

Reflexions Towards the Truth in the Fair's Mirror of the Post-Truth Media

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Abstract: *Our paper tries to reveal the mechanisms which lead, with a few but notable exceptions, to the press' "genetic modification" from Cerberus, the guardian of human freedom, into a barking poodle woofing the mind mashing propaganda of its governmental masters on a large scale covered by nowadays ubiquitous mass-media. To achieve that, we begin with the etymology of the term "post-truth", the collocation of the year 2016, according to the Oxford Dictionary, observing how Derrida's deconstruction works as an instrument of Logos' dissolution and how the contemporary media contributes, like a concave mirror, to the reflection of a distorted virtual reality towards which it is intrusively approaching almost leading to fusion.*

Keywords: *truth, press, deconstruction, logocentrism, propaganda*

1. Introduction

First of all, we would like to bow before the inspiration which lead to the name of this conference, *The Mass Media in the Post-Truth Era. The Transfiguration of the Press?* And this is not just because one needs an extraordinary sense for adequately naming an article, as all of us know already, but this is one, indeed, towards the Truth through what, in truth, should be, if it is meant to be, that peaceful normality which cannot arrive otherwise than through the Transfiguration... of the Press too. Therefore, our paper, using the hermeneutical circle, tries to reveal the process which leads to the press' metamorphosis, a degradation from being the fourth power pole in the state, as the guardian of the noble ideal of human rights, into the mere governmental

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propaganda machine. In our view, the question mark which ends this conference's title becomes a full stop at the end of our paper, marking the beginning of the process of healing our "kingdom's" maladies, because the question is just and urgent, just as Percival's question was, even if he failed in asking it to save the injured Fisher King¹. Thus, starting from the "post-truth" term's etymology, a term which was declared the collocation of the year, in 2016, by the *Oxford Dictionary*, we will try to underline how Derrida's deconstruction works towards the dissolution of the Logos and how contemporary mass media contributes to that. Of course, Derrida's concepts were meant to be literary tools in text analysis, but we apply them following Sapir-Whorf's theory which states that language shapes human thought.

2. Methodology

Thought and presented, initially, as an essay, this paper was adapted to better fit the requirements of academic work. Therefore, we used the deductive method inferring from some interdisciplinary concepts, as Jacques Derrida's *metaphor* thought by the philosopher in deconstructing what he named *logocentrism*, the equivalent of Heidegger's *onto-theological reality*.² Another concept is the mass media's trendy *post-truth* which is questioned starting from its etymology. Thus, the term is being morphologically dissected to establish its true nature, if it has one, of course. All of these are being kept in place to work together, hopefully, by Basarab Niculescu's (2006) *the included middle*, a trans-disciplinary concept theorized from the field of quantum physics. *The included middle* or *the hidden third*³ is the fundament of Niculescu's second axiom of transdisciplinarity⁴, the logical axiom, as opposed to the classical principle of

¹ "Having received no spiritual training from Gornemant, however, Perceval stumbles at the Fisher King's castle, where he sees the grail and the lance that pierced Christ's side, fails to recognize their significance and is thus unable to ask the question that would have cured the Fisher King's wound. Symbolizing his still-incomplete pursuit of chivalric perfection, the sword bestowed upon him by the Fisher King shatters with the very first blow" (Huskin, n.d.).

² The term was coined by Immanuel Kant, but Duns Scotus is considered to be the first onto-theologian. Martin Heidegger uses it in criticizing Western metaphysics and equates it with *the metaphysics of presence*. But, according to Crowell, when Heidegger says "in their unity, fundamental ontology and metontology constitute the concept of metaphysics" he recognizes the flaws in his approach to ontotheology and rejects the idea of metaphysics as ontotheology (Crowell, 2001, p. 222).

³ The hidden third links the different levels of Reality. Its theological equivalent would be The Holy Spirit keeping together the life on earth after Christ's Ascension.

⁴ Trying to draw a bridge between science and ontology and using Galilei's axioms as a model, Niculescu elaborates the axioms of transdisciplinarity: "i. *The ontological axiom*: There are, in Nature and our knowledge of Nature, different levels of Reality and, correspondingly, different levels of perception. ii. *The logical axiom*: The passage from one

the excluded middle, the equivalent of the law of non-contradiction, the very base of scientism. As the best way to imagine how it works, one should think of a cane, which has two ends, each one with its own particularities, working together by being kept together through the middle part of the object. Our method can also be imagined through Marion's view on the concept of *distance*: "[...] the distance opens the unifying departure only starting from a term which is revealing inside it, or, better said, which discovers in itself its own horizon: the distance reveals only as a road that is being cleared, starting from a place, and not as the itinerary is read on a map, from the elsewhere of a neutralized representation" (2007, p. 278). In other words, our work tries to reflect a dynamic, deepening understanding, *in via*, because it is forged under the royal „method” which is, at the same time, the road itself and the step which steps on it.

On the other hand, as one could infer from the previous scare quotes, this is not a method *per se*, as we try to follow the steps of Petre Țuțea, the one who said: “The method is nothing else but the logical form of the poor seeking man who abandons the power of the revealing God. [...] This method, a [presumed] way towards the truth, belongs to the man wandering in nature, always limited in his craving for cracking the puzzle, but the inspiration belongs to God” (Țuțea, 2013, p. 36). Therefore, hoping for inspiration, we try to integrate the concepts used in our work by emphasizing the living facts from nowadays, as Mircea A. Diaconu underlined: “The tendency to substitute the concrete and living facts with synthetic concepts is a born dead endeavor. Being a reductionist method, it partially sterilizes through abstraction a substance with an illusory homogeneity. This happens because as many *constants* would objectively have certain phenomena, being they literary or not, each and every one of them still possesses their own irreducible identity” (Diaconu, 2008, p. 5). Therefore, our “method” uses all the meanings of the term, as derived from its Greek roots: meta- “word-forming element of Greek origin meaning: 1. ‘after, behind; among, between’, 2. ‘changed, altered’, 3. ‘higher, beyond’ from Greek ‘meta’ (prep.) ‘in the midst of; in common with; by means of; between; in pursuit or quest of; after, next after, behind’, in compounds most often meaning ‘change’ of place, condition, etc. This is from PIE *me- ‘in the middle’ (source also of German ‘mit,’ Gothic ‘miþ,’ Old English ‘mið’ ‘with, together with, among’). The notion of ‘changing places with’ probably led to the senses of ‘change of place, order, or nature,’ which was a principal meaning of the Greek word when used as a prefix (but it also

level of Reality to another is insured by the logic of the included middle. iii. *The complexity axiom*: The structure of the totality of levels of Reality or perception is a complex structure: every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time” (Niculescu, 2006, p. 150).

denoted ‘community, participation; in common with; pursuing’) + ‘hodos,’ ‘a way, path, road; a ride, journey, march’ (Harper, 2022).

At the end of our short journey, we hope that the reader will be able to perceive and to balance Umberto Eco’s three *intentio(s)*, *auctoris*, *operis*, and *lectoris*, as our text is, as all the text are, actually, “a product whose interpretive outcome must form part of its own generative mechanism” (Eco, 1979, p. 54).

3. Discussion

Going further on this path, according to the aforementioned dictionary, “post-truth” is an adjective used “relating to circumstances in which people respond more to feelings and beliefs than to facts” (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2021). Reminding that there is nothing new under the sun, Mircea Dumitru equals those who are nowadays promoting the term with the sophists from ancient Greece, stating that “we cannot discuss the existence of the post-truth era because there is nothing else as a substitute or even a simulacrum of the truth” (Dumitru, 2017). On the same page with Dumitru is Petre Țuțea also, when he says: “If there is only one truth, as St. Thomas Aquinas stated, then more truth(s), no truth” (Țuțea, 1992, p. 33).

Now, if it is considered only the term’s morphology, one needs to establish if the prefix “post” refers to something coming “after/later than” or “behind” the truth¹. The metaphor from this conference’s title suggests an image of the press being at a crossroad, trying to find again its purpose as the guardian of man’s freedom as a being made in God’s image. Thus, the “post” prefix would endorse the truth, in black and white, through the Truth itself, the Logos which keeps together all the things existing on this earth. And that is because otherwise, the actual trend would close the circle, the press ending in the role of mere propaganda. The negative connotation of the term *propaganda* is being underlined by Michael Parenti, interviewed by Dan Barsamian in *Stenographers to Power. Media & Propaganda*. Discussing the term’s dictionary definitions (“the systematic propagation of a given doctrine” or “material disseminated by the proselytizers of a doctrine”), Parenti points out that propaganda could have positive effects as well as negative ones. He suspects the lexicographers as being of Western origins, as the Americans believe that they have no doctrines²: “In the United States the word «propaganda» is unrelievedly negative. In certain other countries, propaganda has a more neutral implication” (Parenti in Barsamian, 1992, p. 43). In the same book, Noam Chomsky cynically defines the term, as he criticizes³

¹ In Romanian, there are more meanings for the prefix “post”, one of them being “behind” (MDA, 2010).

² We wonder what Parenti would say today, about *woke*, *cancel culture*, *BLM*, and so on...

³ We wonder why was that? A rhetorical question, of course!

Orwell's *1984*. Discussing the impossibility¹ for the Western democracies to control masses by force, he uncovers the veil of the world in which we live today when the government

has to control what you think. [...] One of the ways you control what people think is by creating the illusion that there's a debate going on, but making sure that debate stays within very narrow margins. Namely, you have to make sure that both sides in the debate accept certain assumptions, and those assumptions turn out to be the propaganda system. As long as everyone accepts the propaganda system, then you can have a debate. (Chomski in Barsamian, 1992, p. 7-8)

Therefore, bringing down on earth the metaphor from this conference's title, we can see that the moment of press' transfiguration is acutely actual, the chronic hunger for the truth of the normal people becoming unbearable. In the light of a moment like this, as in Christ's Transfiguration on the mount Tabor, that part of the press which has betrayed its purpose should turn away to gain some time to prepare to know the Truth, otherwise it would be burned on the spot. And that is because not by chance Jesus took only three of His disciples on the mountain, those who were the best prepared for the Truth's revelation.

So, the problem is that the large majority of nowadays international mass media has lost its main purpose, that being the delivery of accurate information to the people. If it is to recall another metaphor regarding the light, that involving the big firefly which was uttered by a former bad figure amongst the rotten Romanian politicians², we could underline Ben Bagdikian's answers when interviewed by Dan Barsamian: "The people who have power have learned how to feed these hungry, competitive fishes in Washington. You get a feeding frenzy to get the latest word from the top official. The top officials have learned how to play them like a small trout on a heavy line" (Bagdikian in Barsamian, 1992, p. 41).

Even more, stepping towards the area where the mass media was completely taken into the pocket by the governments, on the one side, and heavily fed with steroids from the technological leap, on the other side, we can observe, as John Coleman did, where are we today;

¹ They are trying, though, as we can see nowadays, especially in Australia, but in European countries too.

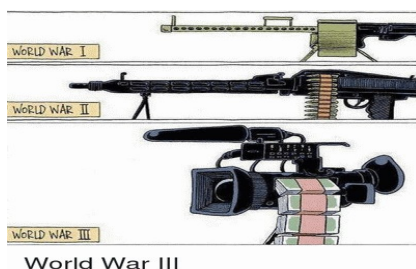
² In a private situation, one of the former presidents of Romania, Traian Băsescu, allegedly revealed his foreign affairs policy by making a remark with sexual connotations: "I'd rather suck from the big firefly than from a sum of little ones". From that moment on, for the Romanians, the USA is known as the big firefly (Dobre & Gafencu, 2005).

'Future shocks' is described as a series of events which come so fast that the human brain cannot absorb the information. [...] Science has shown that there are clearly marked limits to the number of changes and the nature of them that the mind can deal with. After continuous shocks, the large targeted population group discovers that it does not want to make choices anymore. Apathy takes over, often preceded by mindless violence such as is characteristic of the Los Angeles street gangs, serial killers, rapists and child kidnapers. (Coleman, 2007).

Another aspect of the problem is "the rally round the flag effect", theorized by John Mueller and used by Dan Sanchez in an excellent article which links the 9/11 event to the nowadays' p(l)andemic¹. As it happens with the large majority of today's concepts, Sanchez infers that the term comes from an earlier concept, developed by Randolph Bourne to explain how people are being organized by the government in the time of war: "[...] the organization of the herd to act offensively or defensively against another herd similarly organized. The more terrifying the occasion for defense, the closer will become the organization and the more coercive the influence upon each member of the herd" (Bourne *apud* Sanchez, 2021). Even if the concept is a positive one in its essence, the problem appears when the flag is false and those who are waving it have a hidden agenda. The press' role is a crucial one, especially in this case, be it in the service of the truth or in keeping the truth away from the people.

All of this information under false flags is being delivered to us, regurgitated by the social engineers, through the various channels of the mass media, tailored for each targeted population segment. And here the role of the screen steps in. Be it the big or the small screen, it hides as much as it shows to and from the people, according to some of its dictionary meanings: "something that prevents somebody from seeing or being aware of something, or that protects somebody/something" (*Oxford Dictionary*, 2021) or even better "a vertical structure that is used to separate one area from another, especially to hide something or to protect you from something unpleasant or dangerous" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2021). But the revealing meaning of the term comes from French, where "écran" means, amongst others: "Ce qui s'interpose, s'intercale et dissimule" (*Larousse*, 2021). Nonetheless, every piece of technology is as beneficial to humanity as good or bad are those who are using it. Not by chance the images with the terrible weapon of the Third World War had a real impact on those who still have all the tiles on their roofs. And this weapon is the modern TV camera (onsizzle.com).

¹ In the light of the newest discoveries, we think that one could at least question the mainstream narrative regarding this "virus" and its attributes as a consequence of the "gain of function" process (Project Veritas, 2022). In this light, of course, the meaning of the term "gain of function" could be extended, metaphorically.



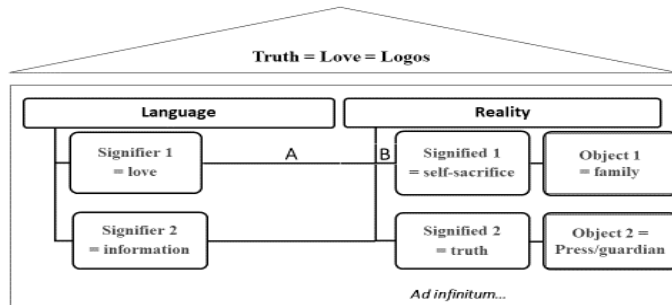
We can see how images are being manipulated to obtain that emotional response from the population in this so-called “post-truth era” almost daily, nowadays. For example, the image of a long string of coffins in Italy – along with the caption “Stop making a mockery of CORONAVIRUS. CORONAVIRUS is real. See what happened in Italy. All these died in one day” –, which was displayed worldwide on social media in 2020 (Deodla). Those who spread that false piece of information had no remorse in reshaping photos taken from a previous tragedy that had hit Italy three years before. The fact that the lie walks on short legs and therefore the fake news was exposed (AAP Factcheck, 2020) had no real impact, not only on those who are used to being fed daily with regurgitated information, because the damage has already been done. Another relevant image for our point of view is that coming from the UK press stands in 2021, where the front pages from all of the newspapers, be they quality or gutter press, were almost identical (Naşul TV, 2021). This kind of rally around the government’s ideology was only a dream for the “communist” rulers of this part of the world abandoned behind the wall by the other part, the “democracy”¹. That reflects the idea that the pedigree press (aka the watchdogs of democracy) has become mere government propaganda barked out on the same tone by some genetically engineered poodles.

4. A possible explanation

The mechanism of this metamorphosis could be explained through Derrida’s deconstruction of what he called logocentrism as the base of human existence. Mentioning the fact that Derrida’s thought referred mainly to literary criticism, one cannot deny that the Sapir-Whorf theory is right and indeed the language shapes human thinking. Keeping in mind our previous affirmations, we try to show how Derrida’s theory illustrates our point regarding the press’ degradation. In the next figure, adapted from one of Rafey Habib’s works

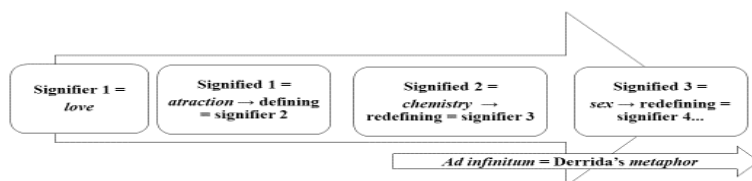
¹ Again, keeping in mind Chomski’s words quoted on the previous page, one could question the true meaning of the term in relation to people’s perception of nowadays’s reality.

(2005), we can see how the Logos, who can be equated with Love and Truth, theologically, holds our world together:



“It is because the Logos holds together the orders of language and reality that the relation between signifier (word) and signified (concept), i.e., relation a, is stable and fixed; so too is relation b, the connection between the sign as a whole and the object to which it refers in the world” (Habib, 2005, p. 650). The example Habib gives when he analyses Derrida’s deconstruction is, in a Christian vision, the signifier *love* which refers to the signified *self-sacrifice* in relation to God: “And this sign as a whole, the word ‘love’ as meaning ‘self-sacrifice’, would refer to object 1, which might be a system of social or ecclesiastical relationships institutionally embodied in a given society, enshrining the ideal of self-sacrifice” (Habib, 2005, p. 650). We chose *family* as an object from reality corresponding to the sign structured around the signifier *love* and signified *self-sacrifice*. Coming back to our subject, the second example from the figure is the same relationship in which the Press, as an institution, is being held together by the Logos if the meaning of the signifier *information* is *truth*. The Logos/Love/Truth keeps a vision of the world in which “the meaning of ‘love’ is sanctioned by a hierarchy of authority, stretching back through institutional Church practice, theology, philosophy, as well as political and economic theory, to the authority of the scriptures and the Word of God himself” (Habib, 2005, p. 651).

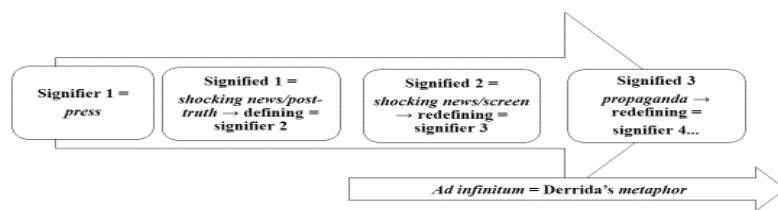
But what happens if the Logos/Love/Truth disappears? One possible answer comes from Derrida’s *metaphor*, as it is seen by Habib:



Of course, this disappearance does not happen suddenly, it takes time and the process seems to be in place for centuries by now. In a world like that, language and reality would not be working together in a structured system.

The relations a and b both become destabilized: if we are not constrained by a Christian perspective, we might attribute other meanings to the word 'love', meanings which may even conflict with the previously given Christian signification. Moreover, various groups might give different meanings to the word so that a general consensus is lost. In this way, signifier 1 may be defined by a meaning attributed to signified 1. But since there is no authoritative closure to this process, it could go on ad infinitum: signified 1 will itself need to be defined, and so this signified will itself become a signifier of something else; this process might regress indefinitely so that we never arrive at a conclusive signified but are always moving along an endless chain of signifiers. (Habib, 2005, p. 652)

This is Derrida's *metaphor*, an endless chain in which one signifier is substituted for another and represents the key in deconstructing what Derrida names *logocentrism* or *onto-theological reality*. On the same principle, we adapted the figure to reflect what happens in both systems with the signifiers *information* and *press*:



Therefore, the reality, as we know it, is being deconstructed before our very eyes. According to *Il Giornale*, which leaked out an internal document of the European Commission, named *#UnionOfEquality* aka the European Commission's Guide for Inclusive Communication, it will be forbidden¹ to use Christian names in a conversation. In the introductory part of the document, Helena Dalii, the European Commissioner for Equality stated: "we must always offer an inclusive communication, making sure that, in our documents, all the people are recognized and appreciated, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, religion or faith, disabilities or sexual orientation" (Giubilei, 2021). To achieve that, it will be "recommended" to avoid using masculine generic nouns like "the working men", "the policemen", to address an audience with "ladies and gentlemen", or to use "the holiday period" instead of "Christmas period". The Commission backed down when Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, stepped in and criticized the document, according to Vatican News. Being interviewed by Massimiliano Menichetti, the Cardinal concluded:

I believe that the concern to erase all discrimination is right [...]. However, in my opinion, this is not the way to achieve this goal. Because in the end we risk destroying, annihilating the person, in two ways. The first is the differentiation that characterizes our world. Unfortunately, the tendency is to homogenize everything, not knowing how to respect even rightful differences, which naturally should not become a conflict or a source of discrimination, but should be integrated in order to build a full and integral humanity. The second: forget what is a reality. And whoever goes against reality puts themselves² in danger. Then, there is the cancellation of our roots, the Christian dimension of our Europe, especially concerning Christian festivals. (Parolini in Menichetti, 2021)

¹ The author exaggerates a bit in order to emphasize his point of view, but this is a common journalistic method when it is considered necessary.

² Our note, since the misspelling is in the original article.

Of course, Francesco Giubilei exaggerated a bit in *Il Giornale*, but we all can see how fast an EU's recommendation becomes a rule nowadays. The response from the Vatican proved him right though. In our opinion, this is exactly the role of the press. The Cardinal's well-balanced and commonsensical response showed that a state of equilibrium can be achieved if something is watching out there and signaling the government's excesses.

5. Conclusions

Trying to close the hermeneutical circle, which is, in fact, our journey through the possible process of the press' transfiguration, we must point out that it is by no means an easy task to present facts from reality and to guide the readers towards the Truth, be it only because the border between fact and memory is a very fluid one, as we all know. But if it was easy, it would not be a thing to tell about the newspaper journalist vocation. For a good image of what we just said, one could see Velasquez' painting called *Las Meniñas*, where the artist's genius makes us think about memory and transcendence as we see, through a mirror reflecting the King and the Queen of Spain's figures, as they are outside of the painting's field, in the place where we, the viewers, would be staying. Just like the aforementioned screen, the mirror symbolizes that the reality and the truth transcend our sensorial capacities and the presenting of the truth in the light of the Truth needs inspiration and sacrifice.

Therefore, the Press' transfiguration is as necessary and urgent as Perceval's question was because otherwise, we would end in some kind of Orwell's dystopian world on a path on which we were already set: "If you want to picture the future, imagine a boot stomping on a human face, forever" (Orwell in Durlacher, 2014). It is obvious, though, that those who are manipulating the information in order to deconstruct the Logos are mere hypocrites because, in the end, if they succeed they will be forced to use the same old logocentric concept just to keep together the old shanty until they "build back better" the fancy castle. The Big Brother who will impose the newspeak upon us would be a simulacrum of the Logos, tailored for a human being fallen into the idolatry of its own spirit, a fall in three steps, as Saint Augustine pointed out: firstly, the vice of imagination which embeds into memory the corporal forms; secondly, the images of the corporal things become idols (*eidola*) which are a screen between the human being and the contemplation of divinity; and thirdly, the human being loses the contact with divinity and imagines himself as God (Vălcan, 1998, p. 192-195).

To get off this road to perdition, even if it is only temporarily, the Press' transfiguration will help decisively, as George Orwell still has a glimpse of hope at the end of his last interview: "The moral to be drawn from this

dangerous nightmare situation is a simple one: Don't let it happen! It depends on you" (2014). And it seems that this transfiguration is happening as, for example, a top Danish newspaper (*Extra Bladet*) admits that following their government's propaganda on the pandemic topic was a big mistake. Amongst others, their editorial article from 07.01.2022, entitled "*Vi fejlede*" (We Failed) states: "For two years we – the press and the population – have been almost hypnotically preoccupied with the daily figures provided by the authorities. [...] We were not vigilant enough when the authorities were compelled to answer what really means that the people are hospitalized *with* corona and not *because of* the corona. And that is because this makes a difference. A big difference"¹ (Weichardt, 2022). A big difference, indeed, as a mere preposition changes the meaning of a sentence reflecting a life and death situation.

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¹ This translation from Danish is an indirect translation from a Romanian source (Niculescu, 2022). All the translations from Romanian works in this paper are ours.

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