Postmodernism and realism in the aporia of post-truth

El posmodernismo y el realismo en la aporía de la posverdad

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Abstract

In recent decades, the problem of post-truth has emerged. Values such as fairness, objectivity, and critical dialogue have become more difficult to achieve. Various characteristics are associated with this, such as the emergence of new technologies and a new era in political relations with the rise of fundamentalism and populism. Besides, the reference to postmodernism is always commonplace in the bibliography on the subject. Considering this, the article's main objective is to philosophically analyze the theoretical foundation of post-truth, the postmodernism. From the methodological point of view, this theoretical study will take the interpretive approach as a reference. Interpretive hermeneutical criticism has been combined with a documentary analysis of the main works that address this problem. The article explains the main characteristics of the concept, considering the current and notorious interpretation, and then interprets the position that criticizes postmodernism as the theoretical basis of the post-truth era. It concludes by defining that the relationship between post-truth and its theoretical foundation has a dogmatic and contradictory character since it confronts subjectivist relativism with the dogma of a realist metaphysics.

Keywords

Truth, post-truth, postmodernism, realism, political philosophy, epistemology.

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Resumen

En las últimas décadas ha emergido el problema de la posverdad. Valores como la imparcialidad, la objetividad y el diálogo crítico, se han vuelto más difíciles de alcanzar. A lo anterior se asocian diversas características como la emergencia de nuevas tecnologías y una nueva era en las relaciones políticas con el aumento del fundamentalismo y el populismo. Además, la referencia al posmodernismo es siempre un lugar común en la bibliografía sobre el tema. Tomando eso en cuenta, el objetivo principal del artículo es analizar filosóficamente el fundamento teórico del concepto de posverdad, el posmodernismo. Desde el punto de vista metodológico, este estudio teórico tomará como referencia el enfoque interpretativo. Se ha conjugado la crítica hermenéutica interpretativa con el análisis documental de las principales obras que abordan este problema. En el artículo se explican las características principales del concepto, teniendo en cuenta la interpretación corriente y notoria, para luego interpretar la postura que critica al posmodernismo como base teórica de la era de la posverdad. Se concluye definiendo que la relación entre la posverdad y su fundamento teórico tiene un carácter dogmático y contradictorio, puesto que enfrenta al relativismo subjetivista con el dogma de una metafísica realista.

Palabras clave

Verdad, posverdad, posmodernismo, realismo, filosofía política, epistemología.

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Introduction

If beginning from the fact that educational practice goes beyond the professor´s role, a promising beginning is made to the study of the relationship between truth as a philosophical concept and education as a human activity based on it. Likewise, science, the basis of the educational process, is an activity that presupposes philosophical knowledge and paradigms. Although both ideas are taken for granted among intellectuals and the scientific community, that does not seem to be the case in some sectors and processes in contemporary societies.

According to Englebretsen (2006) over the past few decades, creative knowledge and practice are at risk by the problem of post-truth. Values such as accuracy, impartiality, and mental openness have become more difficult to achieve, and although none of these phenomena are historically new, as Kavanagh and Rich (2018) suggest, their current scope and scale may be more extreme than before.

Barzilai and Chinn (2020), when talking about the importance of criticizing the post-truth, show four problems. Post-truth implies, first, not knowing how it is known; second, a considerable lack of importance for the truth itself; third, not agreeing on how to know and, finally, the emergence of fallible forms of knowing. All of these lines have implications in education and other areas of society. Indeed, since the emergence of post-truth as a term in 2016 (BBC News), countless papers have

appeared addressing the role of education, including Britt et al. (2019), Buckingham (2019), Darner (2019), Kendeou (2019) and Pupo (2014).

From this point of view, there is an interest in knowing whether students and teachers are prepared to deal with truth-related phenomena and how to improve their preparation. However, this does not suggest that education is the only way to address these problems. On the contrary, an effective response is likely to require social, technological, educational and purely philosophical measures, as suggested by Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook (2017), Wardle & Derakhshan (2017) and Feinstein & Waddington (2020). Given this last need, this article uses philosophy and its response to the problem of post-truth.

According to Braun (2019), a tentative definition of the term indicates that it:

> (…) is primarily a sorting device, a concept that serves as a means to create order in a complicated world and make sense of what is happening. Like any sorting device, it is contingent and full of values, and it sheds light on some aspects of reality while obscuring others (p. 1).

Similarly, Lee McIntyre begins his influential post-truth research (2018) by saying that it is an umbrella term. Moreover, he adds that the first step to understand post-truth is by knowing its genesis. However, genesis cannot be understood only from the temporal point of view as he thinks, but also from the logical-philosophical point of view.

It is also associated with several features such as the emergence of new technologies, massive data consumption and processing, the increase in the use of social networks, and a new era in political relations. All these ideas will be analyzed in this article; however, special attention will be paid to the only idea that is steady in the group of characteristics, its theoretical foundation: postmodernism.

According to Englebretsen (2006), this trend of forgetting the truth is composed of:

> (…) new thinkers who have spread this virus (often innocently, but with the same intentionally and cynically frequency) and have found a more receptive (but not only) entourage in the liberal faculties of the academy. As with many of its biological counterparts, this disease has mutated in a variety of ways (p. 7).

Contrary to this idea, it is thought that there is more than a simple manipulation or emotional interference behind the concept of post-truth motivated by post-modernism with vague definitions. Therefore, analyz-

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es of other sciences always refer to the post-truth regime, the post-truth era, the post-truth paradigm, narratives, among other formulas that indicate that its incidence is much greater and complex.

If philosophy is a knowledge that deals in the first instance with the concepts and problems, post-truth should be its priority. But when comparing the advances in this area with other areas of knowledge, it is easy to see that most of the articles and publications are from the communication sciences, journalism or political sciences. Almost always immediately assuming the identity of a term that is still changing.

Taking into account these ideas about the concept and the extensive reality that post-truth encompasses, various problems might emerge. However, observing the absence of analysis that focuses on its theoretical foundation, an attempt will be made to answer the following question: What kind of philosophical relationship exists between the concept of post-truth and postmodernism as its theoretical foundation, according to the current interpretation of that term?

As observed, reference is made to a "current interpretation," which is only the most widespread and notorious interpretation of the post-truth, with authors such as Keyes (2004), Englebretsen (2006), Calcutt (2016), McIntyre (2018) or Brahms (2020). From the above, the main objective is to analyze philosophically the postmodern theoretical foundation of the concept of post-truth, according to the current interpretation of the term. The article first explains the main characteristics of the concept, taking into account the current and notorious interpretation, and then it interprets the position that criticizes postmodernism as the theoretical basis of the post-truth era.

From a methodological point of view, this theoretical study uses as a reference the interpretative approach, justified by the need to use the analysis about the concept studied. Interpretative hermeneutical criticism has been combined with the documentary analysis of primary and secondary papers that address this problem. As a hermeneutical theoretical study, the important thing is not to question or describe interrogation essences enclosed in themselves, but, in addition, to contextualize in order to arrive at new stages on the question raised. Classical and contemporary works have been used as references; scientific articles and major books have been consulted in several languages present in databases, repositories and academic search engines.

The importance of the topic is based on the need to understand this process; first, from a conceptual point of view. Philosophy must be the main responsible for this task, since it points to possible and future

ethical developments. In addition, beyond theoretical development, it is believed that ideas relevant to other areas of knowledge that use the term to explain subjects' new relationships with the digital and technological environment can be used.

Finally, there is a social importance that must not be circumvented. The years 2020 and 2021 have been defined as the most difficult years for humanity in recent decades. As Ortega (2021) and Guerra (2021) mention, the pandemic has imposed a social challenge, but also an existential and ontological challenge. This has to do with different events that we will not review; however, one of them has been present at all times, the post-truth. For instance, the dissemination of false news about COVID-19, to vaccination campaigns. All this should lead the researcher to ask the philosophical question about the truth in these new processes. This will have a significant impact on global education in the twenty-first century.

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Definition and explanation of the concept

The word 'post-truth' emerged in 2016 when the Oxford Dictionary named it Word of the Year. According to the publication in its digital version, it is "an adjective defined as related or denoting circumstances in which the objective facts are less influential in the formation of public opinion than appeals to emotions and personal beliefs" (p. 1).

There are also more definitions in other languages:

- According to the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy (2020), the post-truth is a "deliberate distortion of a reality, which manipulates beliefs and emotions in order to influence public opinion and social attitudes. Demagogues are masters of the post-truth" (definition 1).
- According to Larousse (2020), it is a "concept according to which we have entered a period (called the post-truth era or post-factual era) in which personal opinion, ideology, emotion and belief triumph over the reality of facts" (definition 1).
- According to Cambridge Dictionary (2020), it is an adjective "in relation to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs, rather than one based on facts" (definition 1).

While in the Anglo-Saxon versions the loss of the fact is more unfortunate, in the French and Spanish definitions facts are less important

and are assumed as a more subjective phenomenon that falls to the misuse of opinion, ideologies or emotions.

Despite this subtle difference, there is an absolute concern in all cases for the interference of emotions and personal beliefs in the interpretation of facts. The latter being the element that is indirectly or directly always referring to: the disconnection or the wide gap between the subjective and the objective, the internal and the external, the truth as correspondence to the facts and what is true 'for me'.

Before its use in dictionaries, the first time the term 'post-truth' was used was in the text *A Government of Lies* (1992), written by the Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich. In his article, the author criticized the American public for submissively accepting the lies of Bush administration and deciding to live in a world where truth is no longer relevant: "In a fundamental way, we, as free people, have freely decided that we want to live in a post-truth world" (p. 12). After that, the term reappeared in 2004 with Ralph Keyes' book *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (2004).

Theories of Truth, Philosophy, and Science

Any philosophical reflection on the post-truth presupposes a specific concept of truth. If the first involves a crisis, it is because it contains a variation of the second. Hence, in some contexts also refer to truth and alternative facts. Post-truth is immediately a deviation from a discourse considered straight, legitimate and sometimes even dogmatic.

According to McIntyre's work (2018), that minimum definition of truth is that of Aristotle (1994), who expressed: To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true". (p. 198). This is already relevant information in a twofold sense. First because it provides clues about the age of the problem. Second, because there is a base on which to begin thinking the post-truth. It is, in an abstract way, a deviation from the original meaning of what we mean 'it is'.

According to García-Bacca (2002), together with Aristotle, in the strict sense one should mention the poem of Parmenides, where a correct way of enunciating the self is already announced, in which the self and the thinking are the same, and an incorrect way that is described in his phenomenological poem. Socrates and the Sophists are in the same space of time. While Socrates defends an absolute, unique and immutable

conception of truth, the sophist philosophy defends its relativity, its possibility of transformation according to the functioning of λόγος.

For Borges Junior (2019), Protagoras would be a sort of precursor, because he speaks of man being the measure of all things, of which they are as they are, and of which they are not as long as they are. Plato, on the other hand, although he does not mention anything similar to the concept of post-truth, as expected in all classical thought, stands as a tentative point of comparison due to the problem of noble and ignoble lie in his work, as stated by Meza (2018).

In the West, there are several conceptions and projects of truth but it is not the intention of this paper to deal with all of them. However, there are at least three approaches that have been one of the most famous: The theory of truth as correspondence (CR), as coherence (CH), and pragmatics (PG). Following D'Agostini (2019) it is possible to define briefly that:

- CR: A proposition or belief *p* is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts.
- CH: A proposition or belief *p* is true if *p* is consistent with other propositions or beliefs that have been accepted (or are consistent with 'the totality' of our knowledge).
- PG: A proposition or belief *p* is true if it is useful to believe *p* (or if believing in *p* is successful).

Despite the different concepts and debates about truth, authors such as BonJour (2009) and Bourget (2014) claim that the theory purposely put into crisis from the post-truth era is CR. According to the above, post-truth would pose a problem for science, the media, and current politics, because the criterion of truth would be no more on the side of facts, but of the various interpretations that exist about facts. These stories would be based mainly on emotions that frame reality according to the intentions of each one.

A distinction must be made that has not always been found in studies on the subject, and it has to do with the space in which post-truth acts. Truth has been questioned throughout human thought, especially from science and philosophy. Plato, Aristotle and Parmenides have been mentioned, but the list is not over, it could be extended to R. Descartes, E. Husserl, M. Heidegger, L. Wittgenstein, B. Russell, K. Popper, T. Kuhn, among others. All these and others who are not mentioned, have had their own ideas about the concept of truth and have advanced novel questions. However, in no case should these questions of the truth be

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confused with the post-truth. There is a notable difference between the functioning of science and philosophy, and the behavior of contemporary public opinion.

To illustrate, K. Popper is one of those thinkers who face the notion of scientific truth as correspondence. Part of his work is devoted to two problems, induction and scientific limit (1976; 2002). His approach was to replace induction with what is false. On the latter, the most relevant is the idea that universal theories cannot be induced from particular propositions. This refers to the problem of induction, as Popper (2002) has defined, and carries an implicit critique of positivism that draws any true value from the positive fact.

This is just one example of the collective and critical character of truth in the most general realm of philosophy and science and how it should not influence its value. Thus, questioning truth, although it can also be found in the most general knowledge about nature and society, it does not intend to deceive its audience.

However, something must be established; there is always a speech, in both cases, that appeals to some criterion of truth. Conspiracy theories, flat-earth organizations, or any other example, always contain a claim of truth as opposed to objective truth.

The claim is not the same as objectivity, and that is verifiable. The post-truth, although it appeals to the rigor of 'certain' laws and theories, to the objectivity of 'true' discourse, to the seriousness of 'certain' sources, or to coherence with pre-established narratives, it remains as an empty and purely formal discourse. Its content is almost always unverifiable and the alluded narratives are based on strictly personal beliefs.

Science establishes its own parameters of design, experimentation, publication, reproducibility and control of new knowledge; processes that are not found in the consumption and reproduction of content outside it, where there are not such verification and balance processes. For this reason, in addition to the distinction between pretense of truth and objective truth, there is an even clearer distinction between individual truth and collective truth, because the latter is based on criticism and the effort to build new theories for a common benefit.

Public sphere, media and new technologies

Other scholars define the problem from the new communicational parameters. Such is the case of Braun (2019), who says:

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Social networks and related fragmentation of the public sphere, the formation of echo chambers, fake websites, bots and other instruments of systematic manipulation, anonymity, simplification, polarization and brutalization of language are generally considered a key component, or the main cause of post-truth policy (pp. 2-3).

This is reminiscent of Borges Junior (2019), who says that there is also a transformation in the heart of the public sphere beyond the use of new tools. The new media defines the public character from the private interests of those who dominate the tools, which means that the public is no longer the encounter for a dialogue, but a privatized space where the public occurs. It is "not only about thinking the notion of truth, but about building a certain idea of 'common' and how this construction has become more complex since the 20th century with the increasing and efficient participation of communication technologies" (Borges Junior, 2019, p. 508).

In fact, according to Hyvönen research (2018), American confidence in the mainstream media has fallen from 72% in 1976 (after Watergate/Vietnam) to 32% today. At the same time, the audiovisual media have almost completely replaced the written media. Daily circulation of newspapers in the US according to the same study, declined from 123.6% in 1950 to 36.7% of households in 2010.

There are other processes associated with it. The study by Schmidt et al. (2017) in the re-emergence context of post-truth as a term, analyzed the interactions of 376 million Facebook users with more than nine hundred media, and found that people tend to seek information that aligns with their views. Not only does this increase the reproduction of false news, but it reinforces the views that facts are becoming less and less important.

The research carried out by Barthel et al. (2016) for the Pew Research Center held just after the 2016 election, found that 64% of adults believed that false news caused much confusion, and 23% said they had shared invented political stories, sometimes by mistake and others intentionally.

As expected, the above examples have increased in recent years (2020-2021) with the expansion of coronavirus and the emergence of associated phenomena, such as the closure of entire cities, education institutions, confinement and its psychosocial effects, the economic crisis, the elections in the United States and the increase of conspiracy theories. In that post-pandemic universe, Facebook had 2603 million active users per month by September 2020, followed by WhatsApp, YouTube and Messenger. The total Internet population that year was 4.5 billion users, i.e., more than 300 000 stories per minute on Instagram, 64 444 people ap-

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plying for a LinkedIn job, 150 000 messages posted on Facebook and $1 000 000 spent by customers from anywhere in the world, according to Ali (2020). Undoubtedly, all these figures show a growing social interaction in networks and a process of virtualizing society. Both are ideal conditions for the increase in the phenomenon studied here.

With the virtual world, there is also the ease of using these tools, and the infinite possibilities of creating content with claims of truth, subjective and alien to collective rational criticism. It is easy to imagine that mistrust of facts is also the logical consequence that anyone can create, validate and disseminate content.

In addition, faith in public institutions is steadily declining, mainly for two main reasons. The first is the belief in a global elite that responds to its own interests without any control and balance. The second is the emergence of a perennial passivity based on the isolation of the subject in isolated topics.

This topic also undergoes a huge imbalance. Anyone who knows how these new technologies work is not able to generate a coherent critical discourse against the dangers they represent, and those who are able to articulate critical discourse do not know how they work. This is a gap that must be overcome if there is a real desire to understand how new technologies influence the production of real discourses.

Internet searches show results that are not casual, videos on You-Tube are organized and shown according to these same algorithms, there is a constant appearance of promotions, and most of the leisure time is invested in a kind of unremunerated proletarian work: react and click. The subject pays double with his time, working physically and devouring himself to these new virtual rites. According to the South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2020), parties and celebrations are only valued from production, and the same is true of language, emotions, politics, truth, culture and society in general. Evidently, circumscribing the post-truth process to networks, Internet and new technologies have the risk of reducing the whole argument to a kind of technological determinism. On the one hand, this is not the situation for everyone; and on the other, it is not the case that technology involves only a loss process of identity and thus a disinterest in truth.

Falsehood, deliberate ignorance, lie, and post-truth

Beyond the doubts of post-truth against science, the rise of new technologies, and the changes that this has caused in the public sphere,

one might wonder whether that concept is also related to other discursive forms. This is what leads McIntyre (2018) to define a theoretical framework from which it can analyze the post-truth in relation to a group of similar processes.

First, the speaker often says things that are not true without wanting to say so. In this case, according to McIntire (2018), *falsehood* is present. Above it, there would be the "deliberate ignorance" when "we really do not know if something is true, but we say it anyway, without taking the time to find out if the information is correct" (p. 7). Then comes the *lie*, in which there is a clearly established intention. It is given great value because it is moved to a speech in which there is a clear will to deceive the interlocutor; and therefore, a level where responsibility has a different role.

There must be an audience when lying, a public to which one lies, even if the interlocutor is himself. Despite the contradiction, the liar is a social being, perhaps one of the most social because of the ontological need for an audience that certifies the disruption of reality. However, the audience certifies the lie by not knowing what is hidden. Thus, in a purely dialectical gesture, the liar and the deceived coexist in a relationship of identity and opposition that they cannot break. If this happens, the truth is uncovered and the game finishes. Is the post-truth a form of lie? Of course. But it is also clear that for some reason it has a different name.

The post-truth is not completely a lie because the difference is that: "in its purest form, the post-truth is when one thinks that the reaction of the audience actually changes the facts about a lie" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 9). Evidently, the greatest concern is that with the post-truth era, protected by the different elements mentioned above, the subject is able to alter the whole reality in their quest to convince the audience. It is not just about abandoning the facts, technological development, the increase of data consumption, the relevance of social media, or another specific feature, but a process that also includes subjectivity and the right to want to adapt reality to the story.

While in the lie the true discourse occupies a central place because it is hidden — and even the liar knows is lying, hence its paradoxical character —there is a cynical component in the post-truth:

> Therefore, the post-truth is equivalent to a form of ideological supremacy, through which its practitioners are trying to force someone to believe in something, whether there is good evidence of it or not. And this is a formula for political domination (McIntyre, 2018, p. 13).

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The problem must be extended to other debates that go through politics, but also by the theoretical basis of the post-truth: Postmodernism. McIntyre (2018) deepens on it when he says:

> Even if right-wing politicians and other science deniers were not reading Derrida and Foucault, the idea opened its way to them: Science does not have a monopoly on truth. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that the right-wing is using some of the same arguments and techniques of postmodernism to attack the truth of other scientific claims that collide with their conservative ideology (pp. 139-141).

Likewise, Daniel Dennet in an interview with Cadwalladr (2017) for *The Guardian* has said that "What postmodernists did was really evil. They are responsible for the intellectual trend that enhanced the cynical being about truth and facts" (p. 3). On the other hand, from the point of view of Calcutt (2016), a little over thirty years ago some scholars had the task of discrediting the truth as a kind of great narrative: "Instead of 'truth', which should be rejected as naive and/or repressive, a new intellectual orthodoxy only allowed 'truths', always pluralistic, often personalized, inevitably relativized" (p. 2).

As observed, according to the current interpretation of the studied term, the definition finds its way and theoretical foundation only in postmodernism, giving the term an alleged origin in the pretended cultural analyzes that promote difference and anti-intellectualism.

The aporia of the post-truth: between postmodernism and realism

It has been mentioned that several authors who investigate and criticize the post-truth end this operation by alluding to postmodernism. This is immediately catalogued as its theoretical foundation.

The so-called postmodernism—from the point of view of authors such as Dennet (cited in Cadwalladr, 2017), McIntyre (2018), or Aylesworth (2015)—refers to a variable, heterogeneous, complex set of thinkers and themes belonging to the postwar generation. The vast majority, although not all French, are the most frequently cited representatives of the contemporary French movement. Contemporary French movement is understood as a generation of thinkers who are primarily known after the Second World War in France, or thinkers who take the latter as a reference, and who, receiving the influence of Husserl's phenomenology, address topics as varied as subject status, culture, politics, and art. This brief

characterization is not superficial and is necessary to understand the real origin of the discourse being criticized.

According to Aylesworth (2015), authors such as K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, S. Freud, M. Heidegger, J. Lacan or J. Baudrillard present the theoretical bases of postmodernism. In one way or another, these thinkers are known as critics of modern notions, such as subject and object in a world that is completely mechanical. Postmodernists would take advantage of this criticism of the modernity of the self-centered and productive subject to clarify that reality is built and man is a prisoner of it.

The beginning of philosophical postmodernism is marked by the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's influential book *The Postmodern Condition* in 1979. The referral to Lyotard is invariant and important in this context, as it mentions topics that will always be remembered.

On the other hand, in addition to its founder, among the recurring ideas is Derrida's theory (2001) on literary deconstruction. The simplistic criticism made is based on a deconstruction notion as a simple synonym of destruction and agnosticism. According to McIntyre (2018), who has been an authority on the subject, it is thought that this idea of deconstruction was taken by sociologists and other specialists to the detriment of the value of truth:

> In fact, the notion of truth was now under debate… this meant that there could be many answers, rather than just one, for any deconstruction. The postmodern approach is one in which everything is questioned and little is taken accurately. There is no correct answer, only narrative (p. 125).

Besides deconstruction, there is the notion of narrative, which is understood as a coherent and decodified totality. The danger with the idea of narrative is that the Anglo-Saxon academy immediately associated it with the notion of ideology and all the negative and anti-scientific base it has.

According to Aylesworth (2015) and McIntyre (2018), Michel Foucault is another thinker who has much to do with this operation of transforming science into ideology. This thinker was the one who pointed out that social life is defined by language, but language itself is linked by the relations of power and dominance. This should mean that all statements, regarding knowledge and self-knowledge, are nothing but the expression of a certain power, "they are intimidation tactics used by the elite to force the weakest to accept their ideology" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 126). Since there is no truth, anyone who claims to be educating us or transmitting knowl-

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edge is only "trying to oppress us" (p. 126). Likewise, Aylesworth (2015) defines in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy that:

> (…) Foucault's writings are a hybrid of philosophy and historical research, just as Lyotard, he combines the language of the expert and the philosopher in *The Postmodern Condition*. This mixture of philosophy with concepts and methods of other disciplines is characteristic of postmodernism in its broadest sense (p. 7).

Thus, to summarize, the notion of postmodernism would first imply a glorification of subjective and individual truths to the detriment of objective truth. Second, the absence of science, knowledge and any other type of metanarratives in opposition to diverse local theories, expressions and perspectives. Third, ideology, hailed by the absence of rational thinking, becomes the content of the whole and would always be lurking on the basis of implicit power relations.

However, there are elements that are neither congruent nor logical in this interpretation of facts. The first problem is to believe that post-truth is something entirely new and that occurred after the emergence of postmodernism. There are reasons to assume that post-truth and almost all the processes associated with it have existed since before, except for the rapid increase of new technologies. At the very least, the absolute certainty that it is a completely new phenomenon that is directly related to theories and thinkers as disparate as postmodernism should be questioned.

On the other hand, while post-truth points to relevant and important phenomena, aggravated by the most recent political events, there is no evidence that the value of truth is ineffective. As stated above, since post-truth there is even an implicit trust in facts, truth, or some theories. The problem lies in the type of theories that are referred to, and especially in the absence of rational criticism mechanisms, checks and balances.

At a time when the lack of influence of philosophy is observed, is it possible to think that people in their daily lives read postmodernism, and that this in turn is as influential as Dennet and colaborators think? Moreover, as Chen (2017) suggests, if there is a right to blame postmodernism for the post-truth and the alternative facts, there is the right to blame romantic novelists for unsatisfactory marital relations. Beyond the clear irony, here is a deeper idea that has to do with the relationship between culture and society, theory and practice and their different relations of significance.

Another element to bear in mind is that it is not yet clear what kind of truth is being spoken of when it appeals to the post-truth, a fact that occurs by the conflicting history of the term, even within the analyti-

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cal tradition itself, on which there is still little consensus with multiple theories in this regard. If the analysis is consistent with its principles, we should distrust both postmodernism and analytical philosophy and even scientific thought.

As for postmodernism, it is easy to see the reduction made. First, there is a source problem. *The postmodern condition* was a report originally commissioned by the University council of the Quebec government. If the text is analyzed isolated, which was presented without any claim to be a manifest, the significance of that movement is not much understood. The author is essentially limited to the epistemological fate of the natural sciences, a subject on which Lyotard did not know too much:

> I invented stories, I referred to a lot of books I had never read, and apparently impressed people; all of that has some parody… it is just my worst book, almost all are bad, but this is the worst (quoted in Anderson, 2016, p. 32).

Regarding the epistemological location of the report, Anderson (2016) has done a thorough work to cast serious doubts about Lyotard's liability: "… the influence that the book exercised was inversely proportional to its intellectual interest; it became the inspiration of a trashy relativism that often passes between friends and enemies, as the hallmark of postmodernity" (p. 33). Not to mention that the book (*the postmodern condition*) focuses on the less important areas of the philosopher's work, forgetting two of his passions: Ethics and politics. The idea is not to completely deny what was expressed by the author, but to shed light on a supposed founding act. Evidently, Lyotard's book must be read from the codes of its own context, both logical and historical.

Referring to Foucault and Derrida, there are reasons to think that serious mistakes are also made by confusing the methods of their philosophical reflections with an alleged destruction of the concept of scientific truth. Foucault would have distinguished between a history of objective truth that falls within the competence of science, and another story more focused on the production of discourses and the subjection of subjects, but in no case did he dismiss the value of scientific truth. Regarding Derrida, there is also no clear evidence that he was more critical than L. Wittgenstein or B. Russell in his investigations.

All these conceptual and theoretical crosslinking cannot end up here, however, these have been explained to justify that the legitimacy of post-truth is unfounded, and deserves further reflection in the near future. Only in this way can we truly understand what it is.

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It should be emphasized that the reasons for this operation are not only based on historical and epistemological arguments. There is an ontological argument that underlies the activity of a term as elusive as post-truth: the return to objective facts.

The concern of the post-truth is not just a question about the truth – as old as humanity itself – or not just how new technologies have positioned the way in which data and news are consumed. The question also includes its own starting point, the subject who interrogates. In that sense, the question of the post-truth exclaims a desire not always hidden to return to the stable and solid world of facts, but to the longing of a world with a very specific sense of truth anchored to positive facts. This does not negate certain moral and political effects experienced in the day to day. There have already been signs that there is a real problem, but the claim of post-truth implies a cardinal aporia, as Carrera (2018) says:

> Thus, a space of discursive transparency is suggested to seek beyond rhetoric and mediation to reflect reality as it is. This naturalization of certain forms of speech described as true in the face of false forms of speech is profoundly demagogic and recovers old realistic dogmas around the representation topic as a duplicate of the world, without questioning that what is supposedly "duplicated" is the result of a specific historical and power juncture, not an "objective" or natural fact beyond the historical (pp. 1470-1471).

The name of aporia is not at random, since it points exactly to the kind of relationship established between the truth and its theoretical foundation. In fact, the relationship, as has been seen, is not simply between a notion and its foundation, but it also represents another paradigm: realistic metaphysics. This points to an insoluble paradox that lies at the bottom of the post-truth. On the one hand, the dogma of a principle that is unaffordable due to its imprecision, on the other, a truth anchored in the positivity of facts.

Post-truth refers to aporia as a fundamental contradiction in an older philosophical problem. It is once again the cleavage between the subject and the object, between consciousness and reality, the inner and outer world. Hence, the ontological foundation of post-truth in a speech that puts two dogmatic moments in the contender. On the one hand, the idea that all truth is subjective, internal and proper to the subject. On the other, the ancient notion that the true object is beyond perception. And this, though contradictory and dogmatic, is the relationship that has been sought.

Conclusions

By reaching this point, it can be said that post-truth refers to concrete problems in contemporary societies. Immediately, that concept describes an era where new mechanisms of information and data production have caused classic notions of truth to be relative to each other's opinion, emotions, or ideology. Contrary to some thinkers, the idea has also shown that these elements are not enough; post-truth discourse also lacks mechanisms of criticism and collective dialogue.

Journalism, cultural studies, communicational analysis, political science, and other areas of knowledge, associate this definition with a setback in decision-making instruments and an increase in political fundamentalism and populism. This is also related to this lack of critical dialogue that is so necessary today.

In a second moment, it has been shown that, despite making a constant and easy reference to postmodernism, this is still a superficial operation. The biggest flaw in the current post-truth reading is that it is an operation that is too simple and only refers to a vague era with weak justified arguments. The latter, of course, is not the characteristics of the concept, but the very interpretation of it.

This interpretation forgets that critics to postmodernism can be equally directed against realistic metaphysics, since positive fact is an assumption that has always been present in the truth debate throughout the history of philosophy. In fact, this debate, and the questions to the truth, have served to make science and knowledge more and better.

On the other hand, in criticizing postmodernism, it is forgotten that every positive fact is also an interpreted fact. Denying the experiential aspect of truth can be as harmful as denying the importance of truth itself.

For this reason, one of the main conclusions that should guide future analysis of the concept is the presence of a contradiction within it. It is not a question of understanding the post-truth as an identity, but as the sign of a contradiction. In this topic, many people forget how important the interpretative aspect is in the apprehension of truth, and in the understanding of the surrounding world.

This task has already been undertaken by phenomenology since the last century. In the work of the great classics of phenomenology, life experience is not a negligible or minor element of nature, reality, science or truth. The movement that describes phenomenology and its followers does not reject objective truth, nor does it reject the reality of the outside world. For phenomenology, it is essential to understand the idea when talking about a concrete or vital experience.

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The relevance of mentioning this movement goes beyond simple biographical or historical connections. It has to do with the suitability that it has to understand more fully the problem of post-truth from the subject's view. Instead of implying a separation between consciousness and reality, phenomenology means just the opposite, an approximation to the given world, to the lived one, to what is immediately presented to man in his daily experience, i.e., experience is given (at least tacitly) as 'my' experience, as one that is being lived. This is the profound meaning of intentionality, a new starting point in knowing that it does not try to discredit objective truth in function of the intimacy of the subject or vice versa; but those truths are simply placed in parentheses — without denying them— to understand what is felt, seen, perceived or lived.

Philosophy must be thought as an inexhaustible relationship against realism that drives the world away from consciousness, or relativism that causes the instability of speech and the sophisms of truth. The importance of understanding truth from phenomenology is essential. From a methodological point of view, it would also be an enormous step forward to understand the subjects' experience of the different ways in which the post-truth is expressed. Thus, the emergence and significance of so-called alternative speeches could be understood. In short, to know and understand the truth, one must not only investigate objectively the expression of a realistic metaphysics, but also include the subject's vital experience. Any other unambiguously-defined path would appear on the most direct path to dogmatism.

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