

PHENOMENA OF POST-TRUTH AND FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF JOURNALIST ACTIVITIES

Research methodology. *The basis of the research is informational, axiological, culturological, systemic approaches; the following methods are used: analysis, synthesis, generalization – to determine the essence of post-truth and false consciousness in the modern communication space.*

Results. *The post-truth phenomenon and its significance in the practice of journalistic activity are characterized.*

Novelty. *The essence of the post-truth phenomenon as an element and method of information war is revealed. It is maintained that post-truth is a message, the aim of which is to form the public mood needed for the journalist, and the truthfulness of this message has not importance. Post-truth hides the mechanism and causes of the event, as well as the reasons for the broadcasting of this message. Post-truth forms a false consciousness that induces the community to inadequate social action. Modern journalism is involved in the information war, generating areas of post-truth in the information field of society.*

Practical significance. *The research results can be used to develop measures to counter the spread of post-truth and to identify false consciousness.*

Key words: *post-truth, false consciousness, journalism, information war, politics of post-truth.*

I. Introduction

In many media messages, the present time is called the era of post-truth [1]. The Oxford Dictionary in 2016 called «post-truth» the word of the year. The «post-truth» word characterizes the state of mass communications, when the truth in the information message becomes not essential.

Originally this term appeared in the essay of the Serbian-American playwright Steve Tesich about the war in the Persian Gulf. In 2004, Ralph Case introduced «the era of post-truth» term, which he described in the book of the same name.

Generally the post-truth phenomenon is associated with two events: the surprising victory of D. Trump, and also the unexpected decision of England to withdraw the European Union membership. Actually, this phenomenon is much broader and can be applied to many events in the world and in Ukraine. The post-truth phenomenon can be directly related to journalism. This is because a journalist covers the events, which are then called post-truth. Consequently, journalists should understand the essence of this phenomenon and develop own attitude to the fact that the truth can have a special status. Post-truth can hide behind itself not so much a false event as a false attitude towards it, which can be described as a false consciousness. Both phenomena can be related to information warfare, which is especially important in the journalist activities.

II. Problem statement and methods

The objective of this article is to consider the essence of the post-truth and false consciousness phenomena in the context of journalistic activities.

The basis of the research is informational, axiological, culturological, systemic approaches; the following methods are used: analysis, synthesis, generalization – to determine the essence of post-truth and false consciousness in the modern communication space.

III. Results

Today the authoritative world publications already have quite a lot of publications on this topic by such authors as Katharine Viner, John Connor, Gey Olkorn, Amulia Gopalakrishnan, Ian Dant, William Davis, Rob Brooks and many others.

Most authors associate the post-truth phenomenon with the development of communication technologies, social networks and the Internet.

To explain the post-truth it has been argued that «manipulating emotions and scandalous statements broadcasted on television, the Internet and social networks today mean more than objective facts» [1]. It is also has been argued that post-truth is the dissolving of boundaries between truth and fiction, is the ignoring facts in favor of a popular opinion [Ibid.]. Yevheniia Blyzniuk understands by the post-truth a message that does not contain truth, which is a way of public opinion manipulating [2]. She states that there is nothing new in this phenomenon, that «in the files of print media from way back, we can easily find all the same methods and ways of work on mass manipulation» [Ibid.]. In her

opinion, post-truth is a kind of fake news and this phenomenon is a consequence of the information over-saturation of the society.

Political scientist Yevhen Laniuk states that post-truth is a phenomenon specific to post-humanity, to «an incredibly complex cybernetic network in which computers will become an integral unit with the human body and mind» [3]. The author claims that «the post-truth world is not just a simulative copy of the real world, but a hyper-saturated version that seeks to surpass it» by means of media simulation [Ibid.].

The Mezhyhirya Fest conference of investigative journalists, which was held June 10–11, 2017 in Mezhyhirya, Ukraine, was addressed to the topic of post-truth and alternative facts as a reality in which modern journalists have to work all over the world. Journalists shared their opinions about the spread of fake news in many media around the world [4].

One of the ethical maxims of a journalist is the need to tell the truth about the events that are covered by this media. Even a blatant lie in journalism should have the status of truth. Moreover, there are mass media that see their task as expressing false opinions and referring to false facts in such a way that it would seem to be true. In such media, the competence and professionalism of a journalist lies in the skill to make a blatant lie look like a truth. This is when the journalist knows full well that the message is lying, but sees the own skill in making this lie perceived by people as truth. Sooner or later it can be discovered by the society and such media will lose its prestige. Thus, the journalists of Russia Today lost their accreditation in the US Congress.

It would seem that truth and lie are opposite concepts that characterize a particular media message. But recently a concept has appeared that erases such an opposition, deprives it of an ethical meaning. This concept is post-truth. The Wikipedia, referring to the Oxford English Dictionary, gives the following definition: «Post-truth is the circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotions and personal beliefs» [5]. In other words, it does not matter whether this message is true or false, but it is important that it corresponds to the beliefs of a certain society and is emotionally supported by it.

The post-truth concept is often related to politics. For example, the abovementioned article in the Wikipedia is named «Post-truth politics». In such a policy, the truth, somewhat is left aside, is not taken into account. But the truth is an ethical concept, so it means that actually it is about the removal of ethical arguments. For politics, this is a natural phenomenon. At his time philosopher and statesman of the Renaissance, Niccolo Machiavelli, believed that politics and morality are incompatible, that in politics moral norms can not be taken into account. Referring to politics he said something like this: «You can be a moral person, but then you will lose power.» In politics, the phrase: «the end justifies the means» is one of the main rules.

But this is for a politician. And for a journalist who covers political events, can the situation of leaving ethical norms aside be normal? Answering this question, one should divide the concepts of abstract and real journalist. An abstract journalist, of course, should strive to take moral considerations into account and try to cover the events truthfully. Another thing is a practical, a real journalist. He is forced to represent the events in such an aspect that meets the requirements and orders of this media management. A journalist must either leave, or obey the editor's requirements. The editor, in turn, follows the instructions of the media owner and is also limited in the possibility to represent own point of view. This is the reality we should regard. For post-truth, it is not the facts themselves that matter, but their interpretation. According to the sociological thesis of Katz-Lazarsfeld, not the information itself changes beliefs, but its interpretation by people we trust. Journalists can report real facts, but give them the interpretation that corresponds to the publication policy. That is how post-truth arise.

Politics and the post-truth concept arose in the liberal, democratic environment of the Western world. Actually, such a policy allows to avoid a sharp confrontation, serves as a means of the conflict resolving.

Having left the truth and justice concepts aside, the politics focus on the more important values of preserving human life and political stability, preventing national collapse and civil confrontation. To clarify this thought, let us consider a conditional situation of the conflict.

The source of enmity, speaking abstractly, is an outraged sense of justice, and the source of motivation for confrontation is the struggle for a just cause. Accusations of violation of truth and justice are a moral justification for enmity. In this case, in order to eradicate enmity, it is necessary to abandon the motivation to strive for truth and struggle for justice, to leave these concepts aside, to disregard them in the negotiation process of the conflicting parties, that is, to adopt positions of the post-truth policy. Peace is possible when truth and justice are withdrawn from the basis of relations, when the parties mutually avoid evaluating their enemy in terms of morality.

The truth is that it is useless to find out who is right in the armed confrontation, on whose side the truth is, who is fighting for justice. If you continue to clarify these issues, you cannot overcome enmity. It is necessary to leave the moral issue aside. There are higher values than morality, that is human life, the whole world. The one who insists on the need to fight for truth and justice does not value human life; this person is actually ready to pay blood for this moral demand, and demands blood for the satisfaction of own sense of truth and justice. Morality is inhumane, if the blood of victims is needed to

uphold it. It's useless to prove your truth. The enemy's voice will not be heard, it will simply not be listened to, all arguments are useless, they are not need, since they can shake the warring spirit.

This statement applies equally to both sides of the confrontation.

If you want to check whether a person wants peace, listen to his/her words. If this person talks about truth and justice, then in fact he/her is not looking for peace, all this person needs is a blood sacrifice on the altar of truth and justice, often not at the expense of his/her life, but the lives of others.

If people are in conflict, they refuse to take the enemy's viewpoint, they refuse even to find out what are the moral bases of enmity between the conflicting parties. If the opponents, theoretically speaking, try to learn the motive of a hostile attitude toward themselves, it may well turn out that the enemy is also fighting for truth and justice.

It turns out that the enemy does not consider itself a hellspawn and a source of evil. On the contrary, the enemy believes that their party is fighting for truth and justice. The enemy defines themselves as a moral subject, and their motives for his struggle are the highest moral values. The opposing sides both consider themselves the advocates of truth and justice, and define their enemy as a source of evil. Is it possible to confute a dissenting opinion? No. Otherwise, the moral basis of enmity will disappear. Therefore, the opponents put the block, the information barrier between themselves, in order not to hear, not to listen to each other. The parties conducting a war should not be in doubt. Otherwise, the motive of war, the justification of the victims, will be weakened.

Only the post-truth policy, despite its seemingly immoral character will help establish a compromise and stop the war.

Proceeding from the considered facts, a journalist can be recommended to practice the post-truth policy if he/she wants peace, not war.

The «truth» concept as an ethical norm corresponds to the «verity» concept, as an epistemological, philosophical category. Both concepts mean knowledge corresponding reality. But if the truth can be disregarded, can be not searched for the good of the cause, can the verity be neglected? Is it possible for a scientist consciously avoiding the understanding of verity? It turns out that in some sciences this can and should be done. Classical sociology avoids value judgments. A sociologist, as a scholar, tries to avoid taking any side when studying social and political conflicts.

The theorem of the classic of the sociological thought William Thomas says: «If a person determines the situation as real, it is real in its consequences.» For this direction of sociological thought, the main thing is not the search for truth, but the identification of the definitions of the situation, which allows explaining of social action. It follows that in order to anticipate a person's behavior, one must know how he/she determines the situation, that is, how the person understands the ongoing events in his/her system of values and concepts. If we want to get along with the enemy, we must take the enemy's definition of the situation into account, that is, enemy's understanding of the essence of the conflict. But here we face an insuperable obstacle of a moral nature. Understanding the situation directly depends on the nature of the identity. In fact, a war is the desire either to impose own identity, or to destroy representatives of a hostile identity. A sociologist, as a citizen of his/her country, cannot neglect his/her civil identity. Therefore, the definition of the situation by the enemy, no matter how moral it looks, is viewed as a manifestation of a false consciousness. The post-truth forms a false consciousness that induces the society to inadequate social action. Thus, the statements of the enemies are not ignored, as in the politics of post-truth, but are studied as phenomena of false consciousness.

By false consciousness, we mean a distorted, inadequate reflection and interpretation of social reality.

False consciousness induces an action that runs counter to an objectively necessary and proper action. False consciousness contributes to the destruction of order, the violation of the system integrity and ultimately can lead to tragic consequences.

The falsity of consciousness is a relative quality. For the bearers of this consciousness, on the contrary, it is the only correct, truthful and valid. Therefore, it is easier to neutralize, isolate the bearers of false consciousness, than to correct it and bring it in line with objective reality.

We can define several criteria for an adequate, not false consciousness.

One criterion is esoteric and exotic, it is irrational, but can be no less convincing than rational arguments. This criterion, based on insight, revelation, «the voice of God.» This is the verity that opens in meditation, in deep prayer, in mystical ecstasy.

Such a verity can be convincing for the bearer of such insight and the narrow circle of the followers. The religious philosopher N. Berdyaev pointed to the possibility of such a criterion distinguishing a false consciousness from not false one.

Another criterion is based on the nature of identification. Consciousness is considered true if its bearers belong to the same solidary society. The pro-Russian fighters of the Donbas will regard as true the claims that are proclaimed by the leaders of public opinion in this region. People who firmly identify themselves with Ukraine will consider the claims of the pro-Russian fighters of the Donbas and people in solidarity with them, false.

The solidarity society can be territorial, ideological, political, ethnic, etc. It can have signs of a cluster, that is, it can combine territorial, political, ideological and ethnic criteria.

The third criterion of not false consciousness is outside the system, which is the bearer of such consciousness. This is some kind of external community standing outside and over the opposing arguments of false and not false consciousness, and this is an expert community whose judgments are shared by the conditional majority dominating in this civilization. For example, in the situation of war in the Donbas, in a dispute that relates to a false consciousness: the claims of Ukrainians or representatives of the occupied territories, the arbitrators are Europeans. Ukrainians appeal to the fact that the European community stands on the side of the Ukrainian version of the definition of situation in the Donbas. This is the reason that Russians ignore European assessments, believing that these assessments are imposed by their enemy, that is the Americans. And although this enemy is phantom, Russians need it to justify their rightness. This is an excuse for being deaf to the arguments of a third party not included in the conflict.

The next criterion is social, which is justified within the sociology of knowledge. The essence of such a criterion is revealed in the formula: knowledge, which is recognized by the authority as correct, is considered true. That is, in this case, the criterion of truth is not the compliance of knowledge with reality, but the support of this knowledge by authority, by the power dominating in this community and possessing the government resources which allow the recognition of this variant of knowledge as generally accepted, corresponding with common sense, unquestionable one.

Another criterion is historical. It proceeds from the premise that time will judge us. Although history can be written from different points of view, the historical argument can still be valid. The weakness of such an argument is that it takes too much time to judge which consciousness was false and which was not false. It is significant that the centenary of the Bolshevik coup was not officially celebrated at all, only a small group of Communists tried to represent the fanfare of this event. In this case, history showed that the Bolshevik consciousness was false.

Too remote historical perspective deprives the verity of emotional content, and people will no longer care which knowledge was not false, and which was false. Historical verity weakly induces action (if only this verity is not actualized and not bound to the interests of contemporaries). Historical memory can revive the shadows of the past and induce contemporaries to action. Such a phenomenon can be noted in the conflict between Poland and Ukraine around the events in Volhynia, which took place more than 70 years ago.

Another argument that separates a false and not false consciousness is practice. If an action stimulated by this type of consciousness is more effective, leads to better results, then most likely this type of consciousness is not false. Thus, the market-based consciousness proved to be more effective than the communist one.

The division of consciousness into false and not false is not only relative, but too categorical. There may be a situation where a false consciousness is objective in some part, but on the contrary, not false consciousness can have elements of delusions. That is, semitones are possible in the identification of knowledge as false or not false.

The post-truth concept is aimed at resolving the contradiction of false and not false consciousness. It suggests not to focus on the qualification of knowledge as false or not false. As if it does not matter. «The determining feature of the post-truth policy is that the campaigners continue to repeat their theses, even if they got a retraction in the media or by independent experts» [of post-truth].

Post-truth is a message, not necessarily aimed at misinforming. This is a message the truthfulness of which does not matter. Post-truth can be true and untrue, it does not matter. The aim of the message is to provoke the needed public mood. Post-truth has a deep latent component that hides the mechanism and causes of the event, as well as the reasons for the broadcasting of this message and the desire to give it the status of truth. Post-truth is a simulacrum of truth, a phenomenon that has no essence. The post-truth phenomenon is an element and way of information struggle.

IV. Conclusions

The information war that Russia unleashed against Ukraine requires from the Ukrainian journalists the ability to recognize the ways and methods of conducting such a war. One of such methods is the broadcasting of fake news and supposedly widespread statements that do not really have support, a distorted interpretation of real events and many other tools of post-truth and creations of false consciousness.

Knowing the methods of information war does not mean applying them by Ukrainian journalism. Not a post-truth, but the truth, not deception, but an adequate interpretation of events should be an effective information weapon of Ukrainian journalism. Infecting of Ukrainian media with fake news and statements based on false consciousness is dangerous by its impact on the mentality of the nation and is a way of not only informational, but also a mental war.

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Катаев С. Л. Феномены постправды и ложного сознания в контексте деятельности журналиста

В статье рассматривается сущность феномена постправды и ложного сознания. Утверждается, что постправда является элементом и способом информационной борьбы. Постправда – это сообщение, правдивость которого не имеет значения. Цель сообщения – вызвать нужное общественное настроение. Постправда имеет глубокую латентную составляющую, которая скрывает механизм и причины события, а также причины распространения данного сообщения и стремления придать ему статус правды. Постправда формирует ложное сознание, которое побуждает сообщество к неадекватному социальному действию. Украинская журналистика не должна дать спровоцировать себя на вовлечение в информационную войну аморальными способами.

Ключевые слова: постправда, ложное сознание, журналистика, информационная война, политика постправды.

Катаев С. Л. Феномени постправди та помилкової свідомості в контексті діяльності журналіста

У статті розглянуто сутність феномену постправди та помилкової свідомості. Стверджується, що постправда є елементом і способом інформаційної боротьби. Постправда – це повідомлення, правдивість якого не має значення. Мета повідомлення – викликати потрібний суспільний настрій. Постправда має глибоку латентну складову, яка приховує механізм і причини події, а також причини поширення цього повідомлення й прагнення надати йому статусу правди. Постправда формує помилкову свідомість, яка спонукає спільноту до неадекватної суспільної дії. Українська журналістика не повинна дати спровокувати себе на залучення в інформаційну війну аморальними способами.

Ключові слова: постправда, помилкова свідомість, журналістика, інформаційна війна, політика постправди.