in literature] where the sacred appears is the thematic field,”⁵ adding that what he has in mind is described by terms such as “‘motif,’ ‘theme,’ or ‘plot.’”⁶ In this, he might have been inspired by a much earlier concept developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, who spoke, among other things, of works that depict objectively religious motifs borrowed from a particular religion, e.g., the birth of Christ, as told by the Gospels.⁷ The second tendency, as Waloszek claims, is represented, among others, by Bohdan Pocij who believes that the sacred can be encountered “in the very musical substance, in a specific language of sound and the structures it builds.”⁸ If we continue juxtaposing ideas on the sacred in music with Sawicki’s concept of the sacred in literature, we might be reminded that “what counts here is not works containing theological senses *per se* but those speaking of God without mentioning his name.”⁹ In the same vein, we can cite von Balthasar’s observation that the religiousness of musical works is communicated by adequate means or stylistic elements.¹⁰ This type of musical religiousness can be described as religiousness or immanent sacredness.

In a multifaceted analysis of issues related to the sacred in music, drawing (obviously) on the concepts of Rudolf Otto¹¹ and Mircea Eliade,¹² Mieczysław Tomaszewski explores the “presence of the sacred in music” from three points of view. First, there are “types of the sacred”; second, there are “kinds of music characterized by contact with the sacred” (i.e., spiritual, religious and church music, with all its variants); finally, what matters is also “the character of works reflecting their creators’ individual experience of the sacred.”¹³

⁴ Joachim W a l o s z e k, “Kategorie sacrum i profanum we współczesnej literaturze muzykologicznej,” *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne* 34 (1987): 46.

⁵ Stefan S a w i c k i, “Sacrum w literaturze,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* 71, no. 3 (1980): 169.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ See Hans Urs v o n B a l t h a s a r, “Sztuka i religia,” in *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 2, *Pisma z zakresu sztuki i religii*, trans. Marek Urban and Dorota Jankowska (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2007), 93.

⁸ W a l o s z e k, “Kategorie sacrum i profanum we współczesnej literaturze muzykologicznej”: 47.

⁹ S a w i c k i, “Sacrum w literaturze”: 169.

¹⁰ See v o n B a l t h a s a r, “Sztuka i religia,” 93.

¹¹ See Rudolf O t t o, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (München: C. H. Beck, 1987).

¹² See, e.g., Mircea E l i a d e, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1987.

¹³ Mieczysław T o m a s z e w s k i, “Muzyka wobec sacrum. Próba rozeznania,” in: *Olivier Messiaen we wspomnieniach i w refleksji badawczej*, eds. Marta Szoka and Ryszard Daniel Goliński (Łódź: Akademia Muzyczna, 2009), 39–40.

In the music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, the category of the sacred has, in a sense, a permanent presence. When asked, in 1986, about religious inspirations in his work, the composer answered: "I keep writing the same thing"¹⁴—as if he wanted to say that whether he composes a piece with an obviously religious reference or without it, or whether he uses an avant-garde language or one in which traditional qualities rejected by the avant-garde have been recreated, he "keeps writing the same thing."

One might say that the case of Górecki exemplifies a situation discussed in various studies on the connection between art and religion, for example, in that by Tadeusz Dzidek, who mentions works that "express the artist's subjective religiousness,"¹⁵ adding that from the point of view of a theological analysis of a given work, it is important that the artist's religiousness, his or her attitude of faith, is clearly revealed.¹⁶ In contrast, von Balthasar observes that a creator, if indeed subjectively religious, sees his or her material, whether religious or secular, through the eyes of an already religious person; therefore, their selection of a particular subject and the perspective they take on it are influenced by the creative religious moment.¹⁷ In addition, Dzidek highlights that it is also important to know whether an artist has experienced a crisis of faith, its disappearance, or even a religious rebellion which can find its expression in his or her specific work.¹⁸ This, however, is not the case of Górecki, who was a man of profound and unshakeable faith.¹⁹ However, Dzidek believes that the most significant fact is that "the beauty of a particular piece can be a vehicle for a journey towards transcendence."²⁰

BEAUTY

It is beauty indeed—and the message conveyed in Górecki's works—that will inspire us in the subsequent considerations. "Beauty is to enthuse us for work, and work is to raise us up"—a quote from one of Cyprian Kamil Norwid's poems is invoked by John Paul II in his Letter to Artists,²¹ in which, he also

¹⁴ The comment was made by Górecki during the seminar organised by the Academy of Catholic Theology and the Union of Polish Composers in 1986.

¹⁵ Tadeusz Dzidek, *Funkcje sztuki w teologii* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2013), 42.

¹⁶ Ibidem, 38.

¹⁷ See von Balthasar, "Sztuka i religia," 94.

¹⁸ See Dzidek, *Funkcje sztuki w teologii*, 38.

¹⁹ For an extensive discussion of this issue see Teresa Malecka, "Górecki: Homo Religiosus," *Scontri* 1 (2013): 89–96.

²⁰ Dzidek, *Funkcje sztuki*, 59.

²¹ John Paul II, Letter to Artists, April 4, 1999, Section 3, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.pdf; see Cyprian

recalls the message addressed to them by the Council Fathers: "This world ... in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair."²² "Within the vast cultural panorama of each nation, artists have their unique place. Obedient to their inspiration in creating works both worthwhile and beautiful, they not only enrich the cultural heritage of each nation and of all humanity, but they also render an exceptional social service in favor of the common good."²³ From a somewhat different perspective, Roman Ingarden remarks on the relationship between man and beauty: "Man is the only creature which can create works and situations that are in no respect useful. He creates them, rather, only for their beauty and to enrich through their existence a specifically human world."²⁴

Władysław Stróżewski speaks of beauty in the following way: "Beauty, an eternal theme in philosophy and reflection on art, has never betrayed its secret. It may be that mystery is beauty's quintessence. It may also be that mystery indeed made the word 'beauty'—whose purpose has always been, after all, to signify the essence of beauty—increasingly ambiguous and helpless."²⁵ Stróżewski's words indicate, on the one hand, the eternal nature of beauty as an object of reflection and, on the other, our helplessness when confronted with beauty. Despite that, or perhaps because of that, we are continually fascinated by beauty.

A FEW NOTES ON CONTEMPORARY ART

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was, as he would say, "an opponent of ... destruction in art"²⁶; he was also "against destroying the most precious thing in the human being—e m o t i o n."²⁷ In 2008, when pondering the condition of art, the composer spared no harsh words: "Art has been brought to a point of total devastation, destruction, almost ruin.... we now live in a time of sanctified boorishness or, as Sławomir Mrożek put it more bluntly, a time when being

Kamil Norwid, "Promethidion: Bogumił," in Cyprian Kamil Norwid, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 1, ed. Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki (Warszawa: PIW, 1968), 216.

²² John Paul II, Letter to Artists, Section 11; see Paul VI, Address to Artists (Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, December 8, 1965), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-artisti.html.

²³ Ibidem, Section 4.

²⁴ Roman Ingarden, "On Human Nature," in Roman Ingarden, *Man and Value*, trans. Arthur Szylewicz (Washington, D. C., München and Wien: The Catholic University of America Press and Philosophia Verlag, 1983), 22.

²⁵ Władysław Stróżewski, *W kręgu wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 1992), 151.

²⁶ Henryk M. Górecki, "Wystąpienie doktora honoris causa," *Teoria Muzyki: Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje*, no. 3 (2013), 111.

²⁷ Ibidem.

a boor has been sacralized.”²⁸ Outraged, he went on to say: “One might as well yell at this point, with all one’s might, ‘This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair!’”²⁹ and added: “We all probably know this quote?”³⁰

Alicja Jarzębska claims the state of culture and art described as “postmodern” is rooted in modernism. She writes: “The new (modernist) meaning of the term ‘music’ definitely departs from the centuries-old tradition of linking this concept to ancient Harmony and the myth of Apollo, and to the agreeable sense of order associated with the idea of beauty interpreted in terms of proportions and symmetry.”³¹ Jarzębska also believes that “this ‘new aesthetics,’ which rejects the idea of beauty, was instrumental for the twentieth-century reflection on art.”³² She refers, among others, to the thought of Theodor W. Adorno, who claimed: “Spiritualization in new art prohibits it from tarnishing itself any further with ... the true, the beautiful, and the good... it is art that should introduce chaos into order rather than the reverse.”³³ “Beauty ... became the ugly.”³⁴ Half a century later, Pope John Paul II—artist (poet, actor), philosopher and theologian—asked anxiously: “Is the mirror of negativity used by contemporary art not becoming an end in itself? Does it not encourage one to relish in evil, rejoice in destruction and fall, or lead to cynicism and the insult of man?”³⁵ The Pope, invoking the ancient way of thinking about beauty as being inseparable from goodness, recalled the concept of *kalokagathia* and said: “The link between good and beautiful stirs fruitful reflection. In a certain sense beauty is the visible form of the good.”³⁶

GÓRECKI’S PATH TO BEAUTY AND THE SACRED

Polish music did not evade the meanders followed by the twentieth-century music at large; however, its evolution saw the constant interplay of the political

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Alicja Jarzębska, *Spór o piękno muzyki: Wprowadzenie do muzyki XX wieku* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004), 14.

³² Ibidem, 37.

³³ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 118.

³⁴ Ibidem, 72. See Jarzębska, *Spór o piękno muzyki*, 38.

³⁵ John Paul II, *Ansprache an die Publizisten und an die Künstler*, November 19, 1980, Section 5, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/speeches/1980/november/documents/hf_jp_ii_spe_19801119_artisti-giornalisti.html.

³⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, Section 3.

and the historical with the artistic, the aesthetic, and the spiritual. It is well known that Górecki's generation embarked on its creative journey during the 1956 political crisis, at the time of a momentary "thaw," particularly visible in the sphere of culture. The era of the first "Warsaw Autumn" International Festivals of Contemporary Music was a period of fascination with novelty, dodecaphony, serialism, and sonorism, manifested by many Polish composers of the time. Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* and *Polymorphia*, or Górecki's instrumental cycle *Genesis* had shocking newness about them; *Genesis* was described by Krzysztof Droba as "a treatise of sorts on the form-creating role of timbre."³⁷ The *Refrain* (1965), with its opposition between simplified means and the augmented role of expression, became one of the composer's several landmark works. In the Poland of the time, political changes were imminent. Added to this, the election of a Polish pope in 1978 and John Paul II's first pilgrimage to his homeland coincided with major stylistic and ideological changes in Górecki's creative output, including transformations in his language of sound and compositional technique, as well as changes in the sphere of ideas and messages embodied by his works. His path was marked, as it were, by a gradual "sweeping of the field," which was essentially a shift from serialism and sonorism to diatonics, his works still containing dissonances achieved through oscillation in *Refrain*, dissonance struggling with consonance, sharpness juxtaposed with mellowness in *Ad Matrem* and Symphony no. 2 (*Copernican*) to reach fully emancipated consonance, fully-fledged melodic pattern with a traditional melody and harmony (in the modal or tonal order), all building powerful emotional tensions and strong expression, while emanating beauty in the *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* and in the Psalm *Beatus vir* dedicated to Pope John Paul II—pieces that represent the apogee of the composer's oeuvre. It is in these works that Górecki has most meaningfully manifested and embodied the value of beauty for the sacred.

In an attempt to approach the issue of the sacred in Górecki's output, it seems natural to concentrate on the sacred word which is in a relationship to music, principally on how the word connects with the music and what verbal form it takes, on its semantic content, message, and the contribution of music to the creation of the message. On the one hand, one can speak of a predominance of vocal-instrumental music: instrumental pieces with lyrics or ones with just a title, hence not devoid of words; on the other hand, in Górecki's greatest works the word sometimes plays merely the role of a clarification, infusing with semantic content the drama created by instrumental, i.e., pure music.

³⁷ *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM*, vol. 3, s.v. "Górecki Henryk Mikołaj" (by Krzysztof Droba), (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1986), 426.

It is in Górecki's early creative phase that we already come across the first instance of harmonizing word with sound as, for example, is the case in the *Three Songs*, op. 3 (1956): "To Mother and What Bell of Mourning," featuring texts by Juliusz Słowacki, and "The Bird" set to Julian Tuwim's poetry. Masterful building of a relationship between word and sound is part of the vocal tradition. Later, fascination with novelty and avant-garde, accompanied by the quest for new means of artistic expression, new compositional techniques, and new aesthetic attitudes, were the features of (mainly) instrumental music. The word—almost always sacred, dense, and even aphoristic at times—made a spectacular comeback in the 1970s and, one might say, began to prevail in Górecki's work, which was now at its most mature. This comeback happened somewhat by accident, when the lyrics of the piece were reduced to only one but meaningful word: "Amen."

Amen (1975) is one of the best-known works of Górecki for a *cappella* choir, perhaps by reason of its radical scaling down of the semantic layer to a single word: "amen" (meaning "it is so" or "let it be so"), which is repeated sixteen times in the piece. The task of music in the case of this piece, which carries a profound message, is building the emotional and dramatic expression. One word, "Amen," explicitly places this musical work within the realm of religion—of the sacred. The simple narrative of choral singing, unfolding across several equivalent modal scales, is subject to pronounced "oscillations" of emotional expression between a pensive, calm, and sad mood and a joyful brightening up. When the piece is apparently drawing to a close, the initial "Amen!" in A Minor returns with a joyful A Major chord but sung *subito piano*—Pociej writes it is "a melody inspired by the spirit of Gregorian chant."³⁸ It transpires, paradoxically, that the verbal economy and emotionality attained through music alone creates a more powerful impression of the sacred atmosphere.

Starting with *Ad Matrem* (1971), lyrics in Górecki's works are religious. The poetry of the Psalms was always his principal inspiration, alongside the no less important lyrics of church hymns and folk songs. He would draw on the greatest Polish poets: Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Kamil Norwid, Stanisław Wyspiański, and Tadeusz Przerwa-Tetmajer.

THE HEIGHT OF GÓRECKI'S CREATIVITY

There are two grand pieces by Górecki in which the idea of the sacred is supremely expressed: *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs* (1976) and the Psalm

³⁸ Bohdan Pociej, *Bycie w muzyce: Próba opisanja twórczości Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego* (Katowice: Akademia Muzyczna im. Karola Szymanowskiego, 2005), 166.

Beatus vir (1979), preceded by *Ad Matrem* (1971) and the *Copernican* (1972), both masterpieces in their own right. There are also other compositions, chiefly for a *cappella* choir, of a different kind, size, and weight, reaching for the idea of the sacred, i.e., *Church Songs*, *Marian Songs*, and, importantly, *Totus Tuus*, dedicated to Pope John Paul II. However, Górecki's legacy turned out to be more than that. After his passing in 2010, his unfinished scores were discovered, including two with a distinctly religious inspiration: *Kyrie* and the *Oratorio Sanctus Adalbertus*.³⁹

In *Ad Matrem*, with a dedication: "In memory of my Mother," the dramatic effect fundamentally hinges on contrast, a factor that plays a major role in Górecki's mature and late style.⁴⁰ In this case, there is a harsh contrast between the dramatic, dissonant, sharply orchestrated, loud *ffff* "calling" of the orchestra and the choral *tutti*: "Oh, my Mother" (*Mater mea*), addressed probably to the prematurely lost mother, and the simple, syllabic, soft *p* singing of the soprano solo, against the extended, gentle chords of the orchestra, with the words close to the sequence *Stabat Mater dolorosa*, a prayer to the Mother of God, who stood, agonized, at the cross of Christ.

In Symphony No. 2 (*Copernican*), the contrast principle was necessary to articulate the dramatic nature of the Copernican revolution. Górecki recalls his conversation with Krzysztof Zanussi: "Zanussi said that, in fact, Copernicus ... was one of the greatest tragedies in the history of the human spirit: an entire system of thought, the way of thinking on which man's attitude to the reality out there was based, was in ruins. We were no longer the centre of the universe, we become nothing."⁴¹ Górecki's idea of symphony was that of contrast: "First the whole mechanism, let us say, of the world, followed by contemplation."⁴² In music, in the first movement, the harsh tones, the sweeping dissonant chords performed *tutti ffff*, separated by radical general pauses, all invoke an image of this "world mechanism" or, shall we say, cosmos. Eugeniusz Knapik noted that "the tremendous force and the mighty sound of the first movement captures the awe the universe inspires and the terror of man, who realizes the ramifications

³⁹ The other unfinished scores were edited by the composer's son, Mikołaj, and published, and they now have a presence in contemporary music: *Symphony No. 4 "Tansman Episodes"* and *Two Tristan Postludes and the Chorale*.

⁴⁰ For a more extensive discussion of the issue see Teresa Malecka, "Word, Tone, Sacrum in the Music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki in Terms of the Category of Logos," in *Re-interpreting Music: Mieczysław Tomaszewski's Kraków School of Music Theory; Studies—Syntheses—Constructs*, ed. Kinga Kiwała et al. (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2022), 109–128.

⁴¹ Henryk Górecki, "Powiem Państwu szczerze..." (I shall tell you frankly...), *ViVO*, no. 1 (1994), 45. Quoted in Adrian Thomas, *Górecki* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 74.

⁴² Górecki, "Powiem Państwu szczerze...", 45. Quoted in Thomas, *Górecki*, 75.

of Copernicus's discovery."⁴³ Mieczysław Tomaszewski likens this movement to the "apocalyptic chaos of the Beginning."⁴⁴ Then, in the second movement, we encounter a stark contrast: a different, lyrical world where beauty is contemplated—a singing melodic pattern based on the text of the Psalms, a calm and more consonant instrumental layer. The melodic line of the baritone rises and reaches the peak in the brightened harmony of the A-flat Major triad⁴⁵—at the word 'light,' which is the fulcrum of the whole symphony. The melody of the soprano, according to Władysław Stróżewski, "seems to be taken to the limits of Transcendence."⁴⁶ The words of Copernicus's treatise: What is more beautiful than the heavens that encompass all that is beautiful? infused with musical yet archaic modality, bring this work to completion and constitute an apotheosis of beauty. They carry us to another dimension, to the realm of the sacred.

"SYMPHONY OF SORROWFUL SONGS"

In 1976, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki presented his Symphony no. 3 (*Of Sorrowful Songs*) at the Music Meetings in Baranów Sandomierski as his most avant-garde work, although it is regarded as a manifestation of the most radical turn towards tradition in the twentieth-century art music. At that time, opinions varied widely: from rapture flowing from genuine emotions to severe, even acrimonious criticism. A decade or so later, in the 1990s, the work achieved unprecedented success in contemporary world culture.

The semantic core of Górecki's Symphony no. 3 is the relationship between the mother and the lost child, both in the human and divine dimensions. The texts used by the composer, while varied in content and demonstrating in each case a different historical language and style, form a tripartite structure. The lyrics of the first movement describe the lament of the Mother of God for her dying son; in it, she prays that the Son of God will share his wounds with her, and that

⁴³ Eugeniusz Knapik, A review of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's oeuvre written in connection with awarding him an honorary doctorate by the Academy of Music in Kraków to Henryk M. Górecki (May 12, 2008), *Teoria Muzyki: Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje*, no. 3 (2013), 86–90.

⁴⁴ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, A review of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's oeuvre written in connection with awarding him an honorary doctorate by the Academy of Music in Kraków (May 12, 2008) (May 12, 2008), *Teoria Muzyki: Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje*, no. 3 (2013): 79–86.

⁴⁵ In the baroque rhetoric, A-flat major is the key that depicts emotions of fear, or horror, but also the inactivity, or even tranquillity of the night; in the late-Romantic convention it evokes dreaminess, conveys intense feelings, while being mellow and solemn.

⁴⁶ Władysław Stróżewski, A review of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's oeuvre written in connection with awarding him an honorary doctorate by the Academy of Music in Kraków (May 12, 2008), *Teoria Muzyki: Studia, Interpretacje, Dokumentacje*, no. 3 (2013), 90–95.

he will comfort her before his passing. Religious symbolism is clearly part of the ideas communicated by the *Stabat Mater* and pronounced most powerfully here. In the second part of the symphony, the words a highland girl wrote on the prison wall during her detainment by German officers are simple. As the composer said at meeting in Baranów, the lyrics were “laconic.” On the one hand, it is a message from a daughter to her mother, who is probably worried about her: “Mother, do not weep, don’t.” On the other hand, the message is transformed into the girl’s personal prayer to the Mother of God: “Oh, Fairest Queen of Heavens...”; she eventually uses the phrase “Hail Mary,” well-known in the tradition of the Catholic Church, and adds the words “full of grace.” The lyrics of the third movement are drawn from a traditional song sang in the Opole region at the time of the Silesian Uprisings, and express a mother’s pain after her son has died at war. On the one hand, they express her protest against the evil people who killed him; on the other hand, they render her complaint of being helpless, if not desperate, especially that she does not know where his grave is. Eventually, she turns to the birds to ask them to sing for him and to the flowers to bloom for him: “Let my sonny / at least lie pleasantly.”

Music—simply, naturally yet elaborately—builds up, almost autonomously, the tragedy of motherly pain. This was made possible by one of Górecki’s greatest discoveries: the restored importance of the melodic pattern which is simple, beautiful, and naturally connected with words. The modal-tonal mood, the natural and simple soprano, once fully communicating pain (in the first movement), another time drawing on the folk style (in the second and third movements), but prayerful (in the second movement), the sound of the grand symphonic orchestra enriched by the colorful nuancing of the piano and the harp (present in many of the composer’s vocal-instrumental pieces), all create an original, unreal, as it were, aura of sound. The slow pace of all three movements creates a unique, leisurely flow. While in the previously discussed works the category of contrast played an important role in building the dramaturgical component, the *ostinato* principle turns out to be important for the Symphony no. 3 as a whole.⁴⁷

The famous, one might say, extremely consistent and elaborate, ten-voice canon for a large string orchestra (in the climax) takes us to the mother’s lament, marked by a powerful expression and an exquisite beauty of singing: “My son, dear and only, share your wounds with your mother...” As Krzysztof Droba pointed out, the placement of the lament within the work is highly original, making the word–sound relationship acquire a new dimension.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁷ For a more extensive discussion see Malecka, “Word, Tone, Sacrum in the Music of Henryk Mikołaj Górecki in Terms of the Category of Logos.”

⁴⁸ See Krzysztof Droba, “Jeszcze o III Symfonii Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego,” *Zeszyty Naukowe Zespołu Analizy i Interpretacji Muzyki* (1978): 55–66.

words are used in a short “sorrowful” song that forms the core of the first movement, which is the longest in this symphony, as a vocal, lyrical “enclave” in a masterfully crafted instrumental canon. By building up tension systematically and by adding new voices in this intricate polyphony, the music is brought to a climax; by withdrawing the successive voices and reducing the dynamic range, the composer leads us to a solo singing, to the mother mourning her son’s death. This simplest, yet expressive singing with its folk and religious lyrics is, as it were, an explanation, an addition to the drama created by the orchestral canon without words. Adrian Thomas describes this situation as rendering “human has hitherto been only instrumentally implied.”⁴⁹

“BEATUS VIR”

The Psalm *Beatus vir* from 1979 is apparently the composer’s response to the historical events of the time, a profound and authentic reaction to Karol Wojtyła being elected pope. Among the countless works of art in various ways related to that event, alongside *Te Deum* by Roman Palester and *Te Deum* by Krzysztof Penderecki, *Beatus vir* is no doubt a response of the highest artistic order. The history of the work, which was commissioned in 1977 by Cardinal Wojtyła to celebrate the nine-hundredth anniversary of the death of St. Stanislaus the Martyr and which the composer dedicated to the Polish Pope John Paul II and performed in 1979 in his presence, reinforces the relationship between Górecki and the future Saint. Their brief conversation was described by the composer as the most important moment in his life.

Beatus vir, which is a psalm for mixed choir and orchestra, is an oratorio based on—which is typical of Górecki—the Book of Psalms. The piece is a plea for mercy, a confession of faith and entrustment, culminating in the explanation: “O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!” (Ps 34:8). The figure of the “blessed man” might be doubly symbolical, referring to St. Stanislaus, in whose memory the work was commissioned, and to the Pope, who commissioned the piece and to whom it is dedicated. This monumental prayer is clad in music: simple, characteristic of Górecki’s work at the time, yet sublime, full of inner tension, leading to great culminations and then retreating from them. Folklore elements intertwine with references to Church music; the psalm-like tone⁵⁰ in

⁴⁹ Thomas, *Górecki*, 89.

⁵⁰ See Kinga Kiwała, *Problematyka sacrum w polskiej muzyce współczesnej na przykładzie utworów związanych z osobą Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Master’s thesis presented at Akademia Muzyczna in Cracow in 2002 (unpublished), 74.

the final section performed by an *a capella* choir takes the listener to another, as it were, supernatural reality, which can arguably be described as a “moment of epiphany.” This is the phrase Tomaszewski uses to describe a sudden appearance of something new in the work, as if “from the outside,” and to invoke the idiom of sacredness.⁵¹ In 1980, referring to *Beatus vir*, Pociąg asked bewilderedly: “How come we have this unusual greatness in music? Why has the greatest, religion-inspired work been composed just now?”

LATER WORK

When the enthusiasm of the years 1978–1980 in Poland waned and when martial law was declared, Górecki—after the presence of the sacred in his work reached its peak and culmination—limited the range of his musical means, retreating into modest simplicity (he then composed mostly folk and church songs for a *capella* choir and chamber music). That was a late stage of his work, and, according to Tomaszewski’s idea of the nodal and turning points in a composer’s life, a sense of existential threat crept in the pieces he composed.⁵² However, “papal theme” recurs in them and Górecki’s fascination with the thought, teaching, and personality of John Paul II is continued. The composer once said: “In truth, I am alive only because I had this lucky chance—it is not much but enough for me—of meeting him.”⁵³

In 1985, *Totus Tuus* for a *cappella* choir was composed, and in the final years of the composer’s life (as we learned only after his death), it was followed by *Kyrie*, op. 83 for mixed choir, percussion, piano, and string orchestra, and *Sanctus Adalbertus*, op. 71 (written between 1997 and 2010), an oratorio for soprano, baritone, mixed choir, and orchestra.

Totus Tuus for a *cappella* choir, dedicated “To Pope John Paul II on his third pilgrimage his homeland,” is, as it were, a coming together of the ways in which the composer and the Pope venerated Mary the Mother of God. The title and lyrics of the piece come close to the center of the papal thought, coinciding with the motto of John Paul II’s pontificate. Górecki, however, shifts the emphasis from “I am all yours” to the invocation “Mary,” repeated forty times (and often

⁵¹ See [Mieczysław Tomaszewski], “Sacrum i profanum w muzyce: Z prof. M. Tomaszewskim rozmawia M. Janicka-Słysz,” *Maszkaron* 1–3 (2003): 30.

⁵² See Mieczysław Tomaszewski, “Życia twórcy punkty węzłowe: Rekonesans,” in Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Muzyka w dialogu ze słowem* (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna, 2003), 35–48.

⁵³ Górecki said that in a conversation (held in Katowice in May 2008) with students of the Academy of Music in Kraków. See “Muzyka jest rozmową: Prof. Henryk Mikołaj Górecki w rozmowie z Anną Satylą i Krzysztofem Cyranem,” *Jubinalia*, no. 4 (2008): 3. *Jubinalia* is a magazine published by the students of the Academy of Music in Kraków, under the supervision of Prof. Małgorzata Janicka-Słysz.

written in large type), and “Mater,” repeated twenty times, while “Totus Tuus” recurs only seven times in the entire work. The tranquil narration, dominated by an almost constant three-measure rhythm, a simple, small-interval melodic pattern, and diatonic harmony is at times embellished with a sudden intrusion of chromaticism or enharmonics. The repeated invocations to the Mother of God in the ending are in a way “suspended” (at the dominant of the initial key); they create an unreal atmosphere, as if this Marian prayer were taken to another, transcendent (as one might wish to say) dimension.

WORKS FOUND AFTER 2010

“KYRIE,” OP. 83

FOR MIXED CHOIR, PERCUSSION, PIANO, AND STRING ORCHESTRA

After the premiere of *Beatus vir*, John Paul II urged Górecki to compose works of sacred music. In the 1990s, the Pope even asked him to write a mass. Górecki's conversation with the Pope during a private audience in 2003 turned out to be momentous for the composer. He became so emotional that he could hardly remember anything, as he was crying the whole time. Yet he was able to hear the Pope's playfully nudging him to work on the mass.⁵⁴

Kyrie, the only movement of the mass ever composed, was written in from 2004 to 2005.⁵⁵ The lyrics of *Kyrie*, ascetic by nature, combine the Latin text with the Polish one: “Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison, Panie zmiłuj się nad nami.” There is an air of anxiety in “Kyrie,” a dramatic cry to God to have mercy, which becomes even more dramatic in “Kyrie eleison!” But there is also an air of softness, a simple choral singing, and a humble request: “Christe eleison,” “Chryste zmiłuj się nad nami.” The whole, however, is dominated by an unrelenting *ostinato*, permeated with tritone–second correlations that convey a dismal and tragic sense of inevitability. The juxtaposition of word and sound in *Kyrie* provokes questions about the work's message: Why is the (collective) lyrical subject dramatically calling, if not crying out, when addressing the Lord? And why does the subject pray to Jesus Christ singing gently? Well, the Catechism of the Catholic Church indicates that petitioning God can have different shades: “The vocabulary of supplication in

⁵⁴ See “*Kyrie* Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego do wysłuchania w Niniatece,” PWM <https://pwm.com.pl/pl/aktualnosci/szczegoly/3458248,kyrie-henryka-mikolaja-goreckiego-do-wysluchania-w-ninatece.html>.

⁵⁵ *Kyrie*, op. 83 is a piece for four-voice mixed choir, percussion, piano, and string orchestra. The premiere took place on April 21, 2014, at St. John's Archcathedral in Warsaw during the concert entitled “The Threshold of Hope: A Tribute to John Paul II,” performed by the Choir of the Polish Radio and Aukso, the Chamber Orchestra of the City of Tychy, conducted by Marek Moś.

the New Testament is rich in shades of meaning: ask, beseech, plead, invoke, entreat, cry out, even ‘struggle in prayer.’”⁵⁶ However, as indicated above, it seems that when listening to the dramatic *Kyrie*, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki’s penultimate work, we remain within the scope of Christian hope. What kind of hope is this? As John Paul II would say, this is the hope “reaching beyond the limit.”⁵⁷ And one more question: Isn’t *Kyrie*—with its relentless *ostinato* pace—a depiction of some kind of pilgrimage toward hope?

THE CONCLUDING WORK IN THE SACRED CIRCLE

In their conversations and correspondence, the composer and the Pope would constantly return to the idea of Górecki composing more works of religious music, perhaps even a larger cycle about Polish saints. Having paid tribute to St. Stanislaus in *Beatus vir*, Górecki considered writing a commemorative piece for St. Vojtěch (Adalbert) and St. Hedwig; he also intended to compose a piece dedicated to St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe. As far as we know, in 2000, Górecki composed the *St. Vojtěch Cantata* “*Salve sidus Polonorum*,” op. 72 to commemorate the millennium of Gniezno and the death of St. Vojtěch. The history of creating the oratorio *Sanctus Adalbertus* is little known. In an anonymous note (posted on the Ninateka website) about the piece in question, one can read that the score of the complete composition was found by Górecki’s son after the composer’s death.⁵⁸ In 2015, the oratorio was published by Boosey and Hawkes⁵⁹ and premiered in Kraków.

Drawn on Psalm 116 (or 115 in the Vulgate), the lyrics of *Sanctus Adalbertus*, “Credidi, propter quo locutus sum...” (Ps 116 (115):6), are laconic; already at the verbal level, the text builds a unique sense of drama, typical of Górecki’s music, by using numerous yet irregular repetitions. It is sung alternately in Latin and in Polish (there exists a Czech version, which is understandable, given the nationality of St. Vojtěch).⁶⁰

The titles of the first three movements reflect the genre categories of non-liturgical chants: the psalm, the lauda, and the hymn. Musical arrangements

⁵⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Section 2629, The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P97.HTM.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, “Hope Reaching Beyond the Limit,” in *The Place Within: The Poetry of Pope John Paul II*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (New York: Random House, 1994), 162.

⁵⁸ See “*Kyrie* Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego do wysłuchania w Ninatece.”

⁵⁹ See Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, *Sanctus Adalbertus*, op. 71 (1997–98), oratorio for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus, and orchestra, Boosey & Hawkes, <https://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Henryk-Mikolaj-Gorecki-Sanctus-Adalbertus/51565>.

⁶⁰ Incidentally, numerous composers have reached for this particular psalm, e.g., Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Claudio Monteverdi, and Anton Bruckner.

vary. The final movement, *Gloria*, contains liturgical singing, and it constitutes a monumental finale, the goal of all parts of the work. It derives, as it were, from the hymn *Bogurodzica* (Mother of God). Given the historical circumstances, the following interpretation springs to mind: The premiere of the oratorio honoring the Polish–Czech patron saint (one of Poland's three patron saints) was to take place at the turn of the millennium in the presence of the Polish pope—when the sense of freedom and national identity were being reborn in Poland. Featuring the first Polish anthem (*Bogurodzica*), the work starts with a gentle reminder of its first few notes (at the beginning of the fourth movement), only to reach its grand culmination, and eventually return to a downscaled epiphanic aura. *Sanctus Adalbertus* can be interpreted as a path, traced by the oldest national anthem, towards the roots of Polishness.

POST SCRIPTUM

The period in which Górecki composed his last sacred works was also a time when he engaged in deep reflection. His views on music, art, culture, and the world, set in the context of the passage of time, ripened and crystallized; simultaneously, he was overtaken by increasing doubts. His attention focused mainly on two problems that were of fundamental importance to him both as a composer and as a deeply religious man, namely music and its essence and the universe and God.

In a lecture (which resembled a testament) he delivered upon being awarded an honorary doctorate by the Krzysztof Penderecki Academy of Music in Kraków in May 2008, Górecki said: “To me, the era of authoritative statements, judgements ... is over. Now is the time for reflection, doubt, and contemplation.”⁶¹ In the concluding part of the lecture, his confession: “My whole life is *music*,”⁶² was completed with a statement of doubt: “I do not know anything specific about it.”⁶³ To address his doubt, the composer invoked Leszek Kołakowski's thought that music was an unworldly guest, and in doing so, he hinted at the perspective from which he contemplated music—the perspective of transcendence. He recalled “a beautiful term existing in poetry and the stories written in Podhale: *Heavenly Glades* [*niebiańskie polany*]. If there are Heavenly Glades, are there also Celestial Beings?” He closed his

⁶¹ Górecki, “Wystąpienie doktora honoris causa”: 118.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Ibidem.

lecture by saying: "Heavenly Glades—Celestial Beings. Our musical thoughts fly *There*. We are Here, They are There. We—Here, They—There."⁶⁴

And John Paul II wrote: "Music, like all other domains of art, brings man closer to God, who has prepared for those who love Him 'what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'" (1 Cor 2:9).⁶⁵

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⁶⁴ Ibidem.

⁶⁵ Karol Wojtyła—Jan Paweł II, *Muzyka: Antologia tekstów w serii Muzyka wobec poezji i nauczania Karola Wojtyły i Jana Pawła II*, eds. Dariusz Radziechowski, Teresa Malecka, and Kinga Kiwała (Kraków: Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, 2011), 261–62

- . Discorso ai componenti dell coro Harmonici Cantores, December 23, 1988, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1988/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19881223_harmonici-cantores.html.
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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAKT

Teresa MALECKA, The Sacred in Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's Oeuvre and the Greatness of John Paul II: Inspirations and Context

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The author argues that the sacred informs Henryk Mikołaj Górecki's oeuvre. The considerations start with a brief examination of the sacred in music in general, based on research in literary studies, philosophy, and theory of music. At the center are the composer's religious works, which define the *differentia specifica* of his output. To describe them, the author uses the method of integral interpretation developed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski. Due to the importance of the textual element in the composer's works, special attention is given to the relationships between word and sound, sacred text and sacred music. Górecki's important statements are analyzed as interestingly documenting his self-reflection and, above all, his unique personality. Since Górecki drew unfaltering inspiration from the intellectual outlook and personality of Pope John Paul II, the author of the paper scrutinizes, on the one hand, the teaching of John Paul II on music and art and, on the other, the special bond between the composer and the Pope.

Keywords: Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, the sacred, John Paul II, music, word, beauty

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Teresa MALECKA, Sacrum w twórczości Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego i wielkość Jana Pawła II: Inspiracje i kontekst

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W artykule postawiona została teza o obecności sacrum w twórczości Henryka Mikołaja Góreckiego. Punkt wyjścia stanowią krótkie rozważania dotyczące sacrum w muzyce – w oparciu o literaturę przedmiotu z zakresu teorii literatury, filozofii i teorii muzyki. W centrum rozważań znajdują się religijne dzieła kompozytora, będące zarazem jego *differentia specifica*. W celu zaprezentowania utworów zastosowana została metoda interpretacji integralnej autorstwa Mieczysława Tomaszewskiego. Ze względu na ważność tekstów dzieł kompozytora szczególną uwagę zwrócono na zagadnienie relacji słowo–dźwięk, tekst sakralny–muzyka sakralna. Przypomniane zostały istotne wypowiedzi kompozytora stanowiące ciekawy dokument jego autorefleksji, a przede wszystkim jego oryginalnej osobowości. Ze względu na nieustające w życiu twórcy inspiracje osobowością i nauczaniem Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II oczywiście okazało się ukazanie kontekstu, jaki stanowią myśl papieska, zarówno poglądy na sztukę, jak i – w szczególności – na muzykę, oraz specyficzny rodzaj relacji między Henrykiem Mikołajem Góreckim a św. Janem Pawłem II.

Słowa kluczowe: Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, sacrum, Jan Paweł II, muzyka, słowo, piękno

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Marcin FERDYNUS

HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE LAW

In his book *Human Dignity and the Law: A Personalist Theory*,¹ Michał Rupniewski explores the concept of human dignity within the legal framework. He introduces the Status of Personhood Theory (SPT), which posits that human dignity should be understood as a cosmopolitan principle intrinsic to contemporary law. Rupniewski refers to that principle as the Principle of the Status of Personhood (PSP) and holds that it “expresses the priority status of human persons towards the law, which translates into respectful relations between persons, *mediated by law*.”² He emphasizes that the central thesis of the book is that “the normative expression and prescription of such relations in the norms related to human dignity is not a mere historical contingency; *it is a consequence of the real connection between legal activity on the one hand, and natural human personhood on the other*.”³ Rupniewski aims to substantiate the central claim of his book by pursuing four research objectives, which include: (1) identifying the privileged position of human dignity in the law, (2) explicating the concept of human dignity in the law as the Principle

of the Status of Personhood, based on the dignitarian moment interpreted in the light of the personalist concept, (3) explaining the presence of the Principle of the Status of Personhood in the law in the light of a personalist interpretation of dignity, and (4) incorporating the Principle of the Status of Personhood into a wider web of political-legal ideas, especially in the areas of adjudication and legislation. These specific research objectives are addressed in the four chapters of which the book is composed.

The opening one, “Methodological Credentials of Human Dignity in the Law,”⁴ focuses on certain methodological assumptions that form the basis for justifying the central thesis. The author undertakes to conceptualize and elucidate the relationship between human dignity and the law. He suggests that human dignity is at least a constitutive element of certain social relations and legal institutions at a fundamental level.⁵ Dignity as a transcendental condition of law, as well as human dignity reconstructed in the light of personalism, can provide a sound foundation for explaining their mutual relations. Methodological commitments (the human condition, weak metaphysical parsimony, skeptical realism) and a transcendental, re-

¹ Michał Rupniewski, *Human Dignity and the Law: A Personalist Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 258.

² Ibidem, 1.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ See ibidem, 7–64.

⁵ See ibidem, 8.

constructive, explanatory, and critical approach play a crucial role in the strategy for justifying the main claim of the book. The author stipulates that methodological commitments make him refrain from seeking ultimate metaphysical explanations concerning human dignity. He also emphasizes that the process of elucidating the relationship between law and human dignity should begin with the law. By analyzing selected legal documents, Rupniewski points to characteristic examples of the application of the concept of dignity in the law, referring to this phenomenon as the “dignitarian moment.” He identifies various functions (foundational, regulative, heuristic, and meta-legal) and aspects (e.g., ontological, moral, political, humanitarian, and social) of the dignitarian moment. According to the author, firstly, the dignitarian moment serves as a basis for explaining human dignity in the law and, secondly, it is a phenomenon that can be properly interpreted and explained in itself.⁶ The chapter concludes with a brief characterization of the Status of Personhood Theory and a description of the methods that will be applied in the subsequent parts of the book, i.e., those of reflective equilibrium, comparative legal interpretation, and the phenomenology of human action.

The second chapter, “Philosophy: The Personalist Conception of Human Action and Affirmation Proper to Persons,”⁷ discusses the philosophy of the human person. Rupniewski reconstructs the personalist views of two ethicists, Karol Wojtyła and Tadeusz Styczeń, in the belief that their views will turn out helpful in interpreting the dignitarian moment in the law. The analysis focuses on two main issues: the ontology of human action and the affirmation of the person. Examining the ontology of human

action, Rupniewski observes that man is not only the author and master of his own actions, but that his capacity for action is revealed in moral experience.⁸ The act performed by an individual is unique and unrepeatable—it reveals who its subject, i.e., the person who accomplished it, is.⁹ A proper act of the person involves two key elements: the person’s self-determination (conditioned by her self-possession and self-governance) and the transcendence of the person (expressed in her reason and freedom). However, a key condition for the transcendence and fulfillment of the person in action is truth. In other words, truth presents itself as a constitutive condition of the freedom proper to action.¹⁰ Addressing the issue of the affirmation of persons, Rupniewski emphasizes that moral duty is fundamentally linked to the dignity of the human person.¹¹ In other words, moral duty is revealed in the direct, moral experience of the person and of her dignity. In the context of personalism, dignity is recognized as the primary criterion of moral duty. Only an action which manifests respect for the person can be deemed as morally right. According to Wojtyła’s personalistic norm, the most appropriate actions towards the person are those expressive of love.¹² The author of the reviewed book also emphasizes that human dignity is irreducible and that it is an existential condition of the personhood.¹³ Furthermore, he formulates the Personalist Postulate which points to the greatness and dignity of the human person: “Before the law, persons are not regarded as replaceable specimens

⁶ See *ibidem*, 32.

⁷ See *ibidem*, 65–109.

⁸ See *ibidem*, 78.

⁹ See *ibidem*, 80.

¹⁰ See *ibidem*, 89.

¹¹ See *ibidem*, 98.

¹² See *ibidem*, 97; see also Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013), 25.

¹³ See *ibidem*, 93.

or as mere instances of some idea or type, but rather as having intrinsic importance, each standing as incommunicably his or her own.”¹⁴

The third chapter, “Law: The Status of Personhood and the Dignitarian Moment,”¹⁵ attempts to elucidate human dignity in the sphere of law as the Principle of the Status of Personhood.¹⁶ According to Rupniewski, the law recognizes certain radical capacities of human persons and prioritizes persons, or at least assigns special importance to them. The priority, or importance, is attributed to persons themselves, not to their capacity or accomplishment. This means that dignitarian protection should be provided not only to human individuals who manifest these capacities but also to those who (due to age or disability) are not capable of manifesting them. According to Rupniewski, the law should enable equal affirmation of all persons. He suggests that his theory—the Status of Personhood Theory—can justify such protection. The basis of this theory is the Principle of the Status of Personhood. It consists of three main dignitarian legal interests of human persons: the freedom from degradation (“law protects people against different forms of denying their most fundamental quality of ‘being human’”¹⁷), their capacity for self-determination in dynamic relations to truth (“the individual is an author of his own life; he is also an author of himself, since becoming such and such a person happens through his own actions”¹⁸), and the integrity of the person (“persons are characterized by the special dynamic unity in which different aspects of their lives are in constant mutual feedback but also find

the unity in complexity”¹⁹). The most important point in this chapter is the content of the principle in question itself: “Before the law, each person equally must be respected as an integrated whole, radically capable of self-determination, and striving towards fulfilment.”²⁰

The concluding chapter, “Politics: Institutions and the Status of Personhood”²¹ comprises an attempt to integrate the theoretical findings, in particular the Principle of the Status of Personhood, into a broader context of fundamental political–legal ideas. Rupniewski emphasizes that the principle has important implications. Firstly, it can be applied to individual persons (each person has a dignitarian standing). Secondly, the principle in question is neither individualistic nor intended as protection of individual freedom against external, unjustified state or societal interference. The proper significance of the principle relates to participation, and thus to the sphere in which individual persons accomplish their personhood or achieve fulfillment, which is a fundamental entitlement of every human person. Rupniewski argues that, according to the principle, “every human being, in a community mediated by the law, ought to have genuine opportunity of acting together with others in a way which recognizes and respects his individual subjectivity.”²² He also adds that “the deepest intention of the PSP is ... to protect the basic standing which is the prerequisite of further conditions of individual personal fulfillment through genuine participation.”²³ Furthermore, Rupniewski notes that among the basic interests of human persons is public order and just law. In his opinion, the principle can play an important role within

¹⁴ See *ibidem*, 71.

¹⁵ See *ibidem*, 110–75.

¹⁶ See *ibidem*, 110.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 128.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 136.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 145.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 159.

²¹ See *ibidem*, 176–231.

²² *Ibidem*, 185.

²³ *Ibidem*, 136.

the domain of law because it protects the basic interests of individual persons. Several arguments support this: (a) human beings are treated as rightfully and naturally setting their own ends and pursuing them; (b) human beings are treated as capable of self-determination, which involves following the truth; (c) human beings are equal in dignity, regardless of their factual state, and must not be treated as replaceable specimens, but as unrepeatable, irreducible individuals; (d) just law demands adequate responses to the human dignity of each person.²⁴ Ultimately, Rupniewski posits a strong thesis that the Principle of the Status of Personhood “protects concrete persons in their wholeness, in their particular internal and external conditions, and in their social involvements. And it does so without exceptions.”²⁵ Thus, when the principle is applied to adjudication, it serves as an indispensable component of justifying decisions that pertain to the basic dignitarian status of the human person.²⁶

The analyses conducted by Rupniewski are interesting, but they raise several doubts. I will point out only some of them (they are closely related to each other). Firstly, the author assumes that the adopted methodological framework (weak metaphysical parsimony) makes it impossible for him to seek ultimate metaphysical explanations concerning human dignity. However, if we refer to the Personalist Postulate, it turns out that the content of the postulate embraces terms and expressions that require ultimate metaphysical justifications (e.g., “incommunicability”; “persons are not regarded as replaceable specimens”). The term “incommunicability” is closely related to the concept of dignity and the act of existence, particularly when considering the views of Thomas

Aquinas.²⁷ It is precisely the incommunicability of the person’s act of existence that prevents him or her from being regarded solely as a specimen of the *Homo sapiens* species. Secondly, the Principle of the Status of Personhood also creates certain problems. Rupniewski claims that the principle protects the dignity of all human beings regardless of whether they show the key characteristics of personhood (e.g., self-determination). However, the seriously ill, the unborn, or those who are in a vegetative state do not have the capacity for self-determination. Justifying the thesis that all human beings have dignity regardless of the qualities they manifest (e.g., the capacity for self-determination) requires reference to ultimate metaphysical principles. Thirdly, the author refers to the thought of Immanuel Kant and quotes passages on the dignity of persons from his writings. However, it must be remembered that Kantian are not the best choice if we seek to defend the thesis that all human beings have dignity. According to Kant, the foundation of personhood is not simply being human, but “having the power of rational agency.”²⁸ In short, according to Kant, it is not possible to defend the normative status of every human being.²⁹

²⁷ See Marcin F e r d y n u s, “Is It True That All Human Beings Have Dignity?” *Nursing Philosophy*, no. 1(25) (2024): e12464; see also T h o m a s A q u i n a s, *De potentia*, in Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia cum hypertextibus in CD-ROM, ed. Roberto Busa (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996).

²⁸ Ariel Z y l b e r m a n, “Human Dignity,” *Philosophy Compass*, no. 4(11) (2016): 205; see Immanuel K a n t, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁹ See Marcin F e r d y n u s, “The End of Personhood Seems to Be Greatly Exaggerated,” *American Journal of Bioethics*, no. 1(24) (2024): 74–75.

²⁴ See *ibidem*, 194.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 204.

²⁶ See *ibidem*, 220.

The normative status of the person can be reasonably discussed only once two thought strategies are distinguished. One of them involves recognizing that all human beings are persons, while the other involves recognizing that not all human beings are persons. However, the normative status of every human being can be defended either by recognizing the integration of nature in person³⁰ or by assuming that all human beings exist as rational natures.³¹ Finally, it needs to be stressed that some strong claims (e.g., “dignity is irreducible;” “dignity is an existential condition of a person;” “only human beings are persons in a strong, ontological sense”) have been used by Rupniewski without sufficient theoretical justification. Therefore, it can

be presumed that the author does not follow his own methodological principles. On one hand, he claims that he does not seek ultimate metaphysical reasons to justify the central thesis of the book, while, on the other hand, he puts forward strong, ultimate metaphysical claims.

The difficulties indicated above do not undermine the value of the book. Rupniewski’s argument is not only engaging, but it is also inspiring and will certainly initiate further critical discussion regarding the place and role of human dignity in the law. The book may be of interest to academics and researchers working in the fields of philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics, and political science.

³⁰ See Karol W o j t y ł a, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).

³¹ See Robert S p a e m a n n, *Persons: The Difference between “Someone” and “Something”*, trans. Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY ETHOS

Michiko Kakutani, *The Great Wave: The Era of Radical Disruption and the Rise of the Outsider*, New York: Crown, 2024, EPUB.

Reproduced on the cover of Kakutani's new book, Katsushika Hokusai's *Great Wave off Kanagawa*, an image showing three tiny fishing boats about to be surged by a huge wave, embodies, as the author expounds, "the feelings of dread and hope that come with swift, unpredictable change" (Introduction). The emotions grasped by the Japanese master in his famous wooden block print are characteristic, according to Kakutani, of a foreboding time in which a sense of imminent change prevails. Undefined as it is, the change will nevertheless be tantamount to shaking the foundations of culture conceived as both a conceptual universe and a lifestyle. Kakutani, a literary critic—but also the author of *The Death of Truth*, where she spoke against the demise of objective truth in public life—believes that a current wave of nature and history combined will forever change not only the condition of humanity as such, but also everything we consider as familiar and safe: "The great wave of change breaking over today's world is sweeping away old certainties and assumptions and creating an inflection point of both opportunity and danger" (Introduction). The marks of the current times are "volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity," continues Kakutani and adds that the reality in which we live, the third decade of the third millennium, is "more unpredictable ... than the bipolar one of the Cold War era." It is already at this point that the reader, in particular one who actually experienced the Cold War era from behind the Iron Curtain, begins to wonder: Yes, it is true that COVID and what was going around the pandemic in the world killed millions of people, yes it is true that there has been a war raging in Ukraine after Russia invaded it over two years ago, that there are inequalities of income among people, that the political parties do not speak in unison, and that the technological developments, in particular those responsible for the ubiquity of artificial intelligence, may turn out harmful if left totally uncontrolled, but how can one even try to compare the two periods in history? More than that, calling the world of the Cold War era "bipolar" is a grave oversimplification of a complex issue: the communist totalitarianism in Central and Eastern Europe was by no means a natural product of the social and political evolution of the nations living there, but it was imposed on them as part of the agreements made

at the Yalta Conference in 1945 (also called the Western betrayal), which left that part of the world in the Soviet zone of influence. A reader who, sadly, did experience life in an undemocratic system and knows what it actually means not to have the freedom of speech will also be surprised to read that “democracy is under threat in the United States, where Donald Trump and his Republican enablers are undermining trust in our electoral system and the rule of law” (Introduction). Equally surprising are mentions of Victor Orbán as an autocratic and right-wing populist who is also a racist, because he disapproves of illegal mass immigration into Hungary of individuals from non-European cultures. In the nine chapters and the epilogue that follow, Kakutani continues her argument, comparing the present condition of the world to that of the one immediately before the Second World War (but also to that of the late medieval period and of the Gilded Age, respectively), non-leftist political powers to fascists and non-leftist ideas to extremism. Her point of reference is the views of Antonio Gramsci, but she also wants to see the current changes in the world in the light of Thomas S. Kuhn’s concept of a paradigm shift. Many parallels between our contemporary reality and events from the cultural past of Europe and America are made by the author, yet few of them, if any, explained. We read, for instance, “This systemic racism persists to this day, as MAGA [Make America Great Again] Republicans try to roll back the progress made in civil rights, and the Supreme Court—with 6–3 conservative supermajority—undermines affirmative action and LGBT+ rights, in addition to eliminating the constitutional right to abortion and narrowing the reach of key environmental regulations” (Chapter 1, “A Hinge Moment”). There is no further explanation. We do not get to know how “Republicans try to roll back the progress made in civil rights,” why there should be a liberal rather than conservative majority in the Supreme Court, what elements of the affirmative action the author has in mind and how affirmative action relates to equality and justice, or why the right to abortion should be constitutional rather than regulated by the states. Non-American readers of the book would be most interested to find out such details. Neither do we learn what “the key environmental regulations” are and how they impact everyday life in America.

Various political phenomena observable in countries historically or (and) geographically distant from the USA of today are considered by Kakutani as manifesting similar (mostly non-leftist) tendencies, even though it is obvious, even to a reader who is not a political scholar, that you cannot simply juxtapose what is going on in the USA, in Hungary, in Germany or in Afghanistan and draw similarities. Indeed, there are a lot of “big words” in the book, but very little (if any) justification for them. For instance, Kakutani writes about “escalating resentment of globalism and European Union policies, which has led to a wave of growing nationalism and anti-immigrant hate.” Again, there is no going into detail: we do not learn why globalism is better than national cultures, in particular when the nations in question have their own histories and have existed for over a millennium. What kind of “nationalism” does Kakutani have in mind? Advocating ethnic cleansings or perhaps attachment to the intellectual and linguistic traditions? What does she mean by “anti-immigrant hate”? Do Europeans wish to persecute immigrants, or do they express concerns for their

own safety and are afraid of the prospect of a rising crime-rate? An American reader who is not familiar with European politics will not find answers to such questions in the book.

Neither does Kakutani stay away from disparaging epithets which express her negative opinion of certain public figures. For instance, Trump is described as a “nihilistic leader,” a “twice-impeached, four-times-indicted pathological liar,” and a “would-be autocrat” (Chapter 1) and Milton Friedman, after all a Nobel laureate in Economic Sciences, is referred to simply as the “conservative monetary policy guru” (Chapter 1). No evidence of Trump’s alleged nihilism is brought up, and no criticism of Friedman’s views is offered. Interestingly, Kakutani underestimates the fact that the inherent weakness of democracy is simultaneously its power: regardless of his legal situation, or even his morals, a politician is never deprived of his civil rights and can run in the election.

Against her description of the political side of the changing world of today, Kakutani offers her insights into the essence of modern culture, which, to a large extent, is created by outsiders, enabled in their role by open access to broadband and digital technologies, in particular to smartphones and social media. Modern day technological revolution resembles that introduced by the invention of the printing press, she holds, the difference being, however, that while print fosters critical thinking, mere proliferation of data suspends it. The parts of the book focused on an analysis of the transformation of today’s culture are probably most engaging, and yet they also point to the rootedness of culture in politics, and in particular to the need for identity politics.

Why do we recommend Kakutani’s book? The reason is that it offers an excellent instance of a post-true narrative and, as such, should be given attention in a volume focused on this subject. The author openly favors a chosen political option (call it leftist, democrat or liberal) which she takes for granted, and it is from this vantage point that she analyzes various phenomena occurring in the world, be it the one immediately around her or one geographically or historically distant. It is clear to her readers that her views, also her unconcealed negative opinions about certain personalities or social phenomena, express her emotions and her personal beliefs, which, as such, do not need any grounding in facts or any argumentation. From the philosophical point of view, a post-true narrative is difficult to argue with, since serious arguments involve putting forward the premises accepted by each of the parties involved, and truly philosophical debates are precisely ones on the presumptions of the discussed views rather than on the conclusions that follow from them.

If one nevertheless wished to enter such a debate with Kakutani, it might be one about values. While criticizing those who voted for Trump, she writes, in the first chapter of her book, that they “felt marginalized by changing cultural values” among others. The question comes up of what “cultural values” are and how they are different from the values which are studied by moral philosophy. For instance, is it the matter of a “cultural” or a moral value whether we approve or disapprove of late-in-pregnancy abortions? Are “cultural” values relative? Are all values “cultural”? Does it follow then that all values are relative? But if so, such is also the set of values promoted by Kakutani in *The Great Wave*. Probably the most intriguing fact about a debate with a post-true narrative is

that its outcome may be much more surprising than in the case of a debate whose participants have accepted the prerequisites of rationality.

The Great Wave is certainly worth reading by anyone interested in the workings of post-truth in today's world, and in the case of its Polish readers, it might be also helpful in a better understanding of the political discourse continued in this country.

Ironically, the great wave depicted by Hokusai and appealing to us from the book's cover might be seen as a surge of post-truth which puts today's world on the brink of disaster.

D.Ch.

Dorota CHABRAJSKA

A TRANSVALUATION OF TRUTH Towards a Double-edged Concept

Cultural history knows of inventions, such as the wheel, the hand axe, the printing press, the steam machine, the light bulb or the personal computer, which have changed its course to the point that they may be considered in terms of discoveries of the underlying principles of the world in which we live. Within our conceptual universe, a comparable status belongs to truth, much as it does to individual reason. The concept of truth originated as a useful tool which helped humans—regardless of the language they spoke—in grasping and naming the difference between what things are and what they are not. Even the incompleteness inherent in any and every cognitive act a human being makes—the fact that we are organically incapable of an absolute understanding of reality and that what we know about it is merely results of our (better or worse, but inevitably contingent) insights into its nature—has not made humanity abandon the notion of truth. On the contrary, one might claim that it was precisely the need for a possibly adequate vision of reality—the need to know not only what things are, but also how and why they are—that triggered the development of philosophy conceived as a conceptual reconstruction of reality and of the place the human being occupies in it.

Aware of the structural intricacies of such a venture and of the various meanings ascribed to truth in the theoretical discourse in which approaches as radically different as realism, idealism, and surrealism, or objectivism, subjectivism, and solipsism, have crystallized, philosophers come up with various truth theories, pointing out to the not unambiguous nature of the concept itself, as well as to the major implications of this ambiguity.¹ Yet, throughout the bulk of ancient as well as modern history, the public square remained—in this respect—indifferent to philosophical speculations, and unanimously, if not unwittingly, endorsed the so-called correspondence theory of truth, in which truth is the value of the conformity of a statement to a fact, or to a state of affairs. Conceived in this sense, truth provided the basis for a community, or a society, to come into existence and to grow: on the one hand, truthfulness made it possible for individuals to enter and build genuine relations; on the other, the prevailing belief was that, at least in principle, truth about things can be established, and if we fail to succeed in this task,

¹ For a comprehensive treatment of truth theories, see, e.g., Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (n.p.: MIT Press, 1995). The complexity of the issue is well-reflected in the lengthy entry on “Truth” composed by Michael Glanzberg in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. See *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Truth” (by Michael Glanzberg), eds. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman (Fall 2023 Edition), Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/truth/>.

the responsible factor is the contingency of human cognition as such. However, common sense suggested that better cognitive tools might help us overcome our inaptitude and get us closer to truth. In a natural way, truth in the sense of determining what the various aspects of things are was put at the core of public debate, which took diverse shapes, all of which nevertheless presupposed the freedom of expression as the fundamental condition for the genuineness and rationality of the discourse, the principle epitomized by words attributed to the French thinker Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."²

Among the other formal characteristics of the pursuit of truth in public life was the assumption that debate, also (in particular in modernity) referred to as public dialogue, significant as it is, is not a goal in itself, but merely a means for establishing the truth about things.³ Thus, any strictures put on reason or logic⁴ would render the debate futile and, as such, pointless. While medieval disputes aimed at a metaphysical grasp and a rational explanation of the theses put forward by the theology of the time, the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment brought fervent exchanges regarding our temporal reality and the place of the human being in it. Regardless of the nature of the views which were subject to debate—of whether they expressed or undermined the religious outlook upon the world—the commitment to truth on the part of those debating brought to mind the Biblical adage "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32). Thus established, the formal framework for public debates remained valid until the postmodern times and—adopted in a broadly conceived social sphere, including political discourse and judiciary proceedings—prevailed not only in the domain of philosophy.

Interestingly, the belief in the special significance of the values of truth and truthfulness survived in Western culture even its most rocky times: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wars, as well as the political and social revolutions, insurrections, and uprisings

² Quoted in S. G. Tallentyre, *The Friends of Voltaire* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1906), 199.

³ See Andrzej Szostek, "Prawda i dialog: Między relatywizmem a pluralizmem" (Truth and dialogue: Between relativism and pluralism), *Ethos* 10, no. 1 (37) (1997): 51–63. Szostek's article is unique in this respect in that it comprises a phenomenology of the relationship between, on the one hand, truth and social solidarity and, on the other, oppression and violence characteristic of the communist system. Against this background, the author delves into the meaning of dialogue and public debate.

⁴ See Brand Blanshard, "Current Strictures on Reason," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 18 (1944): 345–68. In his article, written at the time when the war was drawing to its close in Europe, Blanshard wonders how it was possible that the last years brought "acts that seemed to belong, not to civilization and the twentieth century, but to the days of a Neanderthal past, before law or justice or pity had begun to lift up its voice against the fist and the club" (ibidem, 345) and confesses: "What has dismayed us is not merely the cruelty and the brutality, incredible as these have been; it is also the readiness with which the great numbers of kindly and sensible people have embraced absurdities that were scarcely sane" (ibidem). He goes on to trace the roots of the political threat in the tendency to ignore logic and the rules of reasoning: "No one ever tried to break logic but logic broke him.... To say that there is nothing right or wrong but thinking makes it so is to say that there is nothing for thinking to discover; and to say that is to deny all point in trying to be reasonable" (ibidem, 347). Any strictures put on the formal conditions of reasoning, he holds, "will black out reasonableness far more effectually than any withholding of civil right" (ibidem, 346).

of the period, were all started in the name of some truth which—in the deepest conviction of those committed to each particular cause—was unrightfully denied and which they considered as worth the sacrifice of life. Even the twentieth-century totalitarianisms made every effort to account for their oppressiveness and cruelty by invoking some apparently “higher” truth they attempted to put in effect. For that matter, the leaders of the communist regime claimed that the system of which they were the founding fathers was scientific, as it was based on the study of history, and, as such, a necessary outcome of the historical development.⁵ They held, with one voice, that science was the highest and ultimate instance determining whether a claim is true or false, regardless of its practical consequences. Also, theoretical attempts at changing the status or the nature of the concept of truth would not bring a lasting effect, except perhaps for some of them being readily adopted by those eager to back up their totalitarian worldview with a random yet convenient idea. Such was, for instance, the case with Friedrich Nietzsche’s startling insight: “Let us not underestimate this: that *we ourselves*, we free spirits, are already a ‘transvaluation of all values,’ a declaration of war and victory *incarnate* against all the old concepts of ‘true’ and ‘untrue,’”⁶ the idea he further developed in his *Will to Power*.⁷ To this day, debates are continued regarding the extent of the rootedness of the Nazi ideology in the philosophical ideas of Nietzsche.⁸

However, much as it was unintended by their founders, the twentieth-century totalitarian systems played a role in bringing out the significance of truth not only in public debate, but also, and above all, in the life of a human person. It was somewhat ironic that by creating the phenomenon of the dissident⁹—one who refuses loyalty to the regime even at the risk of being put in prison or in a psychiatric ward, or being murdered in most humiliating a way—they succeeded in demonstrating the existence of a bond between freedom and truth in a human conscience: the bond which ultimately generates the power in an individual to reject untruth regardless of the consequences.¹⁰ The actions

⁵ See, e.g., Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Scientific Socialism* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1974).

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Antichrist,” § 13, in Friedrich Nietzsche, “*The Antichrist*,” “*Fragments from a Shattering Mind*,” trans. Domino Falls (London: Creation Books, 2002), 27.

⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of All Values*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici, ed. Oscar Levy (n.p.: Digireads.com Publishing, 2010).

⁸ See, e.g., Stephen R. C. Hicks, *Nietzsche and the Nazis* (n.p.: Ockham Razor, 2010).

⁹ “When Jan Patočka wrote about Charter 77, he used the term ‘solidarity of the shaken.’ He was thinking of those who dared to resist impersonal power and confront it with the only thing at their disposal, their own humanity.” Václav Havel, “Politics and Conscience,” trans. Erazim Kohák and Roger Scruton, in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990), 157. See also Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” trans. Paul Wilson, in Václav Havel, *Living in Truth*, 36–122.

¹⁰ The issue of the dependence of the freedom of a human person on the truth grasped by her in a cognitive act was scrutinized by the Polish ethicist Tadeusz Styczeń, who argued for the concept of freedom in truth (*wolność w prawdzie*) and held that any cognitive act a person makes may potentially trigger a moral challenge, once the person is demanded to question her own recognition of the facts or actually does question them on opportunistic grounds. See Tadeusz Styczeń, *Wolność w prawdzie*, ed. Kazimierz Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL and Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, 2013). In the 1970s and 1980s, Styczeń was in close contact with the Polish dissident circles and witnessed the drama of those who, “broken” by the threats from the secret police, ultimately

of those who showed utmost fidelity to the truth they had recognized, be it Sophie Scholl, Maksymilian Kolbe, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Witold Pilecki, or any anonymous person who paid the highest price for their integrity, demonstrated that truth is by no means undemanding or easy to ignore or disregard: that is has the nature of a challenge and that the only proper grounds on which to consider one's response to such a challenge are those provided by moral philosophy. "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction ... and the distinction between true and false ... no longer exist,"¹¹ wrote Hannah Arendt. The sacrifice of those who opposed the totalitarian systems in which they lived is a lasting proof that human beings are by no means natural subjects of totalitarianism and that they are not organically blind to the distinction between true and false.

Strangely enough, it was the postwar time that brought an erosion of the belief in the power and weight of truth-in-itself. While the testimony of the prisoners of conscience in the countries behind the Iron Curtain was a pillar of strength and hope for those confined to a life there, ideas not antagonistic to the communist utopia began pervading the public debate in Western countries, calling for a fundamental change in its framework. Truth was no longer to be debated with respect for the principle of free speech and assembly. "Universal toleration becomes questionable—claimed Herbert Marcuse—when its rationale no longer prevails, when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy."¹² "The telos of tolerance is truth,"¹³ he added, yet the truth in question was no longer to be discovered and individually recognized but implemented by those who were already its holders, or maybe even handlers. While one can hardly disagree with Marcuse's opinion that "the democratic argument implies a necessary condition, namely, that the people must be capable of deliberating and choosing on the basis of knowledge, that they must have access to authentic information, and that, on this basis, their evaluation must be the result of autonomous thought,"¹⁴ the point he makes is no longer so plain when he states that "tolerance expressed in ... impartiality serves to minimize or even absolve prevailing intolerance and suppression."¹⁵ Democracy, as it is, is repressive and totalitarian, according to Marcuse, and it needs to be steered by those who are in the know. As such, it calls for repressive tolerance. "Liberating tolerance—Marcuse insisted—would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance... it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda,

signed a declaration of loyalty to the regime. In the wake of such an act, many of them would develop mental disorders. Styczeń argued that their predicament reflected how deeply a human conscience, conceived as the faculty in which moral judgments are made, is immersed in the truth about things which has been recognized. Moreover, he interpreted the decision to stand for the recognized truth in terms of one's respect for one's own dignity as a person. See *ibidem*.

¹¹ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt & Brace Company, 1976), 474.

¹² Herbert Marcuse, "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 90.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 90.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 95.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 98.

of deed as well as of word.”¹⁶ Absolutely certain of the latter point, he had no qualms about making a grandiose claim: “If democratic tolerance had been withdrawn when the future leaders started their campaign, mankind would have had a chance of avoiding Auschwitz and a World War.”¹⁷ Much as it would be pointless to argue against Marcuse’s past conditional statement, one might trace a certain analogy between the imperative of truth-forging he puts forward and Nietzsche’s confidence that “in the long run it is enough to create new names and valuations and appearances of truth in order to create new ‘things.’”¹⁸ In any case, Marcuse’s critical theory of society did not remain unechoed,¹⁹ and the next decades brought numerous instances of unfeigned willingness to work on the only shape of truth deserving admittance to public debate. Among the most articulate and notable voices in the matter was that of Stanley Fish, who did not hesitate to openly argue against the concept of free speech as such and elucidated his position by saying: “Values, rather than being opposed to political commitment, grow only in its soil and wither in the arid atmosphere of bodiless abstraction, whether that abstraction is named reason, merit, fairness, or procedural neutrality. The upshot of this is not ... that anything goes or that words have no meaning, but that the line between what is permitted and what is to be spurned is always being drawn and redrawn and that the structures of constraint are simultaneously always in place and always subject to revision if the times call for it and resources are up to it.”²⁰

Perhaps not surprisingly, and in strict conformity with the rule proposed by Marcuse, the line in question has been drawn in the recent decades by political correctness, which—as Doris Lessing observes—stepped into the vacuum left by the collapse of the “dogmas of Socialist Realism.”²¹ As such, rather than an unexpected bedfellow of repressive tolerance, political correctness transpired as its natural ally and has been used ever since as a system of safeguards helping to separate the wheat from the chaff within the domain of what is allowed to be recognized as true in public debate. Such is the case even though, as Michael Knowles observed, “to call something ‘politically correct’ is to acknowledge that it is not correct, at least by the standard of reality.”²² Within the new framework,

¹⁶ Ibidem, 109. Disturbing as it is, the concerns of the World Economic Forum about false information show distinctive similarity to those of Marcuse. See World Economic Forum, *The Global Risk Report 2024*, 1.3 “False Information,” World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/>, 18–21.

¹⁷ Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance,” 109.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, ed. Bernard Williams, (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo; Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 70.

¹⁹ Indeed, it recurs to this day, lately in the shape of critical feminist theory and critical race theory. See, e.g., *The Difference Within: Feminism and Critical Theory*, ed. Elizabeth A. Meese and Alice A. Parker (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1989); *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, et al. (New York: The New Press, 1996).

²⁰ Stanley Fish, *There Is No Such Thing as Free Speech and It’s a Good Thing, Too* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), viii.

²¹ Doris Lessing, *Time Bites: Views and Reviews* (n.p.: HarperCollins e-books, n.d.), chap. 8, “Censorship,” EPUB.

²² Michael Knowles, *Speechless: Controlling Words, Controlling Minds* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2021), xv.

society, with its now “sanitized”²³ language, is seen in terms of a set “collection of values,”²⁴ which inevitably suggests the idea of social engineering: destroying the traditional standards of speech in order to ultimately establish new standards of thought²⁵ and, in a longer run, bring about a collapse (or—in Nietzschean terms—a transvaluation) of the meaning of words and concepts, including that of truth. There is an analogy between the current condition of the politically correct society and that of the one anticipated by George Orwell in 1984, argues Knowles: “‘Don’t you see the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow down the range of thought?’ asks a member of the totalitarian party. ‘The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.’”²⁶ Thus the proponents of modern Newspeak initially prompt that we should say, for instance, a “holiday tree” rather than a “Christmas tree,” an “undocumented uncitizen” rather than an “illegal immigrant,”²⁷ and “justice-involved youths” rather than “juvenile delinquents.” Ultimately, though, we end up with ideas such as the one stating that “a man who believes he is a woman must at all times be called a ‘trans woman,’ or better still just a ‘woman,’ because ... a man can become a woman simply by saying so.”²⁸ While—in particular when seen from the Polish perspective²⁹—the demands made in the name of political correctness might seem humorous, absurd or even grotesque, there’s an undeniable totalitarian temptation in them. Indeed, political correctness calls for an expansion of state interventionism in almost all spheres of life,³⁰ which is accompanied by the legislature seeking to control more and more areas of the lives of individuals.³¹ What we are dealing with is linguistic and eventually political expropriation, not infrequently done in the name of the protection

²³ Geoffrey Hughes, *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture* (Chichester, UK: Wiley–Blackwell, 2010), viii.

²⁴ Leszek Kolakowski, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” in Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 164.

²⁵ See Knowles, *Speechless*, xvi.

²⁶ Quoted in Knowles, *Speechless*, 3.

²⁷ See Jonathan Kwan, “Words Matter: Illegal Immigrant, Undocumented Immigrant, or Unauthorized Immigrant,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/more-focus-areas/immigration-ethics/immigration-ethics-resources/immigration-ethics-blog/words-matter-illegal-immigrant-undocumented-immigrant-or-unauthorized-immigrant/>. See also Knowles, *Speechless*, 1.

²⁸ Knowles, *Speechless*, 3.

²⁹ The politically correct sanitization of the Polish language has so far involved adopting the so-called feminatives, and only occasionally specific pronouns. Feminatives are created by giving distinctly feminine forms to nouns (referring to humans) which so far have had grammatically masculine forms. The effects of the effort are not infrequently hilarious, as, e.g., in the case of words such as *ministra* (female minister), *komisarka* (female commissioner) or *mecenaska* (female barrister), resembling names of objects. The effort is also in a way futile, since in Polish (unlike in English) verbs are conjugated in all tenses and are given endings denoting the actual feminine, masculine or neuter gender of the grammatical subject of the sentence.

³⁰ See, e.g., Anthony Milton, “How the News Disappeared in Canada,” *New Lines Magazine*, November 20, 2023, *New Lines Magazine*, <https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/how-the-news-disappeared-in-canada/>; “Canada and Trudeau Go Full Orwell behind Anti-speech Bill: Fear the Maple Curtain,” editorial, *New York Post*, May 18, 2024, *New York Post*, <https://nypost.com/2024/05/18/opinion/canadas-moving-to-end-free-speech-with-new-bill/>.

³¹ See Kolakowski, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 166.

of the weak, the discriminated, the underprivileged, and the underrepresented.³² “If we take the principle of an equal start in life seriously and wish to remain faithful to it to the end, we have one foot on the road to totalitarian slavery. Direct experience, however, together with an understanding of human passions, teaches us that, once introduced, the totalitarian order does not bring with it equality of opportunity in life, let alone equality in material things. The opposite is the case. Two things are especially highly valued and important in modern society: free access to sources of information and participation in power. Under totalitarian systems, both are denied to the overwhelming majority of the population and are strictly rationed out to small privileged minorities,”³³ wrote Leszek Kolakowski already in 1979, adding that moral education needs more than an instinct: “It is, to a certain extent contrary to nature, otherwise it would hardly be necessary; nor can empirical knowledge create a foundation for it. To educate people to be tolerant and unselfish, to overcome tribal customs in favor of universal moral standards, cannot be done without the strong base of a traditional authority, which up till now has derived from the great universal religions. Very often, though not always, the net result of education freed of authority, tradition, and dogma is moral nihilism.... The liberal slogan that exhorts us to strive for complete liberation from tradition and the authority of history is counterproductive: it leads not to open society, but at best to one in which conformity enforced by fear keeps strict control over the struggle of private interests.”³⁴ One might say that, in his essay on open society, Kolakowski anticipated the results of the rule of political correctness, which was merely a Marxist-Leninist category at the time. “A similar pattern is to be observed everywhere: the institutions which make the survival of the pluralist society possible—the legal system, the school, the family, the university, the market—are attacked by totalitarian forces using liberal slogans, in the name of freedom, in other words. Freedom appears as the absence of law and responsibility, in the anarchistic sense.... These changes may be roughly described as society’s *retreat into infantilism*,” he further argued.³⁵

Interestingly, another dangerous aspect of this kind of infantilism, which silently introduces a totalitarian rule, was described by Günther Anders, who focused on how easy it has become to control individuals in a welfare-state society: “The stage-managing of masses that Hitler specialized in has become superfluous: if one wants to transform a man into a nobody ... it is no longer necessary to drown him in a mass, or bury him in a cement construction mass-produced by masses. No depersonalization, no loss of the ability to be a man is more effective than the one that apparently preserves the freedom of the personality and the rights of the individual. If the procedure of *conditioning* takes

³² In America, the rules of such protection have been included in DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies adopted by most companies.

³³ K o l a k o w s k i, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 170.

³⁴ Ibidem, 171–72. The results of the type of education Kolakowski criticizes, which today is focused on teaching correct virtue-signaling and shapes the sense of belonging rather than transmits knowledge, could be recently seen in young people, mostly students in various countries, chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” during anti-Israeli demonstrations. Yet, when asked by reporters which river or which sea they had in mind, they were unable to answer. See, e.g., “‘From the river to the sea’—Students Chant, but Don’t Know Which River or Sea,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 7, 2023, [The Jerusalem Post](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-776987), <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-776987>.

³⁵ K o l a k o w s k i, “The Self-poisoning of the Open Society,” 172–73.

place in a special way in the home of every person—in the individual home, in isolation, in millions of isolated units—the result will be perfect.”³⁶

Today, when political correctness, also known as the ideology of wokism, has evolved to the point where its focus is no longer linguistic, but theoretical and simultaneously action-oriented, the classical shape of public debate consisting in the pursuit of truth has significantly waned. The ideas which do not fit in the binding narrative³⁷ Marcuse was so willing to introduce are arbitrarily dismissed, not infrequently as conspiracy theories. The phrase “conspiracy theory” itself has become a stigmatizing catch-all term: in this sense, conspiracy theorists are all those who—for various reasons—disregard the mainstream account of issues such as religion, identity politics, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate alarmism, the so-called green new deal, mass migration, and the roots and the accomplishments of the Western tradition. Among those excluded from mainstream public debate are authors as significant as Douglas Murray,³⁸ Alex Epstein,³⁹ Bjorn Lomborg,⁴⁰ and Steven E. Koonin.⁴¹ While their books are widely available, they do not easily get a mention from mainstream or social media. In such cases, political correctness finds an ally in algorithmic recommendations in digital spaces which are supposed to predict, but actually prompt us what we should think, seek, and desire.⁴²

Another reliable ally of political correctness is activism, defined as “vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change”⁴³ and popular among young, not necessarily well-educated people and celebrities. The impact of activism on social life was sadly summed up by Thomas Sowell: “Activism is a way for useless people to feel

³⁶ Günther Anders, *The Obsolescence of Man*, vol. 1, part 2, section 2, Libcom.org, <https://libcom.org/book/export/html/51647>.

³⁷ One must not fail to notice the tendency, ubiquitous in modern discourse, to replace the notion of truth precisely with that of a narrative.

³⁸ See, e.g., Douglas Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sidney: Bloomsbury, 2018); Douglas Murray, *The Madness of Crowds: Gender, Race and Identity* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019); Douglas Murray, *The War on the West* (London: HarperCollins, 2022).

³⁹ See Alex Epstein, *The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2014); Alex Epstein, *Fossil Future: Why Global Human Flourishing Requires More Oil, Coal, and Natural Gas—Not Less* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2022).

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Bjorn Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming* (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, 2007); Bjorn Lomborg, *False Alarm: How Climate Change Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts the Poor, and Fails to Fix the Planet* (New York: Basic Books, 2020).

⁴¹ See Steven E. Koonin, *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters* (Dallas, Texas: BenBella Books, 2021).

⁴² On the impact of the digital media and algorithmic predictions of human decisions on modern culture, see Kyle Chayka, *Filterworld: How Algorithms Flattened Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2024).

⁴³ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “activism,” https://www.oed.com/dictionary/activism_n?tab=meaning_and_use#19584364.

important, even if the consequences of their activism are counterproductive for those they claim to be helping and damaging to the fabric of society as a whole.”⁴⁴

Just as the twentieth-century totalitarianisms created the phenomenon of the dissident, modern day offensive of political correctness and “correct” thinking has resulted, inadvertently, in the rise of the outsider: the one who does not want, or need, to see the world “through the lens of ‘social justice,’ ‘identity group politics’ and ‘intersectionalism.’”⁴⁵ A transvaluation of truth has been accomplished and the somewhat forgotten concept of post-truth has been hatched anew to explain why there should be outsiders in our world who have diverted from mainstream thinking and obstinately stick to what they deem true. The question remains, though, whose views are those shaped by appeals to emotion and personal belief. The ones of the outsiders? Or rather those of the campaigners for “correctness”?

A travesty of the infamous line of Pilate comes to mind: “What is post-truth?”

⁴⁴ Thomas S o w e l l, “Random Thoughts,” in Thomas Sowell, *Ever Wonder Why* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2006), 447.

⁴⁵ M u r r a y, *The Madness of Crowds*, Introduction, EPUB.

Maria FILIPIAK

ON TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH
A Bibliography of the Addresses
of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis
from 1978 to 2023

Abbreviations

IGP – *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II* [Città del Vaticano]

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| I (1978) ss. 477 | XIV (1991) t. 1, ss. 1983 |
| II (1979) [t. 1], ss. 1729 | XIV (1991) t. 2, ss. 1619 |
| II (1979) t. 2, ss. 157 | XV (1992) t. 1, ss. 2147 |
| III (1980) t. 1, ss. 1983 | XV (1992) t. 2, ss. 1119 |
| III (1980) t. 2, ss. 1869 | XVI (1993) t. 1, ss. 1855 |
| IV (1981) t. 1, ss. 1292 | XVI (1993) t. 2, ss. 1725 |
| IV (1981) t. 2, ss. 1313 | XVII (1994) t. 1, ss. 1367 |
| V (1982) t. 1, ss. 1376 | XVII (1994) t. 2, ss. 1281 |
| V (1982) t. 2, ss. 2497 | XVIII (1995) t. 1, ss. 2054 |
| V (1982) t. 3, ss. 1751 | XVIII (1995) t. 2, ss. 1589 |
| VI (1983) t. 1, ss. 1730 | XIX (1996) t. 1, ss. 1798 |
| VI (1983) t. 2, ss. 1496 | XIX (1996) t. 2, ss. 1206 |
| VII (1984) t. 1, ss. 2016 | XX (1997) t. 1, ss. 1799 |
| VII (1984) t. 2, ss. 1708 | XX (1997) t. 2, ss. 1230 |
| VIII (1985) t. 1, ss. 2081 | XXI (1998) t. 1, ss. 1669 |
| VIII (1985) t. 2, ss. 1683 | XXI (1998) t. 2, ss. 1483 |
| IX (1986) t. 1, ss. 2204 | XXII (1999) t. 1, ss. 1660 |
| IX (1986) t. 2, ss. 2242 | XXII (1999) t. 2, ss. 1396 |
| X (1987) t. 1, ss. 1482 | XXIII (2000) t. 1, ss. 1415 |
| X (1987) t. 2, ss. 2582 | XXIII (2000) t. 2, ss. 1463 |
| X (1987) t. 3, ss. 1812 | XXIV (2001) t. 1, ss. 1607 |
| XI (1988) t. 1, ss. 1073 | XXIV (2001) t. 2, ss. 1376 |
| XI (1988) t. 2, ss. 2625 | XXV (2002) t. 2, ss. 1130 |
| XI (1988) t. 3, ss. 1405 | XXV (2002) t. 1, ss. 1290 |
| XI (1988) t. 4, ss. 2317 | XXVI (2003) t. 1, ss. 1298 |
| XII (1989) t. 1, ss. 1945 | XXVI (2003) t. 2, ss. 1205 |
| XII (1989) t. 2, ss. 1783 | XXVII (2004) t. 1, ss. 1063 |
| XIII (1990) t. 1, ss. 1885 | XXVII (2004) t. 2, ss. 933 |
| XIII (1990) t. 2, ss. 1888 | XXVIII (2005), ss. 333 |

IB – *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI* [Città del Vaticano]

I(2005) ss. 1326	V(2009) t. 1, ss. 1439
II(2006) t. 1, ss. 1008	V(2009) t. 2, ss. 980
II(2006) t. 2, ss. 1065	VI(2010) t. 1, ss. 1166
III(2007) t. 1, ss. 1405	VI(2010) t. 2, ss. 1390
III(2007) t. 2, ss. 1065	VII(2011) t. 1, ss. 1072
IV(2008) t. 1, ss. 1280	VIII(2012) t. 1, ss. 960
IV(2008) t. 2, ss. 1099	VIII(2012) t. 2, ss. 952
	IX(2013), ss. 336

IF – *Insegnamenti di Francesco* [Città del Vaticano]

I (2013) t. 1, ss. 592
I (2013) t. 2, ss. 983
II (2014) t. 1, ss. 938
II (2014) t. 2, ss. 949

JOHN PAUL II

1978

1. *L'informazione al servizio della verità*. Address to journalists. October 21. IGP I, 31–34.
2. *Impegno per la verità, la santità e l'amicizia*. Address to the members of Italian Catholic Action. December 30. IGP I, 446–52.

1979

3. *La liberazione nasce dalla verità di Cristo*. General Audience. February 21 II. IGP II, 428–35.
4. *Con la penitenza l'uomo ritrova la verità interiore*. General Audience. February 28. IGP II, 1, 475–78.
5. *La Croce, suprema cattedra della verità di Dio e dell'uomo*. Address to university students. April 5. IGP II, 1, 802–10.
6. *Il ruolo dell'informazione al servizio della verità*. Address to representatives of the Association of Catholic Journalists of Belgium. June, 28. IGP II, 1, 1639–40.
7. *Costruire ponti che uniscano nella verità*. Address to professional journalists and members of the communication media. September 29. IGP II, 2, 447–48.
8. *Cristo vi chiama alla verità*. Homily at the Holy Mass for the Youth of Ireland in Galway. September 30. IGP II, 2, 457–62.
9. *La libertà deve essere fondata sulla verità*. Address at Battery Park. October 3. IGP II, 2, 569–73.

10. *Fedeli alla verità nell'amore*. Address to Bishops of the United States of America. October 5. IGP II, 2, 629–43.
11. *Operare per una pace fondata sulla giustizia, sulla carità, sulla verità*. Address to the President of the United States of America. October 6. IGP II, 2, 658–61.
12. *Ideale ascesa verso la verità*. Address to the communities of papal universities and Church colleges in Rome. October 15. IGP II, 2, 757–64.
13. *Siate maestri di verità religiosa e sociale*. Address to Bishops of Peru on their *ad limina* visit. October 20. IGP II, 2, 781–88.
14. *Unione nella verità e nella carità per una coerente realizzazione del Concilio*. Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Sacred College. November 5. IGP II, 2, 1046–59.
15. *L'armonia profonda che lega le verità della scienza e le verità della fede*. Address to commemorate the birth of Albert Einstein. November 10. IGP II, 2, 1107–14.
16. *Lasciamoci guidare dalla verità portataci da Cristo*. Homily at the Holy Mass in the al Trulllo parish. November 11. IGP II, 2, 1126–33.
17. *Il Regno di Cristo è il Regno per l'uomo*. Angelus. November 25. IGP II, 2, 1235–38.
18. *"La verità, forza della pace."* Message for the 13th World Day for Peace 1980. December 8. IGP II, 2, 1444–52.

1980

19. *La verità sull'uomo è forza della grande causa della pace*. Message for the celebration of the Day of Peace. January 1. IGP III, 1, 3–8.
20. *Più verità è più amore nei cuori degli uomini*. Angelus. January 1. IGP III, 1, 9–10.
21. *L'amore ardente della verità ispiri la gioia della ricercar*. Address to professors and university students gathered in Kinshasa. May 4. IGP III, 1, 1119–26.
22. *Collaborazione dei giornalisti alla diffusione della verità*. Interview of the Holy Father granted to "L'Osservatore Romano" and Vatican Radio during the flight to Rome. May 12. IGP III, 1, 1351–55.
23. *Il primo servizio da rendere all'uomo è la testimonianza di tutta la verità*. Address to representatives of other Christian confessions. May 31. IGP III, 1, 1541–43.
24. *Al servizio della verità e della civiltà dell'amore*. Address to the Association of Catholic Journalists from Belgium. June 28. IGP III, 1, 1912–13.
25. *Insegnare significa esercitare la carità della verità*. Address to school missionaries. August 25. IGP III, 2, 435–37.
26. *Adesione alla verità e testimonianza di vita*. To clergy gathered in the Basilica of St. Bernardino. August 30. IGP III, 2, 499–503.
27. *I doveri della famiglia cristiana nella carità e nella verità*. Address on the closing of the session of the Synod of Bishops. October 25. IGP III, 2, 965–80.
28. *Testimoniare la verità: un servizio da rendere all'uomo*. Address to members of the Faith and Order Commission. November 3. IGP III, 2, 1047–52.
29. *Servire la verità nei suoi molteplici aspetti*. Address to Bishops of Bolivia during their *ad limina* visit. November 13. IGP III, 2, 1142–45.

1981

30. *Procedete sempre con chiarezza e con fiducia nella ricerca della verità accanto ai giovani d'oggi.* Address to students participating in *Covegno Veritatis*. March 7. IGP IV, 1, 635–38.

31. *Il compito della libertà si realizza sul terreno della verità.* Address during the meeting with the academic community of Rome. March 26. IGP IV, 1, 784–93.

32. *Il lavoro d'archivio è atto d'amore alla verità.* Address at the inauguration of the exhibition on the occasion of the first centenary of the opening of the Vatican Secret Archives. April 4. IGP IV, 1, 880–83.

1982

33. *Sincerità, onestà, verità per l'autentico progresso dell'Africa.* Address to representatives of the press, radio, and television in Lagos. February 16. IGP V, 1, 505–8.

34. *La quaresima, richiamandoci all'esempio di Cristo, è la via della verità, dell'amore e della misericordia.* Homily at the Holy Mass in San Andrea della Fratte parish. February 28. IGP V, 1, 722–26.

35. *Ricerca della verità e formazione dei giovani per la vera libertà dell'uomo.* Address to the academics at the University of Padua. September 12. IGP V, 3, 412–17.

36. *La verità si identifica con la persona vivente di Cristo.* Address to the participants in the Veritas Award. October 16. IGP V, 3, 831–33.

37. *Il servizio della comunicazione richiede sempre la ricerca della verità.* Address to representatives of social communications media in Madrid. November 2. IGP V, 3, 1068–71.

38. *Progressivo avvicinamento reciproco basato sulla verità e sulla carità.* Address at the ecumenical meeting with other Christian communities in Madrid. November 3. IGP V, 3, 1090–92.

39. *Rispettare la verità per rispettare i lettori.* Address to journalists taking part in the Pope's journey to Madrid. November 3. IGP V, 3, 1093.

40. *Libertà, cooperazione, universalità, servizio dell'uomo, condizioni per il vero avanzamento della cultura.* Address to the academic and research university world in Madrid. November 3. IGP V, 3, 1094–103.

41. *Nella fedeltà alla Chiesa e alla verità proseguite il vostro cammino di ricercatori.* Address to members of the Pontifical Committee of Historical Sciences. December 20. IGP V, 3, 1660–63.

1983

42. *Il lavoro giornalistico esige esercizio di professionalità e di moralità.* Address to journalists of the Catholic Union of the Italian Press. February 14. IGP VI, 1, 421–25.

43. *In Gesù è Dio a lottare con l'uomo, perchè questi accenti la verità della rivelazione.* Homily at the Holy Mass for university students. March 17. IGP VI, 1, 724–30.

44. *La verità si impone da sola, vince per la sua forza intrinseca.* Address to Italian pilgrims from Livorno. April 16. IGP VI, 1, 978–82.

45. *Verità nell'esposizione dei fatti, verità nella testimonianza di fede*. Address on the first centenary of *La Croix*. April 23. IGP VI, 1, 1047–53.

46. *Verità ed ethos della comunione coniugale principio di azione pastorale per la famiglia*. Address to the first Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family. May 30. IGP VI, 1, 1405–10.

47. *L'etica cristiana si fonda sull'armonia tra verità e libertà*. General Audience. July 13. IGP VI, 2, 68–78.

48. *Cristo verità intera dell'uomo*. General Audience. August 28. IGP VI, 2, 322–24.

49. *La sacra rappresentazione trasmette le verità eterne*. Address to artists of the Salzburg Festival. September 3. IGP VI, 2, 350–51.

50. *Responsabilità dell'Europa nella ricerca della pace e della giustizia nel mondo*. Address to a group of European parliamentary members. November 10. IGP VI, 2, 1026–32.

51. *L'avvento è dialogo con la verità per costruire una vera cultura cristiana*. General Audience. December, 10. IGP VI, 2, 1310–15.

1984

52. *La Biblioteca Vaticana serve la verità e la cultura*. Address during the official inauguration of the new location of the Vatican Apostolic Library. February 7. IGP VII, 1, 255–58.

53. *La società ha bisogno di instancabili ricercatori della verità*. Address to members of French parliamentary assemblies. March 5. IGP VII, 1, 626–28.

54. *Verità, giustizia, pace e fede per costruire un mondo migliore*. Address to youth. May 6. IGP VII, 1, 1291–96.

55. *La scienza è veramente libera soltanto quando si lascia determinare dalla verità*. Address to Catholic professors of theology of the University of Chur, Luzern, and Freiburg. June 13. IGP VII, 1, 1704–10.

56. *La scienza che serve la verità dispone alla rivelazione di Dio*. Homily at the Holy Mass at the Gemelli Hospital in Rome. June 28. IGP VII, 1, 1973–79.

57. *Costruita sulla pietra della verità, la Chiesa è libera dalla paura*. Homily at the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. June 29. IGP VII, 1, 1987–92.

58. *Nella Chiesa chiamati a collaborare, in intensa comunione, per portarla all'uomo, per dilatarla nel mondo*. Address to the Communion and Liberation movement on the 30th anniversary of its foundation. September 29. IGP VII, 2, 694–98.

59. *Continue a promuovere la verità e a diffondere la cultura*. Address to members of the Board of Directors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. October 4. IGP VII, 2, 746–47.

60. *Voi fate loro scoprire che Dio è la sorgente della vera pace*. Address to Carthusian monks. October 5. IGP VII, 2, 763–67.

1985

61. *I poteri pubblici non perdano di vista la verità di Cristo e della Chiesa sull'uomo*. Address to the administrators of Rome. January 17. IGP VIII, 1, 115–18.

62. *Offrire agli uomini "verità per la vita."* Address to members of the Cultural Ecclesial Movement. February 9. IGP VIII, 1, 453–58.

63. *La missione dell'insegnante cattolico è di educare la ragione ad accogliere le verità della fede.* Address delivered at Maria Assunta High School. March 9. IGP VIII, 1, 622–27.

64. *Il dialogo con Dio e con l'uomo per non deludere quanti sono alla ricerca della fede e della speranza.* Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly for Non-Believers. March 22. IGP VIII, 1, 688–93.

65. *La riconciliazione dono di Dio e missione della Chiesa.* Homily at the Holy Mass in Loreto. April 11. IGP VIII, 1, 1006–11.

66. *Libertà, verità, rispetto delle coscienze per servire l'uomo nella sua integralità.* Address to the new Ambassador of France to the Holy See. May 9. IGP VIII, 1, 1238–41.

67. *Professori e studenti sono uniti dalla responsabilità per la verità.* Homily at the Holy Mass on the inauguration of the academic year of the Roman ecclesiastical Universities. October 25. IGP VIII, 2, 1118–22.

68. *Fedeltà alla Parole e alla verità sull'uomo per il corretto dialogo tra fede e cultura.* Address to the University Rectors of the Society of Jesus. November 9. IGP VIII, 2, 1227–32.

69. *Intensificare la preghiera, lo studio ed il dialogo per giungere all'unità della fede nella verità.* Address to Dimitrios I. November 30. IGP VIII, 2, 1392–94.

1986

70. *Credo in Dio Creatore del cielo e della terra.* General Audience. January 15. IGP IX, 1, 111–18.

71. *Camminiamo insieme, la mano nella mano per costruire un mondo di pace.* Address delivered during the visit to Raj Ghat in Delhi. February 1. IGP IX, 1, 246–49.

72. *Il giornalista: "uomo della verità."* Address to a group of journalists. February 28. IGP IX, 1, s. 555–60.

73. *Assicurare le condizioni giuridiche che favoriscono lo sviluppo della persona nella verità e nella dignità.* Address to a group of Polish jurists. March 20. IGP IX, 1, 806–14.

74. *Per ritessere il legame di verità–bene–libertà urge ricostruire una rigorosa riflessione etica.* Address to participants in the International Congress on Moral Theology. April 10. IGP IX, 1, 969–74.

75. *Il progresso della medicina va integrato nella più ampia verità della persona.* Address to participants in the Congress of Neuropsychiatry. April 12. IGP IX, 1, 994–97.

76. *Operare "secondo coscienza" per radicare la libertà d'informazione nella verità.* Address to a group of journalists from a German radio station. September 29. IGP IX, 2, 749–50.

77. *Giovani: a salvarvi sarà la lotta coraggiosa contro la logica spietata dell'accaparramento.* Angelus. October 26. IGP IX, 2, 1215–22.

78. *Per sua natura la scienza è in ultima analisi teocentrica.* Address to representatives of all Australian institutions of higher learning in Sydney. November 26. IGP IX, 2, 1667–74.

1987

79. *Quaresima: la ricostruzione della merita di tutto ciò che facciamo e che siamo.* Homily at the Holy Mass on Ash Wednesday. March 4. IGP X, 1, 499–501.

80. *Rupert Mayer, un deciso ed impavido difensore della verità della fede e dei diritti della Chiesa.* Homily delivered during the rite of beatification of the Jesuit priest Fr. Rupert Meyer. May 3. IGP X, 2, 1552–62.

81. *La società attende dalle sue Università il consolidamento della propria soggettività.* Address to men and women of culture in the Aula Magna of the Catholic University of Lublin. June 9. IGP X, 2, 2054–63.

82. *Università! Alma Mater! Se servi la verità, servi la libertà, la liberazione dell'uomo e della nazione. Servi la vita!* Address to the academic community of the Catholic University of Lublin. June 9. IGP X, 2, 2064–72.

83. *Apritevi alla verità, che è Cristo, per portare al mondo la speranza.* Address to seminarians, clergy, and men and women religious in Szczecin. June 11. IGP X, 2, 2129–39.

84. *Contribuire alla promozione della verità nella carità per consolidare la libertà ed edificare la pace.* Address to the President of the United States of America. September 10. IGP X, 3, 374–78.

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90. *La via della santità è sempre la via della "consacrazione nella verità."* Homily at the solemn beatification of six Servants of God. September 25. IGP XI, 3, 945–52.

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92. *Giovani, costruite una nuova civiltà.* Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 4th World Youth Day. November 27. IGP XI, 4, 1658–64.

1989

93. *Speriamo che il cammino avviato conduca finalmente alla piena unità nella verità.* Homily at the Holy Mass on the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. January 26. IGP XII, 1, 186–91.

94. *Chi travisa la verità minaccia la pace.* A message to the people of Brasil. February 9. IGP XII, 1, 325–27.

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97. *Parakletos—lo Spirito di verità.* General Audience. May 17. IGP XII, 1, 1264–73.

98. *Siete testimoni dell'amore di Dio e della sua speranza di salvezza.* Address delivered at the meeting with the youth gathered at Monte del Gozo. August 19. IGP XII, 2, 284–98.

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101. *Possibile e fecondo l'approccio interdisciplinare tra scienza e religione.* Address to the participants in a conference sponsored by the Vatican Observatory. September 27. IGP XIV, 2, 664–66.

102. *Possa il Sinodo mobilitare gli animi per una nuova evangelizzazione dell'Europa.* Homily at the Holy Mass for the opening of the Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops. November 28. IGP XIV, 2, 1288–91.

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1992

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111. Letter Enciclica *Veritatis Splendor*. August 6. IGP XVI, 2, 156–375.

112. *La libertà deve poggiare sul fondamento granitico della verità*. Angelus. October 17. IGP XVI, 2, 1045–47.

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113. *Siamo compagni di uno stesso pellegrinaggio: spettatori di situazioni drammatiche, ma testimoni di incoraggianti segni di speranza*. Address to the accredited journalists during the visit to the Press Office of the Holy See. January 24. IGP XVII, 1, 189–93.

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115. *La Beata Vergine Maria e la vita consacrata*. General Audience. March 29. IGP XVIII, 1, 883–89.

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128. *Lo Spirito e i "semi di verità" del pensiero umano.* General Audience. September 16. IGP XXI, 2, 468–76.

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130. *Di fronte al mondo l'esaltante epopea della santità del nostro tempo.* Angelus. April 18. IGP XXII, 1, 766–70.

131. *Il compito degli uomini di cultura oggi: offrire al mondo la speranza che nasce dalla verità.* Angelus. June 7. IGP XXII, 1, 1233–39.

132. *La figura storica di Jan Hus da punto di contesa può diventare un soggetto di dialogo, di confronto e di approfondimento comune.* Address to the participants in the international symposium on Jan Hus. December 17. IGP XXII, 2, 1206–9.

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134. *L'uomo di scienza sa che la verità non può essere negoziata, oscurata o abbandonata alle libere convenzioni o agli accordi fra i gruppi di potere, le società o gli Stati.* Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. September 13. IGP XXIII, 2, 874–78.

2001

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2002

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137. *Basta con la guerra in nome di Dio! Fino a quando avrò, io griderò: "Pace, nel nome di Dio."* Address delivered at the meeting with religious leaders and political, cultural, and art representatives, Presidential Palace, Baku. May 22. IGP XXV, 1, 840–47.

138. *Il discorso del Santo Padre.* Address to His Beatitude Teoctist, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. October 12. IGP XXV, 2, 447–50.

139. *All'inizio di questo nuovo secolo gli scienziati facciano udire la propria voce con maggiore autorità nella causa della pace nel mondo.* Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. November 11. IGP XXV, 2, 697–99.

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2003

141. *Gerusalemme città-simbolo dell'umanità, specialmente nel drammatico inizio del terzo millennio*. Homily at the Holy Mass on Palm Sunday. April 13. IGP XXVI, 1, 451–54.

142. *Un perenne servizio alla verità dell'uomo*. Address to participants in the international congress sponsored by the Pontifical Lateran University. May 9. IGP XXVI, 1, 687–89.

143. *Il consolidamento dell'unità e dell'identità europea esige che i cristiani svolgano un ruolo specifico nel processo di integrazione*. Address to representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. June 28. IGP XXVI, 1, 1084–87.

144. *Siamo uniti nel nostro comune desiderio di lasciarci illuminare dall'unica Verità che governa il mondo e guida la vita di tutti*. Address to participants in the meeting promoted by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. November 10. IGP XXVI, 2, 728–30.

2004

145. *L'istituto matrimoniale rimane una realtà personale indissolubile, vincolo di giustizia e di amore, elevato alla dignità di sacramento cristiano*. Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota. January 30. IGP XXVII, 1, 118–22.

146. *Fondare la società europea non sul materialismo, ma sui valori morali e spirituali*. Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council of Culture. March 13. IGP XXVII, 1, 323–24.

BENEDICT XVI

2005

1. *Un cammino che ha visto crescere la speranza di un solido "dialogo della verità" e di un processo di chiarificazione teologica e storica*. Address to the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. June 30. IB I, 305–8.

2. *Fare scienza nell'orizzonte di una razionalità aperta al trascendente, a Dio*. Address at the inauguration of the academic year at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. November 25. IB I, 844–48.

3. *Nella verità, la pace*. Message for 39th World Day of Peace. December 8. IB I, 954–62.

4. Lettera Enciclica *Deus Caritas Est*. December 25. IB I, 1050–125.

2006

5. *Giustizia, libertà, perdono e riconciliazione, speranza: formidabili impegni per costruire la pace nella verità*. Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited at the Holy See. January 9. IB II, 1, 43–51.

6. *L'obbedienza alla verità ci fa collaboratori della verità.* Homily at the Holy Mass concelebrated with the members of the International Theological Commission. October 6. IB II, 2, 396–98.

7. *Il saluto agli studenti e alle maestranze durante la visita all'Università Lateranense.* Address delivered during the visit to the Pontifical Lateran University at the beginning of the academic year. October 21, IB II, 2, 488.

8. *È l'ecumenismo dell'amore che può risolvere la ricerca della piena verità tra i cristiani.* Address to the participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. November 17 XI. IB II, 2, 629–32.

9. *Servire con coraggio la verità.* Address to the assembly sponsored by the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies. November 25. IB II, 2, 680–82.

2007

10. *La riscoperta della bellezza di quella "verità sul matrimonio" che Gesù ci ha pienamente insegnato.* Address to the prelate auditors, officials, and advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota. January 27. IB III, 1, 117–22.

13. *La verità sull'uomo garantisce la convivenza tra i popoli.* Addressed to participants in Catholic-inspired non-governmental organizations. December 1. IB III, 2, 747–50.

2008

14. *Non vengo a imporre la fede ma a sollecitare il coraggio per la verità.* Lecture of the Holy Father Benedict XVI for his visit to La Sapienza University of Rome. January 17. IB IV, 1, 78–86.

15. *Liberi da materialismo e relativismo per edificare un mondo più giusto.* Message for the 42nd World Communications Day. January 24. IB IV, 1, 132–36.

16. *La passione per la verità evita il relativismo.* Address to participants in the meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. May 23. IB IV, 1, 858–61.

17. *La speranza del Vangelo in un mondo avido e diviso.* Address at the welcoming celebration by the young people at Barangaroo. July 17. IB IV, 2, 44–52.

18. *Anno Paolino: "L'esperienza di san Paolo sulla via di Damasco."* General Audience. September 3. IB IV, 2, 210–17.

2009

19. *Pregiudizio e violenza sfigurano la religione.* Address delivered on the occasion of blessing the foundation stone of Madaba University of the Latin Patriarchate. May 9. IB V, 1, 756–59.

20. *C'è bisogno di un dialogo genuino delle culture e delle religioni.* Address to participants in the meeting with organizations involved in interreligious dialogue. May 11. IB V, 1, 790–93.

21. Lettera Enciclica *Caritas in Veritate*. June 29. IB V, 1, 1105–246.
22. *La verità non minaccia il pluralismo*. Address to participants in the meeting with the civil and political authorities and the Diplomatic Corps. September 26. IB V, 2, 263–67.
23. *Bisogna sottrarre la cultura alle pressioni di interessi ideologici o economici*. Address to participants in the meeting with members of academic community. September 27. IB V, 2, 282–85.

2010

24. *L'intelligenza aperta alla fede è vera sapienza*. January 6. IB VI, 1, 22–26.
25. *I cristiani uomini di pace che rifiutano l'ingiustizia*. Homily at the Chrism Mass. April 1. IB VI, 1, 437–21.
28. *Tre vie per realizzare la verità morale in politica*. Address at the meeting with the civil authorities and the Diplomatic Corps at the presidential palace in Nicosia. June 5. IB VI, 1, 848–51.
29. *Senza verità non c'è autentica libertà*. Address delivered during the visit to Santiago da Compostela. November 6. IB VI, 2 785–87.

2011

30. *La coscienza chaive di volta per la costruzione del bene comune*. Address delivered at the meeting with representatives of civil society, the political, academic, cultural, and business world, the Diplomatic Corps, and religious leaders. June 4. IB VII, 1, 767–70.

2012

31. *La prima scelta educativa*. Homily at the Holy Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. January 8. IB VIII, 1, 37–40.

FRANCIS

2014

1. *Le vocazioni, testimonianza della verità*. Message for the 51st World Day of Prayer for Vocations. May 11. IF II, 1, 51–54,
2. *Fuggere dalla tentazione di clericalizzare i laici, nella Chiesa ognuno è importante*. Address to the members of the Corallo Association. March 22. IF II, 1, 306–8.

2015

3. *Lettera al Presidente della Commissione Internazionale contro la Pena di Morte*. Letter to the President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty. March 20. The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150320_lettera-pena-morte.html.

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2017

5. *Discorso del Santo Padre*. Address during reconciliation liturgy in Parque Las Malocas, Villavicencio, Columbia. September 8. The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco_20170908_viaggioapostolico-colombia-incontrodioreghiera.html.

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6. *“La verità vi farà liberi” (Gv 8, 32). Fake news e giornalismo di pace*. Message for 52nd World Communications Day. January 24. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20180124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html.

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2019

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2020

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2022

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11. *Parlare col cuore. “Secondo verità nella carità” (Ef 4,15)*. Message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications. January 24. The Holy See. <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/communications/documents/20230124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>.

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np. G.E.M. Anscombe, *Nowożytna filozofia moralności*, tłum. M. Roszyk, „Ethos” 23(2010) nr 4(92), s. 39-60.

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