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Humanism and Posthumanism in the Post-truth Era – Pedagogical Implications

Abstract: The research problem put forth in this paper is the seeking of an answer to the question about better and more effective ways of acquiring and transferring knowledge in the so-called post-truth era. Therefore, the point of reference here is the category of post-truth, defined as a phenomenon where the objective facts play a lesser role in the process of shaping a widely understood public opinion than emotions, evaluative judgements or personal beliefs. In such circumstances, a set of ideas, models of thinking, as well as ethical proposals – represented within the framework of such concepts as humanism and posthumanism – faces a huge challenge issued by the contemporaneity in the form of gaining social recognition and prestige. The phenomena developing in such process directly influence the way the pedagogical processes are perceived and being designed.

Keywords: humanism, pedagogy, post-truth, knowledge, post-humanism

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to take a holistic view of the post-truth phenomenon in relation to the humanistic and post-humanistic challenges of contemporary education. Various terms with the prefix *post* have been in use in scholarly circles for several decades, such as post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-communism, post-secularism, post-memory or post-humanism.[1] This text will present a concept that is also characterised by the prefix *post*, and that is *post-truth*. This category can be applied primarily to issues in the field of science, including social sciences, pedagogy or research methodology – and it is, after all, science that is regarded as the most perfect realisation of the cognitive process.

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1. See: Paweł Kozielski, "Retoryczny post, czyli wielka kariera pewnego przedrostka," *Media – Biznes – Kultura. Dziennikarstwo i komunikacja społeczna* 1, 2 (2017), 165–177, https://ejournals.eu/czasopismo/media-biznes-kultura/artykul/retoryczny-post-czyli-wielka-kariera-pewnego-przedrostka (17.01.2024).

The research topic of the article concerns the search for answers to the question of better and more effective ways of acquiring and transmitting knowledge in the so-called post-truth era. *Post-truth* seems to have been first used in a 1992 essay by the Serbian-American writer Steve Tesich (Iran-Contra scandal and the Persian Gulf War).[2] The point of reference is therefore the category of post-truth, defined as a phenomenon in which objective facts play a lesser role in the process of forming broad public opinion in relation to human emotions, value judgements, personal beliefs and feelings. In such circumstances, diverse sets of ideas, models of thinking, as well as ethical proposals face a formidable contemporary challenge, if only in the form of gaining social recognition. These phenomena also affect the way educational processes are perceived and designed.

The category of post-truth forces reflection on extremely complex issues, including questions about the place and role of science in the 21st century; as well as whether it is possible to reconcile scientific objectivity with subjective beliefs; and what is and what should be the role of authorities, that is, persons, institutions, including those related to education, in the process of gaining social prestige due to the competences represented or other qualities and achievements. We live in a world of mass media, the Internet and associated *fake news*. Hence the important question posed by Katarzyna Bąkowicz as to whether our "[...] world is entering an era of having to rewrite the very notions of credibility and truth, which can only become the product of the necessary number of verifiers to be recognised, rather than a reflection of fact and verifiability in offline life."[3]

The problem comes from the fact, as Yuval Noah Harari notes, that some fake news remains forever. Propaganda and misinformation are nothing new. People have always lived in a post-truth era. Military incidents, histories of nations and individual cultural, social, or religious events are fabricated on a large scale (the Aboriginal people of Australia, the Tibet issue, the Palestine issue, the history of the state of Manchukuo, the seizure of Crimea to protect the sacred Russian nation). Why is this happening? Harari responds that it is fiction that is the most effective tool in the hands of people.[4]

When looking at the category of truth in the context of post-humanist analyses including pedagogical implications, it is safe to say that within this domain the issue of human self-improvement is present, as well as the promotion of a broadly

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2. See: Alison Flood, "Post-truth Named Word of the Year by Oxford Dictionaries," *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/15/post-truth-named-word-of-the-year-by-oxforddictionaries (16.01.2024).

3. Katarzyna Bąkowicz, *Fake News. Produkt medialny czasów postprawdy* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2020), 16.

4. Yuval Noah Harari, *21 lekcji na XXI wiek*, trans. Michał Romanek (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2018), 298–314.

understood activity for harmonious union with the environment, including the world of nature, things and technology.[5] From a pedagogical perspective, the most basic feature of the postmodern condition is the weakening of the idea of humanity, which means that the adaptive-emancipatory paradigm of education has lost its former anthropological legitimacy.[6] In addition, from the education and society point of view post-truth destroys democracy. This system requires educated and informed citizens (implementation of skepticism).[7] With this in mind, the aim of this text is to attempt to capture the category of post-truth, both in terms of pedagogy, research methodology and contemporary social issues. So let us look at the category of post-truth in a broader context.

Truth and Its Facets

Truth is an extremely important category, as it constitutes every theory and strategy of scientific research, thanks to which science is treated as an unrivalled and most perfect model in the cognitive field. However, Immanuel Kant himself already warned us that we cannot give a sufficient, as well as a general indication of truthfulness.[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other hand, viewed truth as metaphors, conventions – dependent on context, perspective and personality.[9] As Shosana Ronen notes: in contrast to Kant, Nietzsche is not interested in epistemological questions, for example, "What can I really know?". Instead, he is interested in ethical questions, for instance, "What kind of knowledge would be good for me?", "What kind of knowledge or beliefs will enhance my life?"[10] Let us also note that

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5. Ann Weinstone, *Avatar Bodies: A Tantra for Posthumanism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

6. Markus Lipowicz, "Ponowoczesność jako posthumanistyczna kondycja społeczno-kulturowa: perspektywa pedagogiczno-socjologiczna," *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* 2 (2017), 34–50, http://cejsh. icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.desklight-a1e54629-d80b-49c4-bc49-7c3da9090efd (20.01.2024).

7. See: Henry Armand Giroux, "What Is the Role of Higher Education in the Age of Fake News?," in *Post-Truth, Fake News. Viral Modernity & Higher Education*, ed. Michael A. Peters, Sharon Rider, Mats Hyvönen, and Tina Besley (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018), 197–215; Scott Lilienfeld, "Teaching Skepticism: How Early Can We Begin?," *Skeptical Inquier* 41, 5 (2017), https://skepticalinquirer.org/2017/09/teaching-skepticism-how-early-can-we-begin/ (20.01.2024).

8. Immanuel Kant, *Krytyka czystego rozumu*, trans. Roman Ingarden (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 146.

9. Fryderyk Nietzsche, *Pisma pozostałe 1862–1875*, trans. Bogdan Baran (Kraków: Inter Esse, 1993), 189.

10. See: Shosana Ronen, "Prawda i perspektywizm u Nietzschego," *Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria*, trans. Marcin Miłkowski, R. VII, Nr 4, 28 (1998), 57–70, https://pf.uw.edu.pl/images/ NUMERY_PDF/028/PF_1998-R7_4_02_Ronen-S_Prawda.pdf (20.01.2024).

in the history of theories of cognition, critical research based on proving and pointing out plausible relationships has come to the fore.

The very concept of truth is not unambiguous. In addition to the classical definition (correspondence of cognition with the object), there is a classification in the form of so-called pragmatic truth and coherence. In the methodology of science, in turn, the concept of truth is used in two senses: ontological or epistemological. Historical analyses reveal that the epistemology of the social sciences on the question of truth is characterised by two modes of reasoning. On the one hand, there is naturalism, as a concept of directly capturing and explaining reality. On the other hand, one can see the assumptions developed within constructivism, which combines in its postulates

> [...] the vision of socially determined relations between a part and a cognitive whole (variously called: worldview, ideology, system, lifeworld, discourse) that condition and justify cognition, as well as the idea of the power to create and impose fiction. The issue under discussion is the focus of the most important disputes still being waged today by representatives of the social sciences, some of whom proclaim the idea of 'bare facts' and aspire to discover universal laws, while others question such aspirations, linking the factual to the socially established.[11]

Jan Hudzik rounds off the above reflections by pointing out that the first position has a hermeneutic character, which influences activities centred around the idea of linking truth with interpretation and understanding. In contrast, the position presented as second is critical in nature – and, as the aforementioned researcher notes, captures truth in the light of social relations. In turn, according to Tadeusz Kotarbiński, two main tendencies should be distinguished: the classical and the utilitarian. Under the first approach, the word *true* means conformity to reality, while according to the second option, *true* means the usefulness of a phenomenon, or thing.[12] Yet another take on the category of truth is the dispute between two conceptual assumptions: absolutism versus relativism.[13] In these very different visions of the world, the criteria adopted for truthfulness play a key role. Thus, the ideas of implicational consequentialism or sub-criteria emerge, such as the *intuitive criterion* – invoking the obviousness of the data of sensory perception;

11. Jan Paweł Hudzik, *Prawda i teoria* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2011), 16.

12. Tadeusz Kotarbiński, *Dzieła wszystkie. Elementy teorii poznania, logiki formalnej i metodologii nauk* (Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź: Ossolineum, 1990), 116.

13. See: Jacek Hołówka, *Etyka w działaniu* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2001), 245–263; Maria Ossowska, *Normy moralne. Próba systematyzacji* (Warszawa: PWN, 1970), 17–25; Allan David Bloom, *Umysł zamknięty*, trans. Tomasz Bieroń (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 1997), 272–288.

the *situational criterion* – analysing the situation occurring during the perception of objects; and the *structural criterion*, which can be discussed in application to sentences.[14]

At this point in the argument, let us also turn our attention to the concept of truth as perceived by Roman Ingarden, who uses the term *artistic truth*. According to the aesthete, truth symbolises the correspondence between the represented object and reality. Truth in this sense is also an indicator of sincerity.[15] The above issues touched on the question of human destiny. Ingarden described the issues signalled by this theme in the following words:

> [S]o tragic is the fate of man. But this is where his true essence manifests itself: his geniality and the finiteness of his being. It disposes of basically only two possibilities to triumph over Nature. On the one hand, it can know itself and the Nature around it in its own essence, true and original. On the other hand, he realises by his efforts – through his victories and even through his defeats – the values of the Good and the Beautiful, which, in truth, are only manifested in the history of intentionality, but have for him an essentially higher reality than the world of Nature itself. And man remains in the service of realising these values. If he succeeds, he is certain in his spirit that he is not living in vain.[16]

This vision reminds us of the need for a relational perception of values, so that we can, as a result, communicate with the world and function in it daily – including on our own terms.[17]

Why is truth a fundamental category for science and the general conduct of research? It seems that the point of reference here may be the so-called *problem of ascertainment*. Most often we accept certain sentences because we believe them to be true. On the other hand, we reject when we consider them to be false. A true sentence is a sentence that is simply consistent with reality (correspondence

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14. Kotarbiński, *Dzieła wszystkie*, 124–130.

15. Roman Ingarden, *Studia z estetyki, tom 1* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1957), 373–391.

16. Roman Ingarden, *Książeczka o człowieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003), 17–18.

17. See: Maria Janoszka, "Pytania o wartość. Ekonomiczne uwikłania jednostki i języka w Wyznaniach Jeana-Jacques'a Rousseau," *Er(r)go* 1, 44 (2022), 167–183, https://journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/ERRGO/article/view/12563 (7.08.2023); Lucyna Kopciewicz, "Jan Jakub Rousseau w naturze," *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji* 11/2, 29 (2015), 53–66, http://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media//files/Problemy_Wczesnej_Edukacji_Issues_in_Early_Education/Problemy_Wczesnej_Eduka cji_Issues_in_Early_Education-r2015-t11n2(29)/Problemy_Wczesnej_Edukacji_Issues_in_Ear ly_Education-r2015-t11-n2(29)-s53-66/Problemy_Wczesnej_Edukacji_Issues_in_Early_Educa tion-r2015-t11-n2(29)-s53-66.pdf (12.07.2023); Krzysztof Kalka, *Od rozumienia do postępowania (człowiek, filozofia, etyka)* (Elbląg: Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Elbląskiej Wyższej Szkoły Humanistycznej, 2000), 104–106.

theory). And yet, how do we know that an opinion is in line with reality? In other words: what are the criteria for this veracity? The concept of reality itself is usually taken as a broader term than nature, as it also includes human creations. Thus, reality is made up, in effect, not only of nature but also of culture.[18] Furthermore, when creating a historical outline of an event, we are undoubtedly exposed to subjective elements.

Despite the fact that:

> one can postulate, in the spirit of positivism, a purely descriptive, factual history, as allegedly only objective; but no real historian can realise such a postulate. This is not only because in his historical cognition he is not able to completely reject the influence of the subjective factor [...], but also because he cannot limit himself to answering the question: how was it, but must engage in reflection on the question: *why* was it so?[19]

From a methodological point of view, the proper aim of scientific cognition is the rationality of action in the choice of method, technique and research tool, which consequently makes it possible to reach *the truth of the facts*. In this perspective, truth is sometimes seen as an ambitious goal, because it is not very clear what the truth is.[20]

Let us note that "the aim of scientific theories is not to discover the truth about reality, but to translate it into conventional language. And if this language is not about knowing the world – it is not subject to the criterion of truth – then what else is it about?"[21] This is an important question, especially in the post-truth era, and it is in this perspective that truth becomes one of very many discourses. Hence, "different regimes of discourses construct truthfulness in different ways, just as they allow us to understand the processes of truthfulness production and the use of the term truthfulness in different ways. A different regime for the use of the term "truthfulness' applies in art, another in technology, yet another in politics."[22] It is worth considering today whether post-truth is a new sophisticated formula that prevents us from calling a spade a spade and therefore according to the facts. Or is post-truth something completely different from lies and deception?

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18. Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), 349.

19. Adam Schaff, *Historia i prawda* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1970), 11.

20. Adam Grobler, *Prawda i racjonalność naukowa* (Kraków: Inter Esse, 1993), 7.

21. Hudzik, *Prawda i teoria*, 7.

22. Adam Chmielewski, "Postprawda i populizm prawdziwościowy," *Odra* 652, 1 (2017), 21, https://www.academia.edu/31567577/POST_PRAWDA_I_POPULIZM_PRAWDZIWO%C5%9ACIOWY_1 (7.08.2023).

Post-truth as a Social Phenomenon

The word post-truth has had an amazing career in recent years. On 16 November 2016, the term was named the Oxford Dictionary's word of the year by its editorial board, winning over the term Brexiter – at the time an extremely key term, symbolising a supporter/supporter of the UK's exit from the European Union. Today we hear that a revolution is taking place before our eyes: in science, culture, education, media or politics. We also hear that we are entering a post-truth world. What does this actually mean and does this new situation change the way we look at learning and education? According to Oxford Dictionary post-truth refers to a situation in which facts are less important in shaping public opinion than appeals to personal emotions, intuitions or beliefs.[23] Moreover, in this space of meaning, there is the hypothesis that the greater the emotional involvement in an issue, the easier the opportunity to accept as true information that contradicts the facts.

According to Tesich, an important reference in the constitution of the category of post-truth was a specific political event in the form of the Watergate affair, with all its social and cultural conditions. The writer notes that, at the time, the truth began to be identified by the public with bad news, and no one wanted to hear bad news, not even the true or necessary news for daily functioning. As a result of the situation, expectations of the government to protect citizens from the truth began to emerge over time.[24] Thus, in front of the public's eyes, facts have ceased to play their previous role (Brexit and Trump's victory in the U.S. presidential election are cited as examples of the post-truth's great triumph).

Of course, this type of phenomenon has happened much earlier in the history of civilisation, especially with events where one interest group had the tools to manipulate and disinform other groups or individuals.[25] As Bąkowicz observes, it

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23. "Post-truth," in Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/post-truth (1.08.2023); "Post-truth. Word of the Year 2016," in Oxford University Press, https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/ (1.08.2023); Piotr Drzewiecki and Barbara Głębicka-Giza, *Mały leksykon postprawdy* (Warszawa: Fundacja Wolność i Demokracja, 2018), 76, https://wid.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/E_wydanie-Ma%C5%82y-Leksykon-Postprawdy.pdf (1.08.2023); Looking at other similar words in popular usage, it is worth pointing out another interesting concept, currently seen most clearly in youth slang, and that is the word – *szuryzm*. By definition the word means advocating a particular political option, view or ideology without seeking substantive arguments. The concept is based on an emotional approach to issues and aggression towards adversaries: "Szuryzm," in *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, https://sjp.pwn.pl/mlodziezowe-slowo-roku/haslo/szuryzm;6368909.html (1.08.2023).

24. Steve Tesich, "A Government of Lies," *The Nation* 6–13 (1992), 12, https://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+government+of+lies.-a011665982 (7.08.2023).

25. See: William Weir, *Największe kłamstwa w historii*, trans. Joanna Sawicka (Warszawa: Muza, 2010); François Noudelmann, *Geniusz kłamstwa*, trans. Magdalena Łachacz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018).

is the increasing amount of information produced that has blurred the boundary between fact and opinion, hence "one gets the impression that nobody cares about the truth as such, but only about evoking emotions, which can be managed ever more efficiently: whether in business or politics. And when emotions come to the fore, the facts always go down the drain. It is, after all, emotion that builds and reinforces the authority one uses in forming one's own judgement of an issue."[26] With so much information coming at us from different sources, it is not so easy to get to the truth.[27] Often, the socio-spatial and temporal context of an event is completely ignored, thus distorting the sense of the phenomena described, including the evidence, expert reports and reports attesting to the facts constituting the process in question (an example in this case are the opinions of celebrities on the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 virus – a time of epidemic pseudoscience).

American writer Ralph Keyes portrays post-truth in relation to today's political conditions, while simultaneously analysing the historical contexts of intellectual, cultural, media and technological change. The author notes that the fruits of changing the way we function on a daily basis are relationships and interpersonal contacts maintained through the latest technology rather than face-to-face meetings. Such conditions provide opportunities for lies, half-truths and manipulation. Therefore, "it is not an exaggeration to say that integrity is in trouble today. Deception has become something commonplace at all levels of life."[28] Populism, cynicism or the extreme collapse of all the values once cherished, including precisely truth, honesty and integrity – including that of research – are becoming a symbol of our times. Under these circumstances, it is worth raising the question of whether truth is still the most important point of reference for us.

Step by step, the publicity of the term post-truth has also contributed to the transformation of the meaning of the word lie, which, as Adam Chmielewski notes before the post-truth era, carried a load of discredit and embarrassment. This type of situation has the negative effect of making us more favourably disposed towards post-truth, which increasingly means our consent to dishonest actions on the part of those who are decision-makers on issues affecting specific social groups and individuals.[29] What has been transformed concerns our reaction when we catch someone in a lie. We become willing to accept lies for the sake of all sorts of benefits, comfort or the peace of mind of everyday life. We do not

26. Bąkowicz, *Fake News*, 19.

27. Jan Stasieńsko, *Niematerialne galatee w wehikułach rozkoszy i bólu. Technologie mediów jako aparaty kreowania posthumanistycznej intymności* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2015), 9–51.

28. Ralph Keyes, *Czas postprawdy. Nieszczerość i oszustwa w codziennym życiu*, trans. Paweł Tomanek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017), 5.

29. Chmielewski, *Postprawda*, 17.

want to take the trouble to fight arguments and ideas, nor do we want to verify the truth. What is more, it seems to us to be a completely unnecessary activity. Nowadays, emotions suffice, merging the chaotic argument and transporting us to a world of ideas, feelings and personal desires. These are serious social problems that bring many new distortions and real harms.

The founder of the history of science, George Sarton, notes that human progress is fundamentally correlated with the progress of positive knowledge. Moreover, the progress of any branch of science is a function of the progress of other branches. For this author, it is the unity of knowledge and the unity of humanity that are the foundation for the so-called great truth (great truth). The scholar sees truth as an intangible value alongside beauty and justice.[30] In the post-truth era, the above suggestions are not so easy to implement. The development of science has brought with it a plurality of ideas, including many new developments within the research process. Hence, disputes over freedom of opinion are so often evident in the public debate. Pluralism is also evident in humanist and post-humanist thought. In the pages of these two concepts, we are introduced to a variety of interpretations and research analyses of the phenomena in question, and the phenomenon of truth as well as post-truth permeates this work.

Humanist Meanderings of (Post)truthfulness

The category of truth is, in fact, presented differently in a variety of currents, ideas and concepts. There is an uneven emphasis on the individual buzzwords important to the output category. Therefore, the point of reference at this point in the argument is the assumption that both humanism and post-humanism constitute an interesting semantic platform for the multifaceted socio-educational processes within which the phenomena of truth and post-truth have multiple manifestations.

Where, then, does truth manifest itself in the horizon of humanist ideals? Analysing the literature on humanism in its broadest sense, two different scopes of meaning of the term can be observed. Within the first approach, humanism is associated with intellectual and moral attitudes. This attitude is characterised by respect for other people, although the categories of otherness and the truths that have emerged in the course of history have not always served humanity.[31] From the theoretical assumptions made, it follows that differences articulated in the fields

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30. George Sarton, "The New Humanism," *A Journal of the History of Science* 1, 6 (1924), 13, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/358203 (2.08.2023).

31. See: Małgorzata Obrycka, *W stronę posthumanizmu. O wychowaniu do humanitaryzmu międzygatunkowego* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2020), 198–230.

of race, gender, nationality, worldview, as well as the skills and intellectual-social capacities of an individual should not affect social and political functioning. In practice, however, the implementation of this has varied. The second variant of meaning emphasises the intellectual activities that began in the Renaissance era. Ancient traditions were then revived, and among them Roman traditions.

The basic constitutive features of the current in question can be linked to a number of theses. One of them proclaims the uniqueness and superiority of human beings among all other entities. Hence the acquiescence to actions aimed at subordinating the environment to human needs. Another thesis, according to which human beings should not be perceived through their biological conditions, is also not insignificant. Furthermore, human creations in the form of culture should not be related to the state of nature. Another aspect is the separation of humanity from the sphere called animal (in the biological sense). This element is not questioned by humanism; however, it can be considered depreciated in this trend.[32]

This is the world and its truth on the humanist side. If we look quite broadly at the concepts proposed in this perspective, there is no denying that the ideals embodied in this current are exclusively concerned with the life of the human being, and it is on the human being that they focus, once on the side of the white male, in time on the side of women, and today, thanks to pedocentrism, we speak directly of the subjectivity of the child. The natural development of human thought has brought new reveals of the truth about man, humanity and humanity (critical pedagogy, intercultural pedagogy, ecological pedagogy, ideals of sustainability in the educational process, long-range pedagogy). New *versions* of truth and the qualities that constitute it were emerging. It has not been without critical insights and analyses, which in the course of history have created a new space for alternative ways of understanding the place and role of humans in the world. Reflections began to emerge proclaiming a critique of the theoretical achievements of humanism, including the assumption of an autonomous human subject as the sole point of reference for the category of truth.[33]

What is humanism today and what truth does it carry? According to Adam Sulikowski, modern humanism is quite schizophrenic, for it is "aporically stretched between liberalism and the cult of community, empiricism and deductionism, naturalism and anthropocentrism, universalism and the obsession with "ourness,"

32. Adam Sulikowski, *Posthumanizm a prawoznawstwo* (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2013), 18.

33. See: Jacques Derrida, "Kres człowieka," in *Pismo filozofii*, ed. Bogdan Banasiak (Kraków: Inter Esse, 1992), 129–160; Martin Heidegger, *Znaki drogi*, trans. Seweryn Blandzi (Warszawa: Aletheia, 1995), 154; Peter Sloterdijk, "Reguły dla ludzkiego zwierzyńca. Odpowiedź na Heideggera list o humanizmie," trans. Aleksander Żychliński, *Przegląd Kulturoznawczy* 1, 4 (2008), 52.

between artificially separated science and philosophy, and between quantitative statistics and a specific form of individual paideia."[34] According to the author quoted above, today's humanism should reject the characteristics of philistine Eurocentrism. Truth, and phenomena such as otherness, difference, diversity and equality, need to be rethought. "Classically understood Man – adds Teresa Żółkowska – is an abstract ideal situated at the centre of the world as the measure of all things, a being of the most all-embracing talent and endowed with qualities that other beings do not possess, such as rationality, an expanded emotional and spiritual sphere, and a moral sense."[35]

Humanism represents a whole range of concepts, analyses and interpretations. The truth manifests itself on this level quite unambiguously in the form of the attribution to man of a unique role and a superior place in the world. Post-truths, on the other hand, have a variety of faces in this cognitive horizon, seen mainly in political, economic as well as educational programmes. It follows that an important task for participants in public life is to keep a constant and close eye on humanist demands and their practical consequences.

Posthumanist Ideals in the Light of the Category of (Post)truth

Let us now look at the question of what truth is revealed to us by the post-humanists, for whom the general progress of science has played an enormous role within the development of the field they represent. Theoretical and research recognition within post-humanism refers to efforts to re-read and re-evaluate the assumptions attributed to traditional humanism.[36] This happens within the theme of how people function among the things, plants, animals and technologies around them.

In post-humanism, the point of reference is thus made "[...] the death of Human/ Man/Woman, signifying the invalidation of the basic assumptions of the Enlightenment: the progress of humanity through the self-regulating and teleologically ordered action of reason and secular scientific rationality."[37] Not insignificant in

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34. Sulikowski, *Posthumanizm*, 49.

35. Teresa Żółkowska, "Posthumanizm. Niepełnosprawność," *Niepełnosprawność. Dyskursy Pedagogiki Specjalnej* 32 (2018), 27–28.

36. See: Bart Simon, "Introduction: Toward a Critique of Posthuman Futures," *Cultural Critique* 53 (2003), 1–9; Barbara Kaszowska-Wandor, "De (post)homine. Posthumanizm jako interpretacja humanizmu," *Terminus* 1, 16 (2007), 185–200.

37. Rosi Braidotti, *Po człowieku*, trans. Joanna Bednarek and Agnieszka Kowalczyk (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 2014), 101.

this field are the globalisation processes that contribute to the commercialisation of our planet, to political, economic and even military conflicts. The power of influence of politicians, mass media, private corporations or celebrities is noted. The process of mass production (including that which is alive) is also analysed with exceptional research commitment. The objects of the post-humanism diagnosis are therefore the contemporary social discourses, the natural world and the technological world.[38] Post-humanist discoveries and new readings of humanist demands have led to a reinterpretation of people place in the world in relation to other creatures and in relation to nature. It is considered outdated to see human as the only being on the planet that transcends the state of nature. Added to this is the rejection of measures that promote the maintenance of the privileged position of humans over other entities.[39] In this dimension, it is worth postulating the need to introduce future teachers to the natural sciences, using the assumptions of modern methodology of teaching natural sciences and their latest achievements.

Post-humanism is seen both as a mental current, an intellectual stance, an ethical stance, and as one of the research directions. According to the Polish researcher Ewa Domańska,

> post-humanism is post-humanism, building knowledge that criticises and/or rejects the central position of man in the world, hence all non- or anti-anthropocentric approaches are characteristic for it. [...] The key research problems for it are issues of the limits of species identity, the relationship between the human and the non-human (the relationship of humans to technology, the environment, animals, things) and issues of biopower, biopolitics and biotechnology.[40]

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38. Donna J. Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto. Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 1–90, https://bit.ly/2G92Xfs (2.08.2023); Barbara Czarniawska, *Cyberfactories. How News Agencies Produce News* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2011), https://books.google.pl/books?id=QDGW43rRFJ8C&printsec=frontcover&hl=pl&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (3.08.2023).

39. Tzvetan Todorov, *Imperfect Garden. The Legacy of Humanism* (Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 29, https://books.google.pl/books?id=_SQb65sbLIEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Todorov,+Imperfect+Garden.+The+Legacy+of+Humanism,&hl=pl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj5qJz-5I7qAhXnxIsKHVC8DR4Q6AEIJzAA#v=onepage&q=Todorov%2C%20Imperfect%20Garden.%20The%20Legacy%20of%20Humanism%2C&f=false (2.08.2023).

40. Katarzyna Więckowska, "O nowej humanistyce z prof. dr hab. Ewą Domańską rozmawia Katarzyna Więckowska," *Litteraria Copernicana* 2, 8 (2011), 221; See: Ewa Domańska, *Historia egzystencjalna. Krytyczne studium narratywizmu i humanistyki zaangażowanej* (Warszawa: PWN, 2012); Ewa Domańska, "Humanistyka nie-antropocentryczna a studia nad rzeczami," *Kultura Współczesna* 3, 57 (2008), 9–21; Ewa Domańska, "Zwrot performatywny we współczesnej humanistyce," *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2007), 48–61; Ewa Domańska, *Nekros. Wprowadzenie do ontologii martwego ciała*

In this research field, postcolonial studies, gender studies, queer studies, ethnic studies, object studies and ethology are points of reference. Post-humanist thought is concerned with a critique of the humanist vision of the category of human being and, consequently, with a change in the concept of subjectivity (critique of essentialism). The promotion of the abolition of the dualism of nature and culture is also an important context.[41]

The human in post-humanism is as important as in humanism. The polarisation of the positions represented within the two concepts relates primarily to the attitude of researchers to the thesis that man is the *jewel* of creation. For post-humanists, a claim along these lines is unacceptable, if only because of recent scientific findings.[42] Humanity, then, does not mean putting people and their actions in opposition to *otherness* – this assumption seems to be the most important truth of post-humanism, which in its essence is not anti-human, nor is it post-human.[43] Anthropocentrism gives way in these circumstances to the idea of zoocentrism, a symbol of vitality and egalitarianism.[44]

Tomasz Nowicki aptly points out the correlations signalled above. According to this researcher, "when describing the process of discrimination, it is important to take into account that the exploitative group nourishes a belief in the existence of empirical reasons for unequal treatment. Thus, for example, a racist excludes people from the moral community because of the colour of their skin. Sexist discriminates on the basis of gender. The species chauvinist excludes other animals from the social space on the basis of species. Race, sex and species are the real, empirical factors by which we differentiate between animals."[45] Looking at the slogans developed within the humanist and post-humanist discourse, one can assume that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, between efforts

(Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017); Ewa Domańska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksja o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006).

41. Monika Bakke, *Bio-transfiguracje. Sztuka i estetyka posthumanizmu* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2010).

42. See: Małgorzata Obrycka, *W stronę posthumanizmu*, 230–361; Małgorzata Obrycka, "Czy (post)człowiek myśli równościowo?," in *Inny. Edukacja równościowa. Tworzenie przestrzeni i warunków dla Innego*, ed. Małgorzata Obrycka, Grzegorz Piekarski, and Marta Anna Sałapata (Kraków: Wydawnictwo IMPULS, 2020), 621–639; Małgorzata Obrycka, "Humanitaryzm i wychowanie – perspektywa posthumanistyczna," *Kwartalnik Pedagogiczny* 2, 256 (2020), 9–27.

43. Cary Wolfe, "Animal studies, dyscyplinarność i post(humanizm)," trans. Karolina Krasuska, *Teksty Drugie* 1–2 (2013), 146, http://rcin.org.pl/Content/62025/WA248_79066_P-I-2524_wolfe-animal_o.pdf (2.08.2023).

44. Bakke, *Bio-transfiguracje*, 74.

45. Tomasz Nowicki, "Wstęp do dyskursywnej konstrukcji podmiotu jako zwierzęcia," in *Codzienność, performatywność, demokracja. Pedagogika wobec norm życiowych i problematyki nienormatywności*, ed. Lucyna Kopciewicz and Beata Simlat-Żuk (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2015), 33.

to guarantee basic human rights as well as to protect the natural world and to advance science.

Investigating the Truth in a Post-truth Era

Is everyone equally in need of the truth? In many extremely difficult and complicated situations, people would live more lightly if they did not have to search for the truth. Facts can cause cognitive dissonance, pain and suffering. Today's challenges, including the information chaos, make the topic of truth and post-truth extremely important, if only from the perspective of the fight against an unjust social order, the enormity of disinformation, falsification and fraudulent practices. "Today – observes Zbigniew Kwieciński – hedonism, harlequinade, 'consumerism and the 'Disneylandisation' of culture – the global marketisation of its homogenised and gilded products – seem to dominate. What is needed is a turn towards the education of a 'tragic man,' capable of making existential choices and boldly realising his own meaningful life in this world full of contradictions and threats."[46] In this light, bias and arbitrariness – the main features of post-truth – become a serious obstacle to education. The category of post-truth lacks epistemological and ontological legitimacy, and this is a dangerous phenomenon for both the world of science and wider social life. The logical, factual or informative sphere of the phenomena described and verified is worth fighting for. The postulate outlined above seems important, as "science, which is no longer concerned with the truth about the world, is therefore faced with the problem of presenting better or worse, more or less accurate, friendly or successful visions of it."[47]

In answering the question of better and more effective ways of obtaining and transmitting knowledge in the so-called post-truth era, it should be noted that efforts to create a situation in which people start believing scientists again and are able and willing to apply different weights of truthfulness criteria can have a beneficial effect. Learning has many facets, including that of making mistakes. A value in itself is the disinterested search for truth, but in today's world with its rampant neoliberal economy, this is no longer such an obvious statement. Almost all sectors, including education, culture and nature, are embedded in the rules of economic discourse. Truth is not always the goal desired by politicians or representatives of large and wealthy corporations (including: Ford Motor Company's involvement in sponsoring Nazis; morality scandal involving Bill Clinton; use of *pegasus* spy system). Hence, it becomes a key educational task to demonstrate

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46. Zbigniew Kwieciński, *Grzęzawisko. Eseje z pedagogiki społecznej i krytycznej socjologii edukacji* (Stary Toruń: Studio KROPKA, 2019), 79.

47. Hudzik, *Prawda i teoria*, 11.

the important role that science can play, including in the humanities as well as in the social sciences.

It is precisely these areas of knowledge that should uphold the fundamental mission of science, which is the pursuit and unveiling of truth, as Albert Einstein wrote in the words:

> Think of the fact that these marvellous things with which you are acquainted in schools are the work of many generations, accomplished in all countries of our globe in great toil and enthusiastic desire for progress. All of this heritage is given to you as a legacy to be preserved, respected, multiplied and one day carefully passed on to your children.[48]

The essence of science is constant doubting, searching and verifying. From the point of view of male and female educators, on the other hand, activities to support the development of creative and pro-social people, willing to think independently and critically, as well as to act in accordance with ethical aspects, play a key role. Those who, for various reasons, are unable to keep up with modern expectations in their social and professional roles should also be supported.

The category of truth is still, in my opinion, valuable for the broader educational process, at all levels: primary education, high-school education, university education. This is because a well-structured education – open to shared meaning-making, non-ideological, dialogic, free to choose teaching content, with a curriculum that includes experimental and problem-solving oriented knowledge – gives every person the chance to see the truth in all its complexity. We already know that the concept of truth is not easy to define. However, on the basis of these not always clear foundations, one can be tempted to create relatively clear and coherent concepts. In the post-truth era, the most simple self-reflection can be considered an important skill. The ability to seek alternative sources seems to be an equally important goal of today's education. A major role should also be given to ethical education, so that honesty and integrity become important socially desirable values again as a result. These qualities make it possible, on the one hand, to keep accepted social contracts, as well as give competence in the form of expressing and acting on what a person thinks and feels in a manner consistent with reality.

Post-truth is a challenge for pedagogical theory and practice. Well-considered educational measures can restore respect for the truth, because, after all, "the truth

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48. Albert Einstein, *Jak wyobrażam sobie świat. Przemyślenia i opinie*, trans. Tomasz Lanczewski (Kraków: Copernicus Center Press, 2021), 81.

exists – we just have to demand it."[49] In a broad sense, the process of education is directly linked not only to cognitive but also to ethical activities. A point of reference in this dimension can be the activities of Finnish schools, where special attention is paid to practical classes (craft) oriented to practical, actual and real life. The most important factors in Finland's excellent school system are well-trained teachers and their professionalism, and the continuity and consistency of the introduction of reforms, with a true vision for the development of education focused on the quality of education.[50] Hence, there is a great danger, as "a society that chooses post-truth renounces its own power and voluntarily falls into powerlessness. It becomes post-truth, that is, it ceases to be a society. It is just a loose confluence of selfish individuals whose main concern is moral free riding."[51]

It seems reasonable to venture the thesis that much will depend on education in the future. Will we be satisfied with a fine conspiracy theory or, on the contrary – with a simple, complex and hardly colourful truth? It is the processes involved in education that can be the first step in developing the need to get to the truth, both historically rooted and recent. According to Lech Witkowski,

> education, as a dramatically seriously conceived type of social practice, has a chance to be, against the claims (thunderous usurpations) of the present, the only bridge, a source of rebirth of threads, passages, fragile ties between us and the soil of symbolism, spirituality, experiences and achievements, which can be life-giving, nourishing towards the future, thanks to the roots, thanks to the drawing of the sap, thanks to the search for tools, thanks to the gathering of pearls, thanks to the rebounding through rebellion, thanks to the awakening of the hunger and thirst for knowledge.[52]

These are important guidelines for those responsible for providing reliable information, both historically recognised and the result of theoretical and empirical scientific research today. If we hold dear the vision of education as a process open to a variety of ways of understanding the world and interpreting the phenomena in it – in the light of traditional as well as recent scientific findings – then the redefinition of humanity need not bring with it fear and controversy. Alternative models of thinking enrich the educational process and allow different types of potentials to emerge, such as empathy, care and understanding, for example.

49. Mathew d'Ancona, *Postprawda*, trans. Michał Sutowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2018), 12.

50. See: Ewelina Czujko-Moszyk, "Sukcesy fińskiego systemu edukacji, czyli dlaczego Finlandia szczyci się jednym z najlepszych systemów szkolnictwa na świecie – porównawcze studium przypadku," *Studia Edukacyjne* 4 (2018), 349–365.

51. Chmielewski, *Postprawda*, 22.

52. Lech Witkowski, *Historie autorytetu wobec kultury i edukacji* (Kraków: Impuls, 2011), 37.

Today, various types of proposals for change and transformation permeate directly into pedagogical reflection. According to Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz, it is in this day and age that the need to reformulate the educational system is felt. Such activities should focus on the transition from a world of ideal adaptation to a world of broadened choices.[53] Particular attention should be paid to strengthening cross-subject teaching based on the *phenomenon-based learning method*. This is thematic teaching, which binds the content of different subjects into a single topic (phenomenon, problem, context), on which one team of specialists works together.

In my view, it is crucial for the development of pedagogy that both humanist and post-humanist postulates promote actions aimed at interpersonal and interspecies humanity, including ideas of sustainability and awareness of the coexistence and interdependence of all living beings. The expansion of humanist thought to include the new meanings and content that post-humanism brings with it enables alternative ways of seeing the world to emerge, including the category of truth itself. If we stay with concepts of humanism alone then we limit children, young people and adults alike from learning about alternative ways of seeing the human place in the world. The truth is important because it influences the decisions we make every day. Random, chaotic and unverified narratives are not conducive to logical reflection about the content reaching us, and yet, from the point of view of the sender of a particular content, there are no random narratives.[54] Education can play a key role in dealing with the post-truth phenomenon. This effect can be achieved when researchers and educators recognize that in the current systems, the main goal of education is to create tools for coping in a world of misinformation. However, it needs competencies and teamwork to develop – in a gradual adjustment rather than violent revolutions – education programs based on critical thinking as a result.

Adam Kaczmarek notes that: education should require a new language suitable for addressing challenges in a world where there is an unprecedented use of financial, cultural, political, economic, scientific strategies and technology to implement various forms of control and domination. According to this understanding, the education system's appropriate approach to the post-truth phenomenon requires the following measures: introducing the basics of critical thinking, preparing students to use the Internet appropriately, teaching them to find valuable information, popularizing science, withdrawing ideology from education and

53. Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz, "Narracja – Tożsamość – Wychowanie. Perspektywa przejścia i zmiany," *Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja* 3, 55 (2011), 49.

54. Andrzej Jarczewski, *Prawda po epoce post-truth* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Śląsk," 2017), 5.

increasing awareness of mental health.[55] A holistic view, strategic goals, time and consequence seem to be a good foundation for action in this regard.

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55. See: Adam Zenon Kaczmarek, *Koniec wielkich narracji: postmodernizm i postprawda w nauce i edukacji* (2022), 1–5, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Adam-Kaczmarek-4/publication/360995890_Koniec_wielkich_narracji_postmodernizm_i_postprawda_w_nauce_i_edukacji/links/62e8eba59d410c5ff37d7344/Koniec-wielkich-narracji-postmodernizm-i-postprawda-w-nauce-i-edukacji.pdf (20.01.2024); See: Sarit Barzilai and Clark Chinn, "A Review of Educational Responses to the "Post-truth" Condition: Four Lenses on "Post-truth" Problems," *Educational Psychologist* 55, 3 (2020), 107–119, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00461520.2020.1786388 (20.01.2024).

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