What is post-truth? How did we get here?

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Abstract: *The article proposes to examine the 'post-truth' concept and to see whether we can properly call the current age the "Post-Truth" Age. Therefore, we have started from the philosophical notion of 'truth' and from how we decide the truth value of an utterance in a given situation, considering the various paradigms of knowledge and the problem of interpretation. We have analyzed the possibility of objective information in the media and how objectivity and truth change when passing from the influence of the written press to television and the digital environment. Relying on Lyotard's considerations on postmodern era, which is characterized by a growing preoccupation with science efficiency at the expense of scientific truth, we have examined the effect of this paradigm change when talking about mass media and the new technological trends in this area.*

Keywords: *fake news, mass-media, news, objective truth, post-truth, postmodernism, social media, television, truth*

Introduction

As it is known, the term "post-truth" came to the attention of public opinion in 2016, after the Oxford Dictionaries declared it the word of the year. The reason was that in Google searches, the curiosity about this word increased by more than 2,000% compared to the previous year. The Oxford Dictionaries also give us a definition of the term: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals

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to emotion and personal belief" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 5). If we refer to the definition in the Oxford Dictionaries, then the post-truth is related to the preeminence of emotions over factual findings / facts, when it comes to information that is of public interest. An example can make it easier for us to understand this definition. This is a dialogue that took place on July 22, 2016, between Newt Gingrich, a representative of the Republican Party, and Alice Camerota, the moderator of CNN. The dialogue takes place in the context in which Donald Trump had just publicly declared that criminal violence is high, while official FBI statistics did not seem to confirm this verdict:

> CAMEROTA But it is. We are safer and it is down.
> GINGRICH No, that's just your view.
> CAMEROTA It's a fact. These are the national FBI facts.
> GINGRICH But what I said is also a fact. … The current view is that liberals have a whole set of statistics that theoretically may be right, but it's not where human beings are.
> CAMEROTA But what you're saying is, but hold on Mr. Speaker because you're saying liberals use these numbers, they use this sort of magic math. These are the FBI statistics. They're not a liberal organization. They're a crime-fighting organization.
> GINGRICH No, but what I said is equally true. People feel more threatened.
> CAMEROTA Feel it, yes. They feel it, but the facts don't support it.
> GINGRICH As a political candidate, I'll go with how people feel and let you go with the theoreticians. (McIntyre, 2018, p. 3-4)

As we can see in this example, the Republican politician chooses to ignore what the official data says, on the grounds that this is the problem of "theorists", and to pay more attention to how people feel. If people feel threatened, it means that the violence has increased, not diminished, no matter what the official reports say!

We must also point out that the prefix "post" in this word does not have a temporal meaning – it does not refer to the succession of one era after another, such as "post" in "post-communism" – but has a rather structural meaning, referring to the fact that the truth exists, but becomes irrelevant, its meaning and relevance being increasingly overshadowed in society. Therefore, if we admit the existence of a "post-truth" era, then it is by no means an era in which the truth has disappeared, but an era in which it has become less relevant. But is that so? Is the truth less relevant today than it was 10 or 30 years ago? Is it less relevant today than in other historical eras?

I. **Truth and interpretation**

Of course, the phenomenon of post-truth is generally connected with the proliferation of fake news. If we accept this premise, then fake news is simply a lie. But is that always the case? Is fake news always a lie, in the sense of the lack of truth of the information, or sometimes it may be a certain perspective from which information is viewed, another perspective automatically becoming false? This is why the discussion of the post-truth presupposes a discussion of the truth.

The problem of truth is an old philosophical problem, and from this point of view, there are several theories of truth from which it can be approached. We thus have the theory of correspondence truth, of Aristotelian origin and synthesized in the Middle Ages by Thomas Aquinas. According to this theory, the truth lies in the adequacy between the representation and the real fact: *veritas est adequatio rei et intelectus*. There is also the theory of truth coherence, in certain situations where the facts cannot be verified, the coherence of the statements about them can instead be verified. This is the case, for example, with historical events that took place a long time ago, so that all that remains is for the historian to put together all the existing testimonies and try to build a coherent narrative. Or it may be the case of pragmatic truth. It is the theory of truth launched by the American philosopher William James, according to which an idea is true if it has practical or useful consequences, if it is productive or functional. From the perspective of the definition of truth, things appear to be simple: we check whether a certain fact meets the conditions of truth, and if not, it is considered untrue. But things are simple only in appearance because the problem of establishing the truth value of a fact always involves an exercise of interpretation accompanied, of course, by a perspective of interpretation.

Thus, for example, in the natural sciences, we have facts and statements about facts, statements from which we develop certain theories. The natural sciences enjoy the advantage that the statements they make follow the Cartesian criterion of clarity and distinction. However, even in this field, most of the time, the facts are not taken as such, but they are selected according to the theoretical framework from which they are viewed or insofar as they correspond to the hypotheses of a scientific theory. (Kuhn, 1996, p. 43-51). Thus, the same fact can have very different meanings, depending on the theoretical framework to which it is related. For example, from the perspective of Aristotle's physics, each object has its natural place to which it naturally belongs. The stones fall because their place is in the center of the earth, to which they tend, and the birds fly because their natural place is in the sky. From the perspective of Newtonian physics and the theory of universal attraction, rocks fall because of gravitational attraction, and birds fly, not because their place is in the sky, but because they have a natural flight device that allows them to overcome gravitational attraction. What is true from the perspective of Aristotelian physics is false from the perspective of Newtonian physics.

Things are similar in the humanities, where a fact can always be interpreted from several perspectives. If in the natural sciences there is an epistemology, in which clarity and univocity aim to be dominant, in the humanities, the hermeneutics or the art of interpretation is the one that can offer the meaning of facts or events. However, that meaning is never unequivocal, because it depends on the disciplinary perspective from which it is approached or on the dominant values in the community that interprets the facts. Thus, for example, the fact of the birth and death on the cross of Jesus Christ can be approached from at least two perspectives, the theological and the historical one. A Christian theologian is always interested in the significance of these events in terms of Christian revelation and its significance for the spiritual life of the believer. A historian is primarily concerned with the cultural, social, or political context in which those events took place, or with certain details that may better explain how Jesus acted as a historical figure. For a historian, the theological truth that Jesus is the Son of God is nonsense, or at best, an indifferent fact.

Things are similar if we talk about less significant historical events. Most of the time they are interpreted according to the significance they have in a certain community or for a certain historical era. For example, August 23, 1944, is now considered a palace coup or a *coup d'état* by King Michael, against the fascist military leader Ion Antonescu. Before 1989, on August 23, Romania's National Day was celebrated – the day being named in the official rhetoric of the communist regime as "The great celebration of the liberation of our homeland by the glorious Soviet army" (until 1954) or "The Revolution of social and national, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist liberation" (under Ceaușescu's regime) (Hentea, 2012, p. 268-269). Regarding the day of December 1, which became Romania's National Day after 1989, things are not much different. If for the Romanian community and the Romanian state December 1, 1918, is the day when the National Assembly of Romanians convened in Alba Iulia voted to unite Transylvania, Crișana, and Maramureș with the Old Kingdom and, by extension, is the symbolic day of the appearance of Greater Romania, for the ethnic Hungarians or Hungarian officials, that day has a completely different meaning."For us Hungarians living here, these days are not about joy, but about sadness." (László Tőkés)[1] (Gal, 2013); or "Hungarians have nothing to celebrate and if they thought better of it,

[1] L. Tőkés played an active role in starting the 1989 Revolution in Timișoara. In 2007 he was elected as an independent Romanian MEP, and since 2014 he has represented Hungary in the European Parliament, as a member of the ruling FIDESZ party.

Romanians wouldn't either" (Kelemen Hunor)[1] (Fati, 2018). So what is the "truth" in such a case? Is there one truth, or, on the contrary, are there only different interpretations of the same event? Were we already in the full "post-truth" without knowing it?

II. **The pluralism of interpretations. Postmodernism**

At this point, we can raise again the issue of the relationship between humanities and scientific knowledge. In the modern age, especially with the Enlightenment, it is scientific knowledge that acquires a special status. Encouraged by the outstanding results obtained, scientific knowledge becomes the model of knowledge as such, humanistic knowledge, especially in the form of "sciences of mind" (*Geisteswissenschaften*) developed in the German culture in the nineteenth century, being the one that seeks to establish its legitimacy by comparison with scientific knowledge (Malpas & Gander, 2015, p. 417-427). At the same time, scientific knowledge acquires social significance by relating to humanistic knowledge. The project of modern society, inspired by the Enlightenment, aims to emancipate man with the help of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge thus acquires a moral and existential dimension, being considered essential for the improvement of the human condition.

This project marked Western civilization for several centuries, until the '70s and '80s of the last century when it began to show its limits. According to Jean-François Lyotard, the end of the twentieth century represents the end of great narratives and the beginning of a new era, called by the French philosopher, following the antecedents of the American space, postmodernism: "simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern*ism as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). In the modern age, scientific knowledge has been legitimized by its introduction in the device of great narratives, which is mean in discourses on the dialectic of the spirit, the emancipation of the national or working subject, etc., discourses that gave meaning to the epistemological approaches and institutional architecture of modern society. The decline of legitimizing narratives is simultaneous with the proliferation of scientific knowledge and, at the same time, with its crisis. The proliferation of science is not only an effect of the progress of technology and the expansion of capitalism since the end of the nineteenth century, but also a consequence of the incapacity of the speculative device to inscribe all sciences in encyclopedic knowledge (Lyotard, 1984, p. 40-41). Science is increasingly legitimizing itself through a pragmatist theory, resorting to the effectiveness of its results. In this equation of scientific knowledge, capital and technology become essential. To prove a test in a laboratory, you need the right technical

[1] K. Hunor is the president of UDMR, the party of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

tools, which, as they become more refined, are becoming more expensive. That is why access to scientific knowledge is directly proportional to the investment capacity. Science depends on the laboratory, which depends on technical development, and which in turn depends on the capital invested. Hence we have the equation wealth – efficiency – truth. Scientific truth becomes a variable of wealth, science, in turn, becoming a variable in the production equation, "a moment in the circulation of the capital" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 45). Improving scientific performance is driven more by a desire for enrichment than a desire for truth. The laboratory is also organized according to the company's model, there is a clear institutional hierarchy, which is responsible for establishing research topics, team buildings, estimating the productiveness of individual and collective activity, looking for potential customers for research products on the market, etc. Funding is provided by the state or various private companies, also based on efficiency. Of course, it is not the efficiency of a particular research project that is at stake, but the chances that by funding as many projects as possible there will be one that is truly efficient, justifying investments in all the others. Therefore, "the State and/or company must abandon the idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial backers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find the truth, but to augment power" (Lyotard, 1984, 46). In other words, scientific truth is replaced by technical, economic, or financial efficiency, and the place of humanistic truth is taken by various interpretations of social realities and by postmodern perspectivism.

III. **Mass media between truth and efficiency**

1. **The impossible objectivity?**

The evolution of the media in the contemporary era is an integral part of scientific and technical development, which it cannot ignore. The special place of the press in society is given by its position as the "fourth power" or "watchdog" of democracy. However, the press can fulfill this role only insofar as it contributes to the establishment of the public sphere, insofar as it contributes to the rational debate on issues of public interest (Habermas, 2005, p. 81-138). But, to fulfill this condition, the press must be neutral and impartial, and rational arguments must prevail in its discourse over passions, emotions, or fears. But does the press today (or in the past) meet these conditions? Does it generally promote "objective truth" in society? If so, how can this truth be defined?

Of course, the debate on the objectivity of the press is by no means a new one, it dates back more than a century ago, to the moment when the press raised the issue of its professionalization. In the United States, a country that has set many milestones for the functioning of the Western press, the issue of press objectivity arose first in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Associated Press appeared. The "objectivity" of the information provided by the agency appeared to be a necessity, given that the newspapers that bought the information had different political orientations and the information delivered had to be acceptable to all customers (Schudson, 1981, p. 4-5). The American press of the end of the nineteenth century is marked by the idea that the news must report the facts, without additional interventions or interpretations. Hence the distinction, which has become the basic rule of the journalistic profession, between *reporting the facts* and their *interpretation*. The "objective" truth of the press was the same as the reporting of the facts. This perspective on the objectivity of the press, which is based on rather naive empiricism, will be questioned for the first time in the 1920s, with the outbreak of the First World War and the development of public relations. In World War I, the US government will use public relations for the first time for political communication, with the aim of first and foremost convincing American society of its involvement in the war, which until then had been a European affair. Both, the media and the communication specialists, were amazed by the persuasive capacity of the official communicators, whose task was precisely to report the facts and events from a certain point of view, from the point of view of political officials, respectively. However, the particular perspective on an event is the exact opposite of what the "objective" reporting or "objective" truth would like to be. It is no coincidence, then, that Ivy Lee, one of the founding fathers of public relations, is now suspicious of the possibility of relating "objective" facts as such: "The effort to state an absolute fact is simply an attempt to achieve what is humanly impossible; all I can do is to give you *my interpretation of the facts*" (Schudson, 1981, p. 135). In a spirit very close to Nietzsche's spirit, Ivy Lee almost tells us that there are no facts, there are only interpretations!

A second moment in which the idea of objectivity that the press can achieve is seriously questioned is in the 1960s. The favorable context in this regard is created by the rise of protest movements against the political establishment during the Vietnam War and the growing influence of critical culture. Thus, if until then the idea of "objectivity" of the press was called into question, now the use of the phrase as such is considered an abuse (Schudson, 1981, p. 160). The notion of "objectivity" or "neutrality" of the press is attacked with strong arguments, from several perspectives. First of all, it is stated that the notion of "objective reporting" only reproduces a vision of society, which refuses to see the power structures and the privileges existing at a given time in society. It assumes that individuals are relatively equal to each other and, therefore, their perspectives on social issues are similar, if not identical, which is not true in reality. “Objectivity” thus only speaks in the name of a power structure that it represents and perpetuates (Schudson, 1981, p. 160). Also, the content of a news item is based on certain unquestioned political assumptions, which reflect the political or cultural values of those who lead. And often the news storytelling builds an image of reality that consolidates the official point of view (Schudson, 1981, p. 184). Thus, what is presented to the public as an “objective” point of view is, basically, only the point of view of the officials or owners of press trusts on the issues discussed in society.

2. **The rise of television and the digital**

However, even if the notion of “objectivity” remains an ideal that is quite difficult to achieve, the American press has generally achieved public confidence. But things seem to be changing with the rise of television, which is a new medium of communication and, consequently, will also contribute to changing the mass media as such. If for a written newspaper, which had a significant circulation, it was relatively easy to make a profit from the sale, practically from the sale of news, this is no longer self-evident when it comes to television. The type of information best adapted to the television environment is the show, and this is why in the beginning, the most profitable television departments were the entertainment departments, while the news departments had only the role to “moderate” the very high profits made by the first ones. Therefore, the first news show that will become profitable on American television, only 3 years after its establishment, will be “60 minutes”, broadcast by CBS (McIntyre, 2018, p. 65). News televisions will appear relatively late, 30 years after the birth of television as a social phenomenon. Thus, in 1980 CNN appears, and in 1996 NBC and Fox News will appear, as an alternative to CNN. Because CNN was a news television station close to the Democratic Party, virtually half of its market potential remained uncovered, so other televisions appeared to present the news from a different perspective than the Liberal Party. Thus, news televisions are in direct competition, each having its own perspective on the events it presents and seeking to retain as much as possible its own audience. But these causes will lead to an increasingly partisan approach to public events. If the phenomenon becomes chronic, it could even be a form of risk to American democracy. The commercial success of a news television does not automatically relate to a better quality of the presented news:

> The commercial success of both Fox News and MSNBC is a source of nonpartisan sadness for me. While I can appreciate the financial logic of drowning television viewers in a flood of opinions designed to confirm their

> own biases, the trend is not good for the republic… Beginning, perhaps, from the reasonable perspective that absolute objectivity is unattainable, Fox News and MSNBC no longer even attempt it. They show us the world not as it is, but as partisans (and loyal viewers) at either end of the political spectrum would like it to be. This is to journalism what Bernie Madoff was to investment: He told his customers what they wanted to hear, and by the time they learned the truth, their money was gone.[1] (McIntyre, 2018, p. 71)

Some commentators even claim that the struggle between news televisions, with the partisanship they intentionally maintain, has led to the emergence of fake news as a media phenomenon (McIntyre, 2018, p. 72).

In any case, the policy of news televisions, to tell their audience only what it likes to hear, will have a paradoxical effect over time. On the one hand, journalists who are defenders of classical values in the press can only see how their market share is declining, on the other hand, at the level of society as a whole, there is a decrease in public confidence in the press. If in 1976, the American public's confidence in the press was 72%, in 2017 it reached only 32% (McIntyre, 2018, p. 85-86). So, we have a drop in the trust rate by more than half in 40 years! The evolution is concomitant with the decrease of the influence of the written press and the increase of the influence of television and, later, of the Internet, as means of information. If in 1950, Americans bought newspapers worth 53.8 million dollars a year (equivalent to 123.6% / household, there were households that bought at least 2 newspapers), in 2010, the value of newspapers sold will be 43.4 million (equivalent to 36.7% / household). It is a loss of nearly 80% of the number of newspaper readers during this period (McIntyre, 2018, p. 64). The 1960s and 1980s were the golden years of the American newspapers, followed by a decline. In contrast, the market share of news televisions has continued to grow. Just a few years before the 2016 elections, news televisions raised their rating: “Year over year, daytime viewership grew by 60% for Fox, 75% for CNN, and a remarkable 83% for MSNBC” (McIntyre, 2018, p. 91). How did this happen? First of all, each television offered to its audience what it wanted to hear, building a real "recipe for success" based on this principle. During the 2016 election campaign, the emergence of a quintessential media candidate, such as Donald Trump, amplified the phenomenon. During this time Donald Trump became a true "golden goose" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 92) of news televisions, and even his opposition televisions were accused of helping him to become president, by their over-exposure! (McIntyre, 2018, p. 92)

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[1] The statement belongs to Ted Koppel, best known as the anchor for *Nightline*, a news program on ABC television.

After the 2000s, the World Wide Web environment is developing more and more, and after 2010 social media become a source of information for a growing number of citizens. In 2017, 62% of the American citizens read their news on social media, of which 71% took their information from Facebook. This means that almost half (44%) of the American adults read their news on Facebook! (McIntyre, 2018, p. 94) We can say, without a doubt, that social media has become practically the most important source of information in the United States! Things are similar if we refer to the realities in Romania. In 2020, in a piece of research conducted among students in Bucharest, 42% of the teenagers said they obtained their news from social media, 29% from television, 23% from online traditional media platforms, news sites, and institutional websites, and only 5% from the radio, stating “listened to in the car with parents”. Newspapers account for only 1% of all sources of information, and they are “occasionally consulted” (Ionescu, 2020, p. 46). I think that the evolution is obvious, not only in the sense of the internet as a dominant source of news, but also in the sense of social media as the main source.

The main problem that arises here is the fact that the initial purpose of social media networks was to put more friends in touch and lead to meeting new friends in the virtual environment, but later these networks have become news aggregators. They *were not projected as media institutions, whose main purpose is to inform the public. However, they are increasingly taking the place of media institutions*. And if their original purpose was the social interaction of individuals in their free time, they have quickly turned into big business, whose main purpose is to earn income based on the time spent by network users. Advertising revenue is directly proportional to network activity and, therefore, to the time spent by network users. And if the information delivered in the personal news feed depends on a certain algorithm, which makes the selection of that piece of information, the type of information displayed depends on the personal reaction of each user to that piece of information. If the user's feedback is positive, then the time he spends on the network increases, and as a result, that kind of information will be repeated. Thus, over time, each of the users receives only the information they agree with, leading to the appearance of the famous information bubbles. Information bubbles are a consequence of the individual dispositions (emotions, sympathies, idiosyncrasies, etc.) of each user and the need of the network to maximize revenue. However, the information on social media is only a tool to maximize profit, using the emotional dispositions of users for this purpose. The problem of the “objectivity” of the news, which was a major concern for newspapers and even for television, no longer exists. It simply disappears, because the news is not the object of activity of social media networks. On social media networks, there is no difference between the various types of information (news, opinion, advertising, entertainment, fake news, etc.), all appear indistinctly in a homogeneous environment because the only target of the displayed information is to keep the user of the network connected. But, as rational debates on public interest issues are becoming increasingly rare in the digital environment, social networks contribute to the disintegration of the public sphere and the proliferation of the affective-emotional dimension of the information exchange[1].

Fake news, defined as false information intentionally distributed to the public, is not a new phenomenon, it has existed since information exists and circulates in the public space. What has happened with the emergence of social networks is the proliferation of this phenomenon. And, indeed, for example in the case of the 2016 US election campaign, after comparing the most popular pieces of information broadcast by media institutions with the most popular fake news, which circulated on social media networks, it was found that fake news ranked first. Fake news about the election campaign generated more engagement on Facebook than the top stories from major news outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, NBC News, and others. "During these critical months of the campaign, 20 top-performing false election stories from hoax sites and hyperpartisan blogs generated 8,711,000 shares, reactions, and comments on Facebook. Within the same time period, the 20 best-performing election stories from 19 major news websites generated a total of 7,367,000 shares, reactions, and comments on Facebook." (Silverman, 2016) It is quite obvious that fake news has a greater capacity to go viral on social media networks.

There have also been cases of fake news with real consequences. See for example the famous #pizzagate case, in which, following fake news posted on the Internet about a pizzeria where Hillary Clinton's followers sexually abused minor children, one man went down armed to punish pedophiles. Fortunately, no one was wounded, but the whole story could have easily turned into a tragedy (McIntyre, 2018, p. 109). Or, in Romania, the case of the "built on a slope" stadium is famous. According to this information, a mayor of the Social Democratic Party from a commune in the country invested the money in a sloping stadium. Based on this information, a real press campaign was launched against the Social Democratic Party, assimilated with the party that

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1 Vintilă Mihăilescu remarks that the current media, on the background of the action of the main global actors, which are the State and the Market, promotes an avalanche of "good news", "bad news" and "fake news", which lead to the disappearance of social rationality. In this context, on the background of promoting a culture of authenticity, translated at the level of each individual by the sentence "be yourself", each individual discovers as authentic in itself, their own emotions and feelings (Mihăilescu, 2017, p. 27).

wastes public money unnecessarily.[1] At one point, it didn't matter that the stadium was never built, that it really existed, but in the neighboring country, Ukraine, not in Romania! And it was not made to play football, but to draw attention to the organization of the European Football Championship in 2012, organized by Ukraine and Poland (”Misterul terenului”, n. d.). Even today, most of the Romanians are convinced that in Romania hundreds of thousands of euros were invested in that sloping stadium! The post-truth has been fully installed in this case as well.

Another important effect created by the development of the online environment and social networks is given by the fact that the digital giants, who work in the field, attract a large part of the money from advertising. Thus, in the US, in the first part of 2016, only Facebook and Google attracted 85% of the advertising money circulating online (Viner, 2016). In Romania, the situation is similar, today near 80% of the advertising money goes to Google, Facebook, and YouTube (Stanca, 2021). If such large amounts of money are attracted by a few huge companies, the consequence is a negative one for the other media institutions, whose access to advertising funding is increasingly restricted. And the situation as a whole, for what it means to have quality information, is all the more dramatic, as the money from advertising that goes to the digital giants is directed to an overwhelming extent towards entertainment, and to a much lesser extent towards quality information. In Romania, in 2020, an online entertainer managed to earn even more per month than the most well-known independent investigative journalism. “The influencer Dorian Popa – and his dog, Cheluțu' – earns monthly from advertising as much as the entire Recorder editorial office from donations, grants and sponsorships: approx. 50,000 euros” (Stanca, 2021). If we add to this the fact that in the case of Recorder there are the expenses of an editorial office and a team of journalists to be paid, while in the first case it is only a private person who feeds his dog, then any extra comment is superfluous!

Conclusions. Are we in the post-truth age?

Therefore, with the rise of television and the proliferation of the digital environment, there is a change in the way the media works. If in the written press, the reader's trust in journalists or media institutions was an important principle, which could be commercially capitalized, leading to increased circulation of the newspapers and, implicitly, to increased revenue, with the rise of commercial news televisions and the competition between them, the

[1] The news about the construction of a sloping stadium in a Romanian commune was broadcast by Pro TV in 2011. Later, in 2017, the news was resumed and posted by journalist Liviu Avram on his Facebook account, with a photo of the stadium in Ukraine. From here it was taken over and posted by several online publications.

partisanship of the public is cultivated to a greater extent, because the public watches the news televisions insofar as they say what the audience wants to hear. With the development of the digital environment as a news medium, things are changing even more, in the sense of monetizing the information and diluting professional criteria in its delivery. If the print media relied on public trust, which it sought to cultivate in the long run, and the news televisions on the daily rating, the information presented in the digital environment is based on the number of clicks they manage to get. Therefore, many materials have a strident title, specially formulated to attract attention, and often unrelated to the content of the article. The online mass media business model is based on clickbait. In addition, in the digital environment, the most important promotional tools are social media networks, which become news aggregators but without being media institutions. On social media networks, information is indistinctly presented to the public, without distinguishing between different types of information. Moreover, from the way these businesses are constructed in the online environment, they seek to exploit the emotional-affective dimension of the person and, hence, the easy way to disseminate fake news in this environment. After all, post-truth does not refer to anything but the proliferation of fake news or information based on strong emotional content in the public space, which is often at odds with certain objective data.

Of course, at the end of this paper, we should make some clarifications about the connection between post-truth and propaganda. Is the post-truth all the same as propaganda or do they differ from each other? If they differ, how do they differ? In this regard, we should first point out that the post-truth is often used for propaganda purposes, as, for example, in attacking political opponents by spreading fake news about them or promoting a positive, but false self-image. In fact, the use of lies for propaganda purposes is nothing new. That is why some authors are sounding the alarm about the negative significance of the post-truth for democracy, coming to see in the post-truth an antechamber of fascism: “post-truth is pre-fascism”, warns us in an interview the historian Timothy Snyder (Illing, 2017). However, I think we should differentiate between propaganda, in the classical sense of the term, as it was defined and used in the twentieth century, and post-truth. The main purpose of propaganda is to spread a certain message to as many people as possible, in order to gain the support of a group of individuals, social classes, nations, etc. to that message. In general, propaganda is based on a certain ideology, which it tries to impose on society. Sometimes it can use violence, sometimes lies, but the main purpose of propaganda is social cohesion around a set of values (McIntyre, 2018, p. 112-113). When we talk about fake news and post-truth, the purpose is not at all similar to that of propaganda. “The purpose of fake news, or any misinformation, today is not to make you believe anything else or to believe anything, but to make you very reluctant to believe *anything*. To confuse you, to disappoint you. To come to the conclusion that the whole politics is 'bullshit', that it's just a lie, that the facts don't matter anymore, that there is no legitimacy and so on, so that you don't care very clearly. Stop looking for the other visions, don't look for your own arguments or position." (Iancu, 2017, p. 35-36) So the purpose of post-truth is precisely to hide a certain "truth" from society, not to impose one. The main purpose is to erase the difference between "truth" and "lie" and that is why the main effect of post-truth is anomie and demobilization. But anomie and demoralization can also be just as harmful to democracy, as they can at some point, by blurring the gap between what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad, establish a regime that proposes its own definition of "truth" and "good", without having anything to do with reality.

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