Emergence of the Post-truth Situation—Its Sources and Contexts

MIROSLAV VACURA

ABSTRACT

We often encounter the term "post-truth situation" in quite different contexts. This paper compares existing approaches to the term, reviewing sources of this notion in different domains (scientific, political, economic, academic) and fundametally identifying its conceptual core. The starting point is the analysis of the recent transformation of the relationship between scientific fact and the political sphere and the change of the role of experts in relationship to society. The next section focuses on the role of digital and especially social media in the emergence of the post-truth society and some important phenomena that are constitutive for the post-truth society in the information arena. Subsequently, we identify other sources of post-truth situations in the economic sphere, which is related to globalization, and also in the field of postmodern philosophy.

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§1. Introduction

WHEN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF "POST-TRUTH", it is first necessary to define the term. In contemporary literature, the term "post-truth" has gradually prevailed, although the terms "post-factual" or "post-reality" also appear. The importance of this issue is illustrated by the fact that the term "post-truth" was named by Oxford Dictionaries the "word of the year" in 2016. At the same time, the use of this term is not limited to the U.S. and Europe, but has spread to other parts of the world.[1] In this paper, we will work with the term "post-truth", but we will understand it as synonymous with "post-factual" or "post-reality".

What does this relatively new term mean? A more comprehensive definition is one of the objectives of this paper, but it is appropriate to seek a brief definition of the phenomenon. This definition is based on the characteristics found in contemporary literature in works of several authors who have dealt with this subject systematically. In his influential work, Keyes (2004) defines the post-truth era as a time when the boundaries between lying and telling the truth are blurred, as are the lines between facts and fiction. Pomerantsev (2016) characterizes a post-fact or post-truth situation as the one when politicians not only lie, which they have always done, but when they do not care whether they lie or not. Mair (2017), in a similar vein, points out that while it is an ambiguous term, it is nevertheless possible to characterize a post-truth situation as "qualitatively new dishonesty on the part of politicians," who no longer treat the truth merely "economically", but seem to "make up the facts to suit their narratives." By way of

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[1]   The China news agency Xinhua warned in 2017 that post-truth politics (*hòu zhēnxiàng zhèngzhì*) are on the rise in Europe. In Argentina, an editorial in the news magazine *Rio Negro* described contemporary politics of South America as an expression of the post-truth era (*época de posverdad*) (Mair 2017, 3). For use in Pakistan, see also Javid (2018). For analysis prepared by authors working in different cultural environments see Peters et al. (2018).

example, he mentions Trump and Farrage, whom he compares to former politicians such as Blair and Clinton, who, with the help of media advisors "only" manipulated facts, and to Nixon, who was trying to conceal the facts. Similarly, Lockie (2017) says that while former politicians cherry-picked the relevant facts, used questionable interpretations, and avoided unpleasant questions, post-truth politicians are now creating their own facts, claiming anything that is in their interest and continuing to do so even when there is substantial evidence against their claims.

Kalpokas (2018) identifies the range of different meanings that the term can assume, but concludes that it can be generally summarized as the primacy of unverified or directly fictional claims in a political debate, lack of respect for truth in contemporary society, or the superiority of emotion over knowledge. He is convinced that the profound transformations of society in recent decades have led to the dichotomy of truth and untruth being largely overcome (ibid, 10), which he understands as the central characteristic of a post-truth situation. Fish (2016, 211), on the other hand, defines the post-truth situation with three specific attitudes: attitude toward experts, attitude toward truth and attitude toward evidence (we will discuss these in detail in the next section of this text). He thus emphasizes the corroding relationship of society and politicians to science (its institutions and results) as an underlying characteristic of a post-truth society.

Based on these discussions, we will use the term "post-truth" to refer to such *a situation in society and politics, in which the boundary between truth and untruth is erased, facts and related narratives are purposefully produced, emotions are more important than knowledge and the actors of social or political life do not care for truth, proof and evidence.*

It is also worth noting that in contemporary English literature, in some contexts (and this is a more recent trend), "post-truth" is used not as an adjective, but as a noun to designate specific information artifacts that are created, transmitted or consumed (Mair 2017). This is related to proliferation of forms of speech modes that intend just to persuade without regard for truth to politics and public discourse (Frankfurt 2005).

In the rest of the paper, we will first focus on the issue of facts and experts in a post-truth time. In the next section, we look at the role of the media, especially social networks, in the constitution of the post-truth situation. The third part examines the sources and causes of the post-truth situation, both in the economic and social arenas, and relates it to the rise of postmodern discourse at the end of the 20th century. The conclusion summarizes the text.

§2. Facts and Experts in the Post-truth Era

The use of the terms "post-truth" and "post-factual" as more or less synonymous also indicates what kind of phenomena they describe. A post-truth situation is closely related to the role of facts in society. Douglas (2009, p. 23–24) points out that in the course of the 20th century, the role of science in politics has changed radically. While at the beginning of this century politics and science were separate, at its end, the influence of scientific "facts" on practical policy is unquestionable. The term "evidence-based policy" (analogous with the term "evidence-based medicine", which describes scientific medicine as opposed to alternative and non-scientific approaches) has been coined (Head 2010). Hence, Douglas speaks of the 20th century as a time of "rise of a scientific advisor".

The problem is that when scientific "facts" became a powerful weapon in political struggle, the experts and institutions that produce them multiplied. Some of these institutions (usually think tanks), as Davies (2016) points out, are willing to produce scientific "facts" to support any political position. Even within conventional science, there are often a number of different methods, and the choice of what question is asked and the method of answering it can influence the result of the inquiry; e.g., in the case of social research based on surveys (Kalton and Schuman 1982). The chosen method can also influence how an untrained reader interprets these results. However, from the point of view of formal scientific methodology, such a procedure is often scientifically largely without major problems. Davies is therefore talking about the "facts industry" that appeared in the 20th century.

Another problem lies in contemporary publishing practices in science. In spite of the effort to publish only high-quality results (so-called sound science) in scientific journals that are facilitated by peer review, some published studies do not meet strict requirements of methodological quality (Huber 1993; Agin 2006). One of the main causes is the vast number of scientific publications that are undergoing peer review because publication output and number of citations have become the main measures of quality for both institutions and individuals in the bibliometric community. A solution applicable in certain fields is so-called meta-studies, which analyze all available studies on a specific topic carried out in the past and then formulate an overarching conclusion. Such meta-studies are in some fields a standard publication output, but they are also ordered by political institutions (e.g., within the European Union) as a basis for decision-making as a part of an evidence-based policy. This approach, however, does not seem to solve directly this problem itself, but aims rather to exclude such low-quality

publications from meta-studies, making them more reliable than original scientific studies.

As a result, the public is overwhelmed by scientific "facts" that may sometimes seem contradictory or may have a commentary or context that creates a completely misleading image. The result is a loss of public trust in science and "facts" produced by legitimate scientific institutions. This is also sometimes associated with the increased inclination of the public to trust conspiracy theories that reject scientific results entirely or accept only those that fit a pre-determined conspiracy scheme (Goertzel 1994; Wood, Douglas, and Sutton 2012). In this situation, we can understand why some authors say: "There's no such thing, unfortunately, anymore, as facts" (Halberstam 2000, xi; Shuham 2016).

Another effect is the oversaturation of the public with "experts". A well-known example is a statement used by the Brexit campaign: British citizens "have had enough of experts" (Fish 2016, p. 211). On top of that, some research shows that if scientists or experts bring evidence that contradicts someone's firm beliefs, the result is not a weakening of the belief, but a weakening of trust in these scientists or experts and also an increase in the belief that experts' opinions are often changing, so they cannot be trusted, or other forms of rationalization that allow dealing with the evidence of experts without the need to weaken one's own belief (Lockie 2017; McCright et al. 2016).

Lockie (2017) considers attacking the objectivity and independence of scientists and experts a fundamental sign of a post-truth policy: they are described as the "elites" and "establishment" who stand in opposition to "ordinary", "everyday" and "real" people. These "elites" are also in many cases portrayed as trying to silence or limit freedom of speech. Lockie's recommendation is that scientists open up more and admit that there are areas in which there is still some uncertainty or ignorance. The pretense of certainty that is not backed by substantial evidence potentially deepens distrust in science.

Fish (2016, p. 212) analyzed the use of facts in the political field, noting that a post-truth era is characterized not just by a common use of statements that are not (completely) true in the political struggle, but also by particularly focusing on the timespan of electoral political campaigns, because after casting votes at the ballot box, voters cannot take them back. This form of politics, in which campaigns throw a vast amount of information at the electorate in a short period of time, knowing that the other parties do not have enough time to scrutinize or refute controversial issues is, according to Fish, a mark of non-liberal or illusory democracy. Democracy presupposes the freedom of citizens and the acceptance of the government that is formed on the basis of elections. However, consent must

be informed consent — similar to the informed consent needed to accept a particular medical procedure. Such consent is impossible in a post-truth situation, in which voters are not adequately informed and their consent through participation in the electoral process cannot be regarded as informed consent. The result is merely an illusory democratic process. If the post-truth era is characterized by this relationship to information in policy-making, the question is whether such a situation undermines the very foundations of democracy. Fish claims that "[t]he attitude towards information that characterizes 'post-truth' politics is in direct conflict with this feature [consent] of democratic decision-making" (ibid).

At the same time, more voices are calling for a reassessment of the current concept of freedom of speech. Sears writes: "it is time for a broad public debate about the boundaries of acceptable speech, this time in a digital age, to be followed by tough legislation and sanctions" (Sears 2017).

§3. Role of the Media and Information in the Constitution of a Post-truth Era

Before we discuss specific media, we will look at what we can say in general about information in a post-truth situation. First, changes in technology result in an information superabundance, and its consumers suffer from information overload. The characteristic feature of the post-truth time is, above all, the dramatic transformation in the structure and economy of information (Mair 2017, p. 3). The essence of the economic aspect of this transformation is a significant reduction in the cost of disseminating information. The Internet has substantially reduced the cost of spreading written information, first in the form of e-mail, newsletters, and electronic forums (so-called usenet),[2] and then in the form of websites. The current final stage of this change is the emergence of social networks in which anyone can disclose high-impact information at no cost with practically no limit to the size of the audience. At the same time, costs and skills required for audio (podcasts) and video broadcasting (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) have decreased. As a result, the distinction between professional and amateur news sources is being erased.

Reducing dissemination costs also results in a change in the dissemination structure. Earlier centralized publication models (star-shaped) have changed to decentralized publication models (mesh-like). This applies in particular to so-

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[2]   Discussion forum usenets were introduced in 1980. Software email discussion group listservs were created in 1986, both long before the introduction of Web technology (1989).

called social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), on which people increasingly rely for general news and political commentaries. Kwak et al. (2010) even found that Twitter structurally resembles news media more than a social network.

In social networks, interactivity and the ability to actively respond to communicated content are strongly supported. There are generally three supported forms of responses: a) comments on published content, b) "likes" that expresses support or other (usually positive) non-verbal responses to the communicated content, and c) sharing, i.e., forwarding the communicated content through a personal information channel in a social network to persons who subscribe to this channel.

Unfortunately, this means that the information that reaches people from social networks is primarily shared or upvoted by people from their own social environment, resulting in phenomena known as the "social bubble" or social "echo chamber". These phenomena are sometimes confused, and the meaning of these labels may not be clear, although they are crucial to understanding the pathways of information flows in social networks and how they constitute the post-truth information environment.

"Social bubble" (or "filter bubble") is a term for a situation in which an individual is in an environment (real or virtual) comprised of people with similar or identical views (Nikolov et al. 2015). The result is that the idea arises that certain attitudes are "normal" because "almost everyone" has such views, so these attitudes are certain, unquestionable and correct. This phenomenon was not completely unknown in the past. J. S. Mill in his 1869 work draws attention to the fact that otherwise self-critical people who do not consider themselves generally infallible and are characterized by intellectual modesty behave differently when they are locked in a community of people with a shared common view. If the opinion of such a person coincides with the views of everyone he or she is in contact with, his or her conviction becomes unshakable certainty, elevated to absolute truth (Mill 1989).

While Mill was considering cultures at the level of different nations (e.g., English vs. Chinese), present-day communities are smaller in size and in many cases virtual. Currently, many people maintain a large part of their social contacts through social networks. The few remaining social contacts they have in the real world are with people with very similar views as their own. This produces a similar effect as Mill described.

"Echo chamber" is a metaphorical term for a situation in which a certain group of people mutually reinforces their shared beliefs. Shared views are repeated, resonated in a shared virtual space, thereby being reinforced, and their

truthfulness is confirmed by others' consistent variations, responses and comments. New contributions to shared information channels often only develop previous contributions through an iterative form or follow up on them, and thus the participating authors mutually confirm each other in the validity of shared attitudes. Opinions that contradict the shared attitudes of the echo chamber are then either rejected passively — no one comments, they are not shared, no "like" is added to them, or they are rejected actively through rejecting reactions or comments added by other participants.

The difference between the social bubble and the echo chamber is the way in which inner homogeneity of community is strengthened. In the case of the social bubble, it is primarily passive — people inside a bubble are separated from opposing views or attitudes. In the cases Mill describes, this is a geographic separation — at that time, information spread slowly and only in small amounts between parts of the world. At present, it is often virtual separation — people on social networks are members of groups that do not share or forward certain information because it contradicts their shared beliefs.

In the case of the echo chamber, the internal group's homogeneity is strengthened actively, requiring a large part of the group or community to communicate with each other. Individual information contributions are confirmed by consistent resonances of repetitive responses, actively commented upon, developed, forwarded and recycled and sent again over time. Modern social networks facilitate this active participation in many ways — one click is often enough to actively manifest support.

Thus, while the social bubble needs a relatively small amount of active information resources and its existence is based on an information boundary that separates it from the surroundings, the echo chamber requires high activity of most of its participants and is based on their interactions. Therefore, the phenomenon of the social bubble existed before the advent of information technology (we can even say that the difficulty of spreading information made it more easily arise), but the phenomenon of the echo chamber is largely linked to the development of information technology and especially social networks, which allow constant feedback. In many cases, a particular community has features of both the information bubble and the echo chamber.

If we look in detail at the content shared in communities exhibiting these characteristics, one of the most characteristic forms of communication of ideas and responding to them is virtue signaling, which refers to flashy public expression of moral values. It is currently used in a rather pejorative way to describe seeking social credit by openly supporting social values (or values that

are held in high esteem in their own social subcommunity). It is "indicating that you are kind, decent and virtuous" (Bartholemew 2015). The focus of criticism in this context is on some forms of commercial advertising (those that, along with a commercial product, refer ostentatiously to somewhat sympathetic, but often nonspecific "good") as well as a particular form of social networking practices. The ease of engagement, in which only one click is action, that makes a passive viewer a committed actor who contributes to a "good cause" is often criticized because this form of engagement is empty by nature and shows in reality "[m]indlessness, arrogance and lack of real determination" (Hobbs 2017). An essential sign of virtue signaling is that it does not require doing anything truly virtuous. It is often an easy, quick and undemanding act that carries no risk to the agent and is taken just to increase his or her social credit.

More generally, it is this kind of activity by individuals (not firms) that often contributes to the constitution of echo chambers on social networks. Kalpokas (2018, 12) argues that post-truth communication is merely a form of signaling in which the speaker shows certain moral signs and affinities shared with the target audience, and this signaling itself is more important than its factual content of communication and its formal truthfulness.

Another factor contributing to the constitution of social bubbles and echo chambers is the cognitive characteristic that is generally inherent in each person's psyche and that is referred to as confirmation bias. This is the human tendency to favor information that confirms one's existing beliefs. This tendency is reflected in most information-related activities — what information people search for, what information they store, what information they remember, but also how they interpret information. Confirmation bias is a type of cognitive bias or error. While some people search for one-sided information deliberately and consciously (e.g., a lawyer seeks information indicative of his client's innocence), confirmation bias is unconscious and unintended, and to some extent, everyone shows it.

The universal character of this cognitive distortion is also evidenced by the fact that Francis Bacon mentions it in 1620, noting that when a person sets his or her opinion, he or she uses all new evidence to support this view. Even if many observations contradict the opinion, they are either ignored, condemned, put aside or rejected. According to Bacon, neither scholars nor philosophers are immune to this universal tendency (Bacon 2000, p. 36).

Recent experimental studies confirm that confirmation bias is extensive and strong and manifests itself in many different ways (Nickerson 1998, 177–83). In particular, confirmation bias is manifested by the fact that once a person accepts

a certain view, he or she a) seeks information that supports that opinion, b) does not seek and avoids information that is contrary to the opinion, c) preferentially relates to evidence supporting the opinion, d) seeks only those examples of actual cases or events that support the opinion, e) gives greater weight to examples confirming the opinion, and f) interprets neutral information as supporting the opinion.

Several studies also show that if people who have some very firm belief are exposed to evidence against this belief, then the belief can be even reinforced — exactly contrary to normal intuition (Lockie 2017; McCright et al. 2016).

In general, the emergence and expansion of information technology has fulfilled the promise of democratization of information and media. In reality, however, this democratization looks in many ways less idyllic than what earlier visionaries had anticipated. Lockie (2017) points out that democratization does not mean that opinions are miraculously turned into facts, or that everyone has the right to "scream" his or her "non-facts" at others. The prerequisite for democratizing knowledge is, at the very least, a determination to engage in dialog and respect for all participants and experiences they bring to the debate. Above all, it means respect for the experts and the evidence they bring to the discussion.

§4. Sources of a Post-truth Situation

We can identify the three underlying causes of the current post-truth situation. The first cause is undoubtedly the development of information technology, especially social networks, which has already been discussed. The second group of causes are economic and political changes, especially deindustrialization and economic globalization. The third source is the permeation of postmodern relativizing philosophy from academia to other areas of social life, especially politics. The second and third sources of a post-truth situation will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

Lockie (2017) emphasizes the disillusionment associated with middle-stream politics, especially among those who have been adversely affected by de-industrialization and globalization. Economic restructuring has increased economic inequality and laid the foundations for the frustration of some voters who are then the target group of the politician. However, Lockie rejects describing this economic change as "neoliberalism", which appears in both professional and popular literature, but lacks analytical specificity. This term is often used as a general pejorative term for any policy, decision or institution that is somehow related to market mechanisms and that the author who uses it does not like. Instead, Lockie recommends focusing on the results of decades of

research into what these authors refer to as "neoliberal" governance models without *a priori* assumption that all the results of these practices are necessarily negative (Geddes 2005).

Another source of post-truth politics, according to Lockie, is that while in recent decades there has been no extensive neoliberal deregulation of trade and the market, there was au contraire its reregulation based on specific rules. Thus, the regulatory function was not passed on to the market and market mechanisms (as self-regulation), but rather to technocrats. This transfer of regulatory power was in agreement with the major mainstream political parties, and it is possible to see it as a symptom of emptying the politics and the end of ideology. As a result, the focus of political campaigns has shifted to addressing specific demographic groups and exploiting artificially induced moral panic (Garland 2008) about the areas to which the demographic group is sensitive (crime, immigration, drug abuse, abuse of social benefits). At the same time Špecián (2019) demonstrates that real people's behavior often deviates assumption of coherent preferences. These policy strategies then paved the way for the emergence of post-truth politics.

While these considerations mainly concerned the US, some of these phenomena can be observed in the EU. For example, parts of the public in many areas do not mind the self-regulation of market entities, but if similar regulation is proposed by the EU technocratic apparatus and put into practice, then such a procedure is widely criticized. An example is EU Commission Regulation 2257/94, which stipulated that certain bananas should be free from "anomalous curvature",[3] which was the subject of a number of myths and their refutations, often both based on a purposeful interpretation of the regulation and moving in a misty way through the spectrum of truth and falsity. The arguments concerning the EU's centrally imposed regulations, which were perceived as inappropriate and too pervasive, were also one of the main topics of Brexit and are commonly used by several political parties on the fringes of the political spectrum across Europe, profiled as Eurosceptic. For overview of the current literature on voter competence related to referendum see Špecián (2017).

§5. Postmodern Philosophy and the Post-truth Situation

One author who discussed the relationship of the emergence of a post-truth era and postmodern philosophy is Ferraris, who begins his analysis with

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[3]   Commission Regulation (EC) No 2257/94 of 16 September 1994 laying down quality standards for bananas.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and follows their reflections to postmodernism, which "indeed regards itself as a philosophy of history that declares the end of reality, which was replaced by media 'fictionalization.'" (Ferraris 2014, p. 18). Thus the real world becomes in postmodern vision a "fairy tale", and "there are no facts, only interpretations" (ibid.). The ontology is then replaced by "mediology", and the media become the creator of reality, a position held by, for example, Baudrillard (1991; 1995), who considered the Gulf War a media invention.

Ferraris states that humanities and philosophy have come to a postmodern position of so-called professional anti-realism, which claims that "reality does not exist, that it is socially constructed, determined by language, manufactured by paradigms, and so on" (Ferraris 2014, p. 19). The current state of media and politics is the consequence of adopting the principle that there are no facts, only their interpretation. What was presented as a means of intellectual emancipation has become, in fact, a justification for the perceived right to say anything the author believes, whether or not it is supported by facts. This postmodern approach to facts and truthfulness, coupled with an anti-scientific attitude and the rejection or neglect of the natural sciences and their outcomes, directly leads to a post-truth situation.

McIntyre says that it is unpleasant to "admit that one of the saddest roots of the post-truth phenomenon seems to have come directly out of colleges and universities" (McIntyre 2018, p. 123). He points out that the definition of postmodern philosophy is difficult and cites Lynch, who says that part of the popularity of postmodern philosophy is "largely a function of its obscurity" (Lynch 2004, p. 35–36). One basic principle of postmodern thinking is that "[t]here is no right answer, only narrative" (McIntyre 2018, p. 125). Thus, the possibility of the truth of any claim has been entirely rejected. McIntyre also refers to the analysis of Papazoglou, who says that if we condemn the idea of truth as a "philosophical hoax", then "the only alternative is a position called 'perspectivism' — the idea there is no one objective way the world is, only perspectives on what the world is like" (Papazoglou 2016).

McIntyre defines two basic principles of postmodern philosophy: 1) "there is no such thing as objective truth", and 2) "any profession of truth is nothing more than a reflection of the political ideology of the person who is making it" (McIntyre 2018, p. 126). The second principle also implies that language in the postmodern context is only a tool of power and domination, and what we call knowledge is just the set of authoritative tools used by the powerful to force their ideological system on the weak. In fact, anyone who claims truth is trying to

oppress others: "If there are many perspectives, then insisting that we accept any particular one is a form of fascism" (ibid.). McIntyre does not advocate any naïve concept of "objective truth", but points out that discussions about the nature of truth and objectivity are pervasive in the history of philosophy. What is essential, however, is that if many humanities studies at American universities have been dominated by a direction based on total rejection and the absence of any respect for truth and objectivity, then it is necessary not to close our eyes to the consequences of this state: "postmodernists (...) must accept some responsibility for undermining the idea that facts matter in the assessment of reality, and not foreseeing the damage this could cause" (ibid., 127).

In this context, it is worthwhile to mention Frankfurt (1988, 132), who emphasizes that while truthteller and liar play the same game (the first is guided by authority of truth and the second refuses to meet its demands), the person who pays no attention to truth at all and ignores its demands altogether ("the bullshiter") is a greater enemy of truth than a liar.

Pomerantsev (2016) sees the all-pervasive late postmodernism and relativism as the primary cause of the post-truth situation. His interpretation is based on the theory of permeation or trickling down of postmodern philosophy from academia to the media and subsequently to other areas of social life. Postmodernism was originally understood as an emancipatory philosophy that frees individuals from the oppression of the predominant narratives. But by declaring all narratives equal and explicitly rejecting rationality and reason in favor of emotion, it opened the door to a post-truth era in which emotional compliance with claims is more important than the truth. The affective investment of the target audience, based on the emotional acceptability of the communicated content and the underlying emotional attunement to its spokesperson, rather than its truthfulness or objectivity, is more important to the post-truth political communication (Kalpokas 2018, p. 12). A focused attack on truth and objectivity by authors close to postmodern philosophy has borne its fruit. Now they are surprised to find that if one removes the truth, what is left is a post-truth situation.

§6. Conclusion

Unlike some authors, we do not regard post-truth as a characteristic limited to the political sphere. Although in some politicians' speeches and communications the characteristics of the post-truth society may manifest itself most visibly, we have tried to show that other parts of the social environment are also the founding sources of these phenomena.

In this paper, we have explained that the sources of post-truth politics can be found in three spheres. The first is media — primarily decentralized social networks. The second source is in the economic sphere, especially phenomena related to globalization. We then identified the third fundamental source of the post-truth situation in the sphere of social sciences, in the influence of postmodern thought, which is not limited to philosophy but also is evident in several other fields of humanities (gender, cultural, literary, and similar studies).

If the sources of post-truth thought are so differentiated, their effect is (unintentionally) synergistic in many ways. The conclusion is that the post-truth situation affects and encompasses the whole of society. Thus, it is not possible to speak of a post-truth era in relationship only to the political sphere — it is a fundamental and more complex historical-social phenomenon arising from the interaction of a number of factors (an interdisciplinary research such as presented by Stenmark et al. (2018) in therefore useful).

We must also take into account these sources if we ask ourselves how to cope with the post-truth situation. In the context of philosophy, a suitable first step could be a critical reflection of postmodern thought and an attempt at a new reflection of the idea of truth, driven by experience with a world in which truth disappears.

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