# HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-TRUTH, POSTMODERNISM AND THE PROBLEM OF MORAL DEVALUATION

## EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN POSVERDAD, POSMODERNISMO Y EL PROBLEMA DE LA DEVALUACIÓN MORAL

## EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR EM POSVERDAD, POSMODERNISMO E PROBLEMA DA DESVALORIZAÇÃO MORAL

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**Abstract:** Of the goal of this study is to Educate the abstract concept as : Post-truth and Post modernism. Post-truth as a social phenomenon has put scientific discourse into polemic discussions in connection with an acute public request for the restoration of the Truth. Postmodernism, the previous era that gave rise to the problems of moral devaluation, is regarded as a cynical environment that produced these problems. Postmodernism has softened up the ground for radical openness of the public to the requests for the Truth, which can no longer be ignored in the last decade. The research considers modern sources of the formation of socio-ethical phenomena, which are the main life criteria in developed countries. Politics, media and culture are the core of any state and the entire global space. It is in the time of globalization, interstate interdependence, information wars and global warming that these aspects have attracted increased public interest. We provide a comparative argumentation of postmodernism and post-truth proving that the request for the Truth has become a new reality factor due to the mass public demand. The morality and ethics of the Truth have regained their classical forms and escaped from mass manipulation. Consequently, the issues of morality and values have become relevant. Ideologically, the world community demonstrates a genuine desire to restore the socio-ethical mission of the Truth. This statement is proved in our research.

**Keywords**: *post-truth, postmodernism, fact-checking, fake, reliability of art, media culture*.

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**Resumen:** El objetivo de este estudio es educar el concepto abstracto como: Post-verdad y Post modernismo. La posverdad como fenómeno social ha puesto el discurso científico en debates polémicos en relación con una aguda solicitud pública de restauración de la Verdad. La posmodernidad, la era anterior que dio origen a los problemas de la devaluación moral, se considera un entorno cínico que produjo estos problemas. La posmodernidad ha suavizado el terreno para la apertura radical del público a las solicitudes de la Verdad, que ya no se pueden ignorar en la última década. La investigación considera fuentes modernas de formación de fenómenos socio-éticos, que son los principales criterios de vida en los países desarrollados. La política, los medios y la cultura son el núcleo de cualquier estado y todo el espacio global. Es en la época de la globalización, la interdependencia interestatal, las guerras de información y el calentamiento global que estos aspectos han atraído un mayor interés público. Proporcionamos una argumentación comparativa de la posmodernidad y la post-verdad demostrando que la solicitud de la Verdad se ha convertido en un nuevo factor de realidad debido a la demanda pública masiva. La moral y la ética de la Verdad han recuperado sus formas clásicas y han escapado de la manipulación masiva. En consecuencia, las cuestiones de moralidad y valores se han vuelto relevantes. Ideológicamente, la comunidad mundial demuestra un deseo genuino de restaurar la misión socio-ética de la Verdad. Esta afirmación se demuestra en nuestra investigación.

**Palabras clave:** post-verdad, postmodernismo, verificación de hechos, falsificación, confiabilidad del arte, cultura de los medios.

**Resumo:** O objetivo deste estudo é Educar o conceito abstrato como: Pós-verdade e Pós-modernismo. A pós-verdade como fenômeno social colocou o discurso científico em discussões polêmicas em conexão com um pedido público agudo de restauração da Verdade. O pós-modernismo, a era anterior que deu origem aos problemas da desvalorização moral, é considerado um ambiente cínico que produziu esses problemas. O pós-modernismo amoleceu o terreno da abertura radical do público aos pedidos da Verdade, que não podem mais ser ignorados na última década. A pesquisa considera fontes modernas de formação de fenômenos sócio-éticos, que são os principais critérios de vida nos países desenvolvidos. Política, mídia e cultura são o núcleo de qualquer estado e de todo o espaço global. É na época da globalização, da interdependência interestadual, das guerras da informação e do aquecimento global que esses aspectos têm atraído maior interesse público. Fornecemos uma argumentação comparativa entre o pós-modernismo e a pós-verdade, provando que o pedido da Verdade se tornou um novo fator de realidade devido à demanda do público em massa. A moral e a ética da Verdade recuperaram suas formas clássicas e escaparam da manipulação em massa. Consequentemente, as questões de moralidade e valores tornaram-se relevantes. Ideologicamente, a comunidade mundial demonstra um desejo genuíno de restaurar a missão sócio-ética da Verdade. Esta afirmação é comprovada em nossa pesquisa.

**Palavras-chave**: pós-verdade, pós-modernismo, verificação de fatos, falsidade, confiabilidade da arte, cultura da mídia.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The paradigm of modern society of all moral and ethical directions (Ferrando, 2013), political and social movements, cultural and aesthetic trends has been plunged into the discussions about the consequences of globalization and the future of humanity. The modern discourse on the "history of delusions" has revealed global problems in all spheres of public life; however, there were examples of the great Lie in the history (Farrow & Moe, 2019). Today, the situation has become critical due to the flows of information which make it almost impossible to find the truth.

The largest mass media corporations and leading news analysts announced the beginning of the "era of Post-Truth." In 2016, there were two significant events that preceded this statement: Trump's victory in the election and the UK exit from the European Union. Why did these events mark the beginning of a new era? The paradox is that in both cases it was done by millions of people who voted democratically and purposefully. However, the authorities and experts say that everything happened contrary to common sense and obvious evidence. The large-scale scenario was implemented due to the tools of the populist segment, emotional pressure and external cyber influence (although there is no evidence today) and many other factors. Millions of people in America and Great Britain, as well as those who watched were involved in the stream of manipulation and misinformation in the most cynical way.

We believe that the events of 2016 doomed the world of media games and manipulations; they became a symbolic "stop" sign or a symbolic beginning of the end of the history of delusions. Discussions, polemics, information wars, as well as military conflicts of recent decades have shown that global socio-ethical trends (Beyer & Listen, 1992) have been dramatically transformed under the impact of manipulations that are beneficial, first of all, to those who produce the Lie.

In our research, we consider the issues of global crises based on politics, culture (Gibbons, 2017) and the media that constitute the main modern world infrastructure and produce an authoritative opinion which shapes public opinion (Ferrando, 2013), symptomatic transformation of moral and ethical principles, cultural concepts, etc. The current crisis is a consequence of the era of Postmodernism (Keyes, 2004), which is the subject of many scientific, cultural and journalistic works. If we analyze the critical studies of the last decade, the distinguishing feature of the era is the devaluation of the concept of the Truth.

Alan Kirby's famous statement "postmodernism has died" (Docx, 2011) caused a flurry of discussion and controversy. However, everybody argued that the globalization of the postmodern era significantly changed public opinion and formed new prospects for the development of life (Gibbons, 2017) which modify absolutely everything (Keyes, 2004). First of all, this resulted in the devaluation of certain human values and fuzzy concepts of the Truth, Fact, Knowledge, etc (Beyer & Listen, 1992). The Truth is neither demanded nor respected (Farrow & Moe, 2019). The Lie becomes the norm which is accepted by both society and the liars that ironically become the victims of their own lies.

The focus of modern social institutions on the problem and the keen interest of the world community in conflict prevention (Hoydis, 2019) noted the advent of the new era of Post-Truth. The

financial dependence of the humanitarian segment has raised protests and slander can no longer be recognized as authoritative. The request of the society demonstrated completely different remits which reflect new trends in the media space. The overproduction of fakes made many communities to contend for the Truth (Politic Fact, 2019). However, the world community became the main driver in this fight as it does not buy the Lie due to its abundance.

We also believe that cultural heritage objects and their massive depreciation due to the mass commercialization of art have caused a certain degree of cultural inertia in the postmodern era. Given the high importance of the culture (Ferrando, 2013) as a social phenomenon, the community considered culture as one of the dominant political tools in the interstate vector of the state image formation (Gibbons, 2017). The art of the new Post-truth era highlights authenticity in every sense of the word. According to E. Docx (2011), the era of art authenticity has come: the demand for mass commercial projects will soon decrease due to inveracity. Social deprivation under the pressure of low-quality art content has been partially ceased as an extremely negative commercial project of mass culture (Vermeulen & Van Den Akker, 2010; Moraru, 2011).

**2 RESEARCH OBJECTS**

**Media in the late postmodern era**

The Postmodern era brought communication to the level of an endless stream and made sure that information could reach its destination or the audience. The production of information became more intensive due to the massive use of the Internet, which made it possible to rapidly expand the media product. However, Postmodernism demonstrated its indifference to the consumer in terms of moral codes, archetypes, national, cultural and religious differences. Although the postmodernism information boom can be described as cynical, it has globally justified the media slogan: "Information for all."

The controversy over this issue is very diverse and acute today. Fast distribution of information has disrupted the ability or inability to perceive. The Internet has created an abundance of information on the one hand, and the inconsistency of the information flow, on the other. The excess of this cynicism in the information space has become one of the main arguments of the final Postmodernism phase. The Internet has lost the functions assigned by sociologists, scientists, and media experts when the absolute freedom of personal choice and the ability to objectively filter

information were supposed to form a new world of democratic objects of the Truth. We can say that the expected effect has been distorted. The Lie has been legalized in the course of information flows and put into the cycle of populism and misinformation.

Media or information wars, controversy, pluralism of opinions and discussions have become the battlefield where the consumer is the main "trophy". The attention of society was methodically bought through information falsification. In a best-case scenario, it was a scandal, a sensation, revealed personal facts, but not the truth. The social scale of the event was distorted by commercial profit. Millions of journalists, marketers, IT specialists and managers worked to create a "good" information product to be sold and bought. The scale of some media corporations (Facebook, Google, Microsoft, etc.) proves that the information industry has focused its strategy not only on economic benefits, but also on the sociological and psychological approach to its business operations.

Media streams cannot remove the Lie. This makes them vulnerable and dependent. Media streams need to be reanimated from monetary dependence. A catalyst can be a consumer society that is still capable of responding to the Lie, ranking information and finding peace in the Truth. Although this cannot be called peace; it is more likely indignation which has been transformed into skepticism. The profound pessimistic crisis that is observed in the Western media industry has created the media market environment, where new methods of perceiving the information product will regulate fake flows downward.

**Politics in the postmodern era**

The agenda of the postmodern era demonstrates obsessive dictatorship offering special and perspective autopoietic long-term plans. The promises and populist declarations of politicians became dominant aspects in political power. As a result of this, mankind plunged into the history of delusions. It has always been the case, but in the postmodern era, the Internet made the political arena available to the broad masses. The availability of information not only involved the electorate in the general political process, but also opened up methods of manipulation to society.

We can deduce an algorithm for the presentation of the Truth: presentation – broadcast – perception of information.

**Table 1-** Algorithm

| Subject | Actions | Result |
|---------|---------|--------|
| **"Authority opinion"** | someone who produces controversial interpretations | Content market |
| **"Expert opinion"** | someone who discusses facts, provides subjective vision that can be proved or disapproved | Media product |
| **"Public opinion"** | the object of perception affected by the authorities and experts | Audience |

Authority has always existed as a social phenomenon; but the Lie has never been authoritative. Postmodern philosophy of cynicism has made the new mutant gene of the Truth an idol. The mechanisms for the production of political tools are disproportionate to the canonical views of the Truth concepts. In the Postmodern era, the polemical statement "everything is for sale" became a fundamental truth. The so-called opinion authorities do not mind selling their opinions. It is they who contribute to the mutation of the Truth by transmitting it under the cover of the socio-political symptoms. The public has become the key player in the political arena targeted by both authorities and experts. Unfortunately, the political mind of the voters does not have enough immunity to prevent the development of negative consequences for the society. The task of the communicative media environment is to serve the groups that form and perceive the Truth.

**The postmodern art**

Culture is a phenomenon of stable collective memory of historical archetypes that is subject to time fluctuations and demonstrates its unlimited protection of the best or the worst. Everything that was embodied in art became a measure of the Truth. Although some creative works were banned or persecuted by the public, they were later canonized. For example, the notorious art of modernity underwent a terrible ordeal during its formation, but its recognition as a great era proves the authenticity of the era.

Cynicism came into art in its full splendor. Aesthetic and artistic principles were destroyed by simulacra in all forms of postmodern art. Although architecture, sculpture and music somehow managed to survive, there were significant problems in literature. The distribution of popular fiction, yellow press and anti-literature proves only that monetization replaced the main function of literature. Shocking scandals, the ability to shock and successful advertising yielded some dividends.

Art had never been treated in such an aggressive way before. This is the paradox of the postmodern era. The natural response of the time was the emergence of mass culture. Sexism has become an idol and a tool to attract the attention of almost all age-old and social categories.

Mass culture has become extremely popular due to telecommunication channels, but it has not been recognized. The uncrowned mistress of a multi-million army of fans was attached a cliché of the "kitsch culture," which caused social deprivation. The increased attention did not live up to the expectations of art historians, but it lived up to the expectations of producers: the monetization of ideas attracted crowds of admirers and brought multi-billion-dollar financial satisfaction. In addition, the world of art is also promoted by the Internet. This fact contributed to the creation of a digital art niche.

## 3 RESULTS

### Media in the post-truth period

Modern human development has already passed the stage of media education and most of the world's population can actively use the Internet for various purposes. It can be argued that Postmodernism has taught people to recognize, classify, query or ignore information. We believe that in a few decades a new social group will be brought into the classification of society. This will be the generation that broke the cynical chain of misinformation. Despite the efforts to cultivate moral nihilism, it was impossible to eliminate ethical archetypes.

Ideological markers at the media level are regarded as manipulation. Fake has become the face of some media outlets, which does not make them authoritative. The mass distribution of news from fake publications through social networks is extremely fast. Nowadays social networks have become one of the main marketing tools. Well-aimed consumer wants rank the public according to their preferences and provide them with the Truth specifically designed for them. The practice of creating communities through mass subscriptions intentionally leads them to the source, which produces a lie, reducing the level of analytical analysis among users. It can be argued that the problem is about information providers rather than consumer perception. It seems that they themselves believe in their fake news. In addition, we observe that the motivation for truth is very low; the owners of media resources accept the Fact. However, they are not interested in changing anything. Snobbish statements are nothing but another portion of misinformation.

**Politics in the post-truth period**

Political arenas produce modern and trendy forms of the Truth. The differentiation of the perception of the truth is determined in advance. How can the truth that we hear from the political elite be evaluated? This issue should be addressed at the socio-ethical level. In other words, there is no immunity and the objectivity has lost its canonicity. In the case of political allusions, we can talk about replacing the "truth" with another term that more specifically describes the nature of political allusions. Let us replace it with the word "provocation". This is not a metaphor, but the actual transformation of the authority of the "truth" that we hear from the "authoritative" political arenas. The truth was changed when the society recognized the existence of authority.

In political terms of the formation of facts, this is a manipulative reality that absolutely violates moral markers through the obsessive dictatorship of specific factual algorithms, which will be perceived by society as the truth. The actual situation proves the fact that politics has lost its true morality, ethics and patriotism. In fact, the truth is being monetized and it is presented as a good intention of political leaders at the macro and micro levels.

**The post-truth art**

We believe that the post-modern art crisis has already passed. There are evident facts that demonstrate its final phase. Art has been characterized by authenticity. The true generates the beautiful; the socio-ethical functions of art can be fully directed towards the consumer. Culture experts note the increased interest of the world community in the art form, content and inner meaningful filling.

The policy of the so-called "soft power" is a good example. Interstate world politics and the programs of the foreign policy strategy development seriously rely on culture as a constructive element. Culture is a social phenomenon that has become a tool in the global ideology projects of the European Union countries, as well as China, Russia and others. The policy of "soft power" makes culture an extremely important element in the formation of an ideological state image at the international level. The high communicative coefficient of the culture has been recognized at all levels: by political elites, scientists, political scientists, culture experts and sociologists.

It is beyond doubt that we live at the intersection of the eras. There are different opinions about the question whether this period is transitional or a new stage in human history. The names presented in the table below are the most common; however, this is only a small part of all existing modern definitions.

**Table 2-** The most common names and its meanings

| Name | Basic concepts | Opinion experts (the founders of the theory) |
|---|---|---|
| **After modernism** | Culture interlacing due to globalization, multilayer nature, art without borders | Nicolas Bourriaud |
| **Cosmodernism** | Globalization, ecological compatibility in all ways, cosmo-nationalism | Christian Moraru "Cosmodernism: American Narrative, Late Globalization, and the New Cultural Imaginary" |
| **Digimodernism** | Digitization of life, transformation under the pressure of technology | Alan Kirby |
| **Metamoder-nism** | Radicalism, universalization, pluralism, irony | Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker "Notes on Metamodernism" |
| **Post-humanism** | The infinity of human possibility, posthuman (superhuman) formation | Francesca Ferrando |
| **Performatism** | Global changes in all areas, skepticism, faith is not always right | Raul Elshaman |

The variety of the names of this period indicates that the concept has not been completely formed. We can argue that they all complement the definition of modern time through the lens of:

- ✓ Ethical perception
- ✓ Morality
- ✓ Aesthetic canon
- ✓ Social phenomena
- ✓ Cultural aspects

However, all these concepts are connected by the fact that everything is being globalized or affected by globalization.

**Moral and ethical aspects: a "small review" of a global scale (media, journalism, social networks)**

The postmodern era has transformed the concepts of the Truth and the Lie, the Good and the Evil. The international community observed the formation of indifference and passivity in the moral and ethical understanding of these concepts. It can be argued that the Truth was deformed in this period. Relativity was introduced into stable categories, which brings into question the essence of the moral and ethical standards. For example, the relativity of the Lie implies its mitigating effect: if people tell a lie, it can be said that they do not make it all the way to the Truth or the Lie can be questioned. The same principle can be applied to talk about the Truth: when the truth is not completely accurate, we call it "partial truth." We would like to present a modern classification of the Truth, which is used by journalists of well-known American publications engaged in fact-checking.

**Table 3-** A modern classification of the Truth

| Type | Semantic context, information content of the term |
|---|---|
| True | The statement is accurate and complete. |
| Mostly true | The statement is accurate, but it requires clarification or additional information. |
| Half true | The statement is partially accurate, but it does not take into account important details or takes things out of the context. |
| Mostly false | The statement contains an element of truth, but it ignores critical facts that may create a different impression. |
| False | The statement is inaccurate. |
| Pants on fire | The statement is inaccurate and makes ridiculous claims. |

The classification shows that all fundamental principles of the philosophical, ethical and moral meaning of the concepts are subject to authenticity; they slightly reduce the nature of the meaning, but significantly change the content.

User media culture is more intelligent than the producers of the Lie can imagine. The user's request for the Truth directly relates to social networks and their flash-like replication of information. It was the public that contributed to the creation of a new niche in the media industry. Today, social movements and services for identifying the accuracy of information and data

verification have been created. Programs and mobile applications for identifying the authenticity of information are widely used in cyberspace. For example, Google Search by Image, FotoForensics, Findexif.com and other services determine the reliability of the photo, as well as identify when and where the picture was taken, etc. The programs Pipl.com and WebMii are designed to search for a human footprint on the Internet (deep Web search on the deep Internet) and verify the authenticity of accounts on social networks.

Modern digital technologies provide a number of tools and services for establishing the Truth. Fact-checking services are especially popular. This may reduce the flow of false information. For example, in the United States, such authoritative publications as Reporters lab, PolitiFact, Gossip Cop, The Washington Post check all information related to politics and politicians and publish it with the label "true" or "false". However, it should be noted that there is a "human factor" in fact-checking: information is still verified by people. Automatic lie identification algorithms have not been invented despite high aspirations to develop such programs in the future. Perhaps a new start-up on fact-checking is already being tested in strict secrecy due to the urgency of the problem.

Corrupt journalism, as a postulate of the postmodern era, has been destabilized. We can also argue that modern journalism has matured for working in a completely different style focusing mainly on reliability, honesty and professionalism. Moreover, an honest media representative is "worth its weight in gold." Consequently, the material remuneration for the Truth is going to be increased rather than decreased. Following the sarcasm of the modern era, the honesty will be described like this: we have appealed to the conscience of journalists; and let it be not sarcasm, but a new era in journalism.

## 4 DISCUSSIONS

In modern conditions, new trends aimed at finding the Truth are being created (Farrow & Moe, 2019). Information channels that have repudiated ideological dependence have become active; they are focused on facts and neutrality. A win-win method of presenting facts in a realistic form and a flat denial of any comments should become an alternative for a new era in the media space (Beyer & Listen, 1992). The bare truth will supplant the fake only when the truth becomes a corkscrew in the production of manipulations.

The society has protested against altered information flows (Gibbons, 2017). User media culture has been transformed into new movements sorting out information (Politic Fact, 2019) and
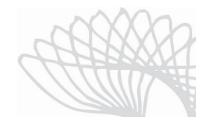
creating new communities of truth moderators. The public is engaged into controversy with politicians to demonstrate dissatisfaction and readiness for radical actions (Suarez, 2017). It is safe to say that mass protests, both peaceful and military, are the consequences of the manipulation. For example, the so-called Arab Spring, a protest that involved about twenty countries of the Arab world; the conflict was caused by political games and manipulations (Hoydis, 2019). Another example is social networks which were used to organize mass meetings, as well as peaceful and military demonstrations (regardless of the country or the scale of the event, conflict, etc.).

Opinion experts are the main producers of the Truth, the Lie and fakes. Literally, the production of these leaders should be based only on the intellectual rating criterion (Ferrando, 2013), when the recognition of intellectual social activity is authoritative rather than the number of followers on social networks. There will be no manipulations and the public will act as a moderator relying on the reliability of facts when fake authoritative opinions are rejected (Cole & Hill, 1995). The catalyst for the Truth should be publicly multiplied through the positive dynamics of universal education. Social recognition should be formed solely on the basis of knowledge rather than by marketing or political (or other) factors.

Global ethics are still priority principles of the moral code of humanity (Beyer & Listen, 1992). The oxymoron "reliability of the truth", which was coined by the cynical media policy of the postmodern era, should disappear. Modern age is characterized by inexplicable paradoxes. We are looking for the truth in the truth; we have created the Fake news Awards; we take part in the wars that are alien and incomprehensible to us; we are no longer us, but just people in someone's hyper-smart cyberspace programs. The truth has already shown prospects for sincerity and a surge of humanity's exalted faith in true morality (Vermeulen & Van Den Akker, 2010; Moraru, 2011; Ferrando, 2013; Gibbons, 2017).

A new computer generation is being formed. This is a generation that has new identification parameters and accepts physical and virtual reality as equal realities (Syzdykova, 2014).

The attention of users should not be bought. It should not be treated as a product or an infrastructure for manipulation. However, the IT industry makes a lot of efforts to produce new ways to attract or buy user attention. Automated programs for buying user attention have been used in business for several years. For example, targeting is one of the marketing tools that allows ranking the right audience. Doogle, Yandex, Facebook, Instgram and many other well-known companies (almost all) have long been using automatic search for the so-called target audience. Big and small

companies pay a lot of money for views, likes, increasing the number of subscribers, etc. In fact, it can be stated that user attention is already being sold; moreover, it has become competitive.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Socio-political elites should be formed based on intellectuality and professionalism. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Successful businessmen should operate in their niche rather than be involved in politics lobbying for their financial interests and questioning the concept of the elite. The reputation of political elites should be based exclusively on professional activities rather than scandals thought out by political consultants. It is a high level of intelligence that can resist the moral mutation of the Truth and ideological bias. Man, still plays a crucial role as a value (in any perception of the value). Whatever technological advances humanity has; everything is created by the mind. Artificial intelligence still needs human intervention. Therefore, the reliability of the truth that will be produced as dominant is required. When citizen journalism, patriot journalism and the search for the truth in history are more developed, the prefix pseudo- will disappear; there will be no paid subjectivity and the senseless oxymorons will be removed from dictionaries and public space. The task of the Post-truth era is to reduce the flows of the Lie by deriving a new criterion for public morality. Interstate and interethnic integration contributed to the development of a new social need, where the Truth can become a dominant expert regardless of the activity. We believe that the reliability boom is not just another mass media fake, but the objective need of the modern world.

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