

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF ACCEPTING THE POST-TRUTH THEORY OF TRUTH

Ideas have consequences, so the post-truth theory of Truth has them as well. If we take seriously the definition of truth as the correspondence of a statement to the person's already existing opinions verified by her emotions, consequences for our individual and social life will follow. The first is that any dialogue, will turn into persuasion. What is debated is various views of what *is* true, for any person can *establish* the truth value of a given statement based on her emotional response to it. So, what clashes in a debate are various *truths* rather than various *views considered as true* by the debating parties respectively. If there is no independent reality that functions as an "external arbiter" for all involved, the only way to solve the debate is to persuade one of the parties to change their relevant emotions. "Argumentation" in a debate would then consist in provoking in one's interlocutor an emotion that agrees with one's emotional reaction to a given statement (or recommendation). In this way, reason and logic disappear from communication. In the post-truth world, what was hitherto seen as manipulation—such as using persuasive definitions or eristic tricks—is elevated to the level of good reasons. Also lying becomes something different. It will consist in causing—by whatever way that works—in the recipient of a message an emotion which is opposite to that experienced by the one who communicates the message.

In the post-truth theory of truth, truth retains its binding power but changes its form. When Truth is defined as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, its binding power is expressed by means of the norm: Whatever I have recognized as true, I must not deny.¹⁸ According to Styczeń and other representatives of the Lublin school of philosophy, for instance Karol Wojtyła and Stanisław Kamiński, the norm in question expresses genuine human experience: I grasp a certain fact, express my recognition with a statement, and grasp myself as the author of this statement. I adjust my intellect to reality that is independent

¹⁸ See Tadeusz Styczeń, "Etyka jako antropologia normatywna," in: Tadeusz Styczeń, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 4, *Wolność w prawdzie*, ed. Kazimierz Krajewski (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL and Instytut Jana Pawła II KUL, 2013), 313–49.

of my intellect, will, and emotions, and this is an act of *my* recognition. I must not deny it because I would then cause an ontic fracture in myself, for instance, as a cognitive subject, I recognize that the cat in front of me is black, and as a subject endowed with volition, I deny this fact.¹⁹ I may wish the cat was of a different color, I may expect the cat would be of a different color, or I may imagine the cat is of a different color—but the cat is as it is. I *recognize* the color of the cat when I adjust my intellect to its blackness. Moreover, Truth retains its binding power even if I am mistaken. For to reject my own claim about the cat's color, I need reasons stemming from reality. For example, someone changes the light, and the cat turns out to be dark brown; or a doctor informs me that my eyes do not work properly when it comes to seeing colors. Only then do I have a rational answer to the question why I have changed my mind about the color of the cat. Yet, as a being endowed with freedom, I *can* reject my own statement and behave contrary to what I accepted earlier. Once emotions are chosen as the criterion of the truth value of a statement, their binding power becomes absolute. For I cannot reject the truth I have established, unless I change my emotion. If I like the claim “this cat is black,” I am bound by my liking. I cannot ask myself, with regard to that claim: Is this a correct emotion? For assuming the correctness or incorrectness of emotions with regard to a certain claim would presuppose that there is an independent indicator of the correctness of a given emotion. However, we cannot provide such an indicator, once dispose of reality as the truthmaker. We may of course change our emotional attitude towards a claim under the influence of others. Thus, accepting the post-theory of truth does not liberate us from the influence of others. On the contrary, since there is no external arbiter to which we can appeal when claiming “I am right,” we are more prone to yield to power, be it that of money, military force or political prominence. This at least partially explains why the phenomena of filter bubbles and echo chambers work so effectively, causing social and political polarization.