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Beyond Truth and Falsehood

Science and art, two areas that started being separated deliberately and consistently on the threshold of modernism, were brought closer together again in postmodernism – thanks to the humanities and social sciences. However, this growing closeness was not a simple reversal of the situation in which the split had occurred; the rules were different, the cause was different, and the objective was different. The perception of science and the arts as areas of different kinds of cultural practice appeared prominently in the thinking of Descartes, whose argument in *Discourse on Method* sought to empower science, to turn it into a separate area of human activity and to indicate the rules according to which scientific, i.e. cognitive, thinking can be distinguished from artistic, i.e. creative, thinking (Descartes, 1980). The negation of the Cartesian paradigm, in turn, coincided with a trend in linguistics that began strongly highlighting the fact that proposals publicizing the results of someone's deliberation on epistemological procedures can appear in the social sphere, but only if they are verbalized first. This observation, however, did not translate directly into artistic practice at the time. On the contrary, on the eve of the 20th century stronger emphasis was put on the idea that knowledge about the world which is transferred through a work of art originates from the pre-discursive, symbolic and archetypal realm referring to a universal pre-experience, and therefore might be verified intuitively, either individually or collectively (the issue of a work of art's acceptance

and popularity requires separate consideration that would include not just the psychological aspect but also, for example, the achievements of contemporary memetics). So, 20th-century disputes on the value of discursive and non-discursive learning turned their attention to language, as an integral part of human culture on one hand, and an independent medium governed by autonomous norms and rules on the other. Highlighting the fact that in language, you can only speak responsibly about linguistic reality, shifted the debate on the nature of truth and falsehood strongly toward logic, leaving unresolved issues of sensing, feeling, and the sufficiency of individual experience. Although those who spoke up for the value of the individual and subjective during this time included Georg Simmel, his proposals initially did not win the approval of academic circles and started being appreciated a little later (Simmel, 2007). The problem of the cognitive value of what is subjective and individual remained an intriguing mystery. In the late 19th century (1894) Wilhelm Windelband tried to systematize the status of procedures used for describing individual events from the past or analyzing original products (of literature, visual arts, music, intellect). He proposed a division into idiographic sciences, i.e. those reporting on the unique, and nomothetic sciences, i.e. those determining laws (Windelband, 1992). His follower Heinrich Rickert decided it would be more appropriate to distinguish between cultural (idiographic) and natural (nomothetic) sciences (Rickert, 1921). Windelband favored the idea of truth as an absolute value, independent of any pragmatic circumstances (Windelband, 2008). Rickert's stance was similar, as he gave truth the status of a value – the main object of scientific cognition. Simmel's proposals, especially his concept of "subjective culture," went beyond those distinctions and were not verifiable. Neither were they possible to falsify, i.e. undergo procedures popularized by Karl Popper (2019) for the purpose of checking "bold hypotheses" without which science could not develop. Today we can already see limitations in the paradigm of Popper's falsificationism, especially when we try to apply it to the humanities and social sciences. For example, in academic psychology there are two methodological "camps" – **quantitative**, relying as much as possible on experiments, statistical analyses and conclusions about hypotheses, and **qualitative**, aiming to learn about the subjective perspective of the individual being studied.

A subjective "sense of truth," although based on acknowledging truth's objective value, hands the power of judgment to the acting subject. However, some doubt still remains as to the possibility of properly exercising that power in a situation when the judgments themselves are expressed in language. Of course the material of language allows true and false sentences – in the logical sense – to be uttered, but it does not fulfill the requirement of absolutely true statements about the non-linguistic reality. This dilemma was already noticed earlier, and led to the validation of various approximation procedures, among which granting special status to metaphors came to the forefront. At the end of the 18th century this was a new idea, but with time, metaphorical language made its way into science and gradually became an independent medium, with a life of its own, generating its own problems. Among the most important consequences of uncovering the connection between science and the choice of linguistic procedures for the transfer of research results in both the humanities and the natural sciences, we should mention the "narratological turn" that allowed practically any scientific statement to be considered in terms of a linguistic statement, in terms of a kind of "story" about a specific case or set of cases; this could be a monophonic story or one being part of a polyphony. Thus, we can approach the scientific statements of a given time in the same way Mikhail Bakhtin (1970) approached the novels of Dostoyevsky. These novels do not represent a single, overriding vision of the author, but are the result of dialogues between independent individuals and their points of view or ideologies. Therefore, we can say after Bakhtin that truth is not born in one person's mind but comes into being between people seeking it together; it is born in a process of dialogue that inevitably is entangled in linguistic conventions.

Thus, today we can recognize that fields situated on the boundary between science and the arts include, for example, psychology's Dialogical Self Theory, which posits that human personality is composed of a number of internal voices representing different social roles, aspects or traits of a person. These voices are constantly in dialogue with one another, trying to reduce tensions and resolve contradictions, make decisions and lend meanings. Underlining the subjective nature of experience, Dialogical Self Theory says that human personality is unavoidably shaped by cultural and civilizational conditions, which today

are also shifting away from objective, timeless facts and values toward more individualized "truths."[1]

The question of truth and falsehood in science and art has thus assumed a new dimension in our times: For some in our community, the classic understanding of truth, positivist in spirit, is still the main reference point in judging phenomena and processes; for others, a guarantee of scientific character, also in scientific analyses of art, lies in concentrating our research attention on the interpretation of narrative procedures. This means one relevant question is that of **what *truth* is in relation to the human individual**. Invoking Dilthey's distinction (Dilthey, 1982, 2005), we would need to resolve whether sufficiently *explaining* human anatomy, physiology and neurobiology will bring the same effect as *understanding* a person's individual experience.

The collection of analyses and interpretations presented in this volume seems to testify to an ongoing intensive search for an answer on how the problem of truth and falsehood in science and the arts should be investigated today. The individual proposals are mostly "case studies," pointing to the opposition from the title or one of its elements in the context of specific phenomena and events. However, some of the authors offer more synthetic summaries of progressively growing knowledge on the significance of nuances in distinguishing between what is true, probable, real, natural, authentic, reliable or clear, and what is untrue, false, fake, pretend, inauthentic, stylized, ironic, illusory, deceitful, erroneous, mistaken, incorrect, unreliable or wrong. The richness of synonyms in language does not so much make it easier to support relativism in relation to Truth as it indicates that social experience and the truth of language demands that we exercise great caution when expressing absolute value judgments. Today those positivist hopes for the discovery of objective facts have

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[1] The concept of **possible worlds** is quite a good illustration of individualized truths. Umberto Eco in *Lector in fabula* (1994, p. 190) writes that the characters within a narrated world assume propositional attitudes. For example, Little Red Riding Hood thinks the character in the bed is her grandmother (whereas, for the reader's benefit, the plot has negated the girl's belief). What the girl believes is her own b e l i e f structure, but it also remains one of the states of the *fabula*. In this way, the *fabula* proposes two states of affairs: one in which it is the wolf lying in the bed, and another in which the bed's occupant is the grandmother. We know straight away (but the girl is not aware of it until the end of the story) that one of these states is presented as being true and the other as untrue.

largely died down. Instead, the relativity of knowledge is being underlined more and more often. The replies we obtain depend to a large extent on the questions asked, and the act of observation inevitably turns the observer into an element of the whole system.

Presenting the specific proposals of our authors, we need to warn readers that this is a special collection: It is the outcome of a conference organized for the conclusion of the 10-year Inter-University Program of Interdisciplinary PhD Studies at the »Artes Liberales« Academy. It was attended by the academic teachers, who have supervised some excellent doctoral dissertations, and the program's students themselves, most of whom now hold doctoral and postdoctoral degrees. The program was headed by Professor Barbara Bokus, and it was also she who proposed a few years ago that "Master Seminars" be added to the program. The seminar for the program's jubilee, and for its closing in the present format, was chaired by Professor Jerzy Axer and preceded the conference, an outline of whose subject matter will follow.

Jerzy Axer gave his talk in the form of a biographical story. This enabled him to give an accessible presentation of complicated problems connected with the development of scientific rules of editing Classical texts. The liminal experience of confronting the rigid foundations of positivist methodology with new reception theories and narratological concepts led the Professor to pose the fundamental question of the scientific credibility and veracity of the products of interpretation as it starts moving dangerously close to the border of falsity. Axer's erudite argumentation is rounded off with the following conclusion: "*Ars critica* consists of scientific activity, artistic work and an exercise in forgery of old masters, all rolled into one. Perhaps that is what makes it so fascinating and allows it to bring so many triumphs and disappointments, depending on the temperament, character and mood of whoever is practicing it."

Contemporary *ars critica* is sometimes helpless, however, when faced with the need to authenticate a miraculously discovered document from the past. This is the case recounted by **Przemysław Piwowarczyk**, whose attention was drawn to a media storm, almost self-inflicted by the Harvard Divinity School, on the threshold of the 21st century. Karen King, a member of the staff, was offered a manuscript that she called the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*. The author recounts the problems with confirming the find's

authenticity almost as a crime story. However, the scientific value of his thoughts on the veracity of newly discovered artifacts, and on the capabilities of modern-day scientific methods of verifying unexpected finds, is of unquestionable importance.

The focus of **Karol Wilczyński's** interest is the output of Al-Ġazālī, an Arab thinker from the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries, an opponent of falsafa, a philosophy that first became popular more than a century before he was born and lasted almost four hundred years. Al-Ġazālī saw falsafa as a dangerous movement, potentially breaking with Islam, abandoning religious practices, trusting in reason and, as a result, erring to an extent making it impossible to find truth and salvation. "Pride connected with wrongful practice and knowledge unaware of its own limitations ultimately leads to unbelief," and "the philosophers' undoing is their pride and their belief that science alone can be enough for their salvation and happiness." Excessive trust in the power of the mind leads people astray and away from all that is important and true. Presenting his own interpretation of selected views of Al-Ġazālī, the author draws our attention to the renaissance of interest in his ideas currently observed in Arab countries.

On the example of the theory of poetic art of Maciej Sarbiewski (1595–1640), a Polish Jesuit, **Maria Łukaszewicz-Chantry** considers the gap between assumed proof of truth when a fact is documented by a record, and poetry which expresses truth indirectly, employs metaphors and allegories, often constructs nonexistent beings, to use them as examples pointing to the existence of phenomena and regularities that go unnoticed in the process of direct perception.

Izabella Zatorska traces the relations between illusion and truth in theater from the Baroque to the Romantic period, setting out to show how Baroque and Rococo theater influenced the behavior of the elites and to what extent those elites were aware of the social consequences of intentional theatralization of life. Those consequences were definitely noticed by some writers, who proposed a secondary theatralization of the scene: "turning the game of illusion into the subject; this is a method allowing the truth to be sought – over and above the immediacy of the masquerade." This kind of transformation, effected in the time of neoclassicism and then Romanticism, did not eradicate the theatralization of life as such, but fundamentally changed its forms and scope. What remained, however, was the problem – important

in both life and theater – of lying as intentional misleading and speaking untruths, and illusion creating appearances thanks to which truth could be revealed.

Wojciech Sajkowski draws our attention to 18th- and 19th-century French-language descriptions of the Morlachs. The authors of the accounts he has chosen quite unanimously judged that "the Southern Slavs who inhabit provincial Dalmatia are simple, naturally good and sincere." The author links the convention of these narratives with a peculiar valorization of truth. This emerged in the 17th century as a result of contacts between educated, or at least literate, residents of Western Europe with "uncivilized" peoples. Among those considered uncivilized were Slavic shepherds, whose "confidence, devotion and sincerity are linked to an inability to understand abstractions and sophisticated truths of the civilized world." The opposition of civilized versus uncivilized, disseminated by Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, found confirmation in the observations of travelers of the time. The writers who penned the accounts under consideration, theoretically respecting the idea of natural law, noted that in the world of civilization "yes" does not always mean "yes" and "no" does not always mean "no." In contact with that world, "people of nature" acting artlessly fall victim to their own naivety. Thus, the Slavs' honesty becomes a sign of their uncivilized character.

Adam Grzeliński points out that "classical philosophical aesthetics … developed several solutions to the problem of justifying the validity of aesthetic judgments." The main authors of such solutions in British aesthetics were Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, Edmund Burke, and David Hume. Their achievements were synthesized in Immanuel Kant's concept of reducing the phenomenon of beauty to its simplest form and according aesthetic judgements the value of universality and validity. Grzeliński focuses on presenting the views of George Santayana (1863–1952), who offered a critique of 18th-century philosophers' efforts to establish conditions for the validity of judgements of taste; in this, he sets out to show that these seemingly polemical stances can be reconciled to some extent.

Anna Żymełka-Pietrzak highlights the significance of ideas put forward by Johann Georg Hamann, who was one of the first to negate systematic philosophy and saw the very notion of a system as "a hindrance to truth." That is why this thinker from Königsberg gave up the precise language typical of rational

discourse in favor of metaphorical disquisition introducing people to the essence of things in a way making it more easily comprehensible. The actual process of getting to the truth hidden amidst a tangle of symbols and metaphors was to be illustrated by Lichtwer's story of the many dresses of the woman-fable attacked by robbers. Stripped of her clothing, the naked fable, like the naked truth, is something "no one can bear to look at." But in Hamann's interpretation, the secret of truth is that it is bodiless, and thus removing successive layers of clothing can be a fascinating road to learning, but arriving at the goal thwarts the purpose, for there is only one Truth, and it is connected to divine reality inaccessible to humans. This nature of truth means we can only speak of it indirectly, through metaphorical language that has a necessary presence in philosophy.

In her paper "Worthless yet priceless: The truths and economics of poetry" **Marta Baron-Milian** discusses the truth of a poetic text not so much in opposition to falsehood, but rather in the context of knowledge to be extracted indirectly. The semantic potential of a poetic message and its unobvious character as a source of new meanings was not an evident value on the threshold of modernity. Contrary to Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who demanded the right to view the world through imagination (and not just scientific knowledge), Jeremy Bentham, for example, thought that "all poetry is misrepresentation," that it is not true to reality and is not useful. Tracing the discourse surrounding the worth of what is not useful and the truth of what is impossible to verify using scientific tools, the author succeeds in convincing her readers that there are multiple dimensions involved in the useful, and there is enormous cognitive value in the ambiguous.

The concept of reflection has played an important role in the quest for truth, whether in science or in the arts. **Paweł Tomczok** is interested in cognition and experience, which respectively belong to the realms of learning and aesthetics, in relation to the metaphor of mirroring, and also in "different forms of mirroring – above all in art and philosophy." He points to the fact that the metaphor of mirroring "quickly got ensnared in linguistic representation – it was words and sentences, notions and judgments that were meant to reflect reality," and then mirrors themselves became "historical mediators that take part in a complicated network made up of people and things." Therefore, they can be seen as nodes in a network "combining theory and practice,

science and aesthetics, technology and speculation." Highlighting the paradigmatic potential of mirroring, the author does not lose sight of the metaphor of words reflecting reality and the problem of truth this leads to.

In his paper on truth and probability in studies on religious thought, **Michał Rogalski** considers the logical consequences of a historian of philosophy assuming the position of a disengaged, objective, unbiased researcher. Such a tradition, originating from 19th-century German thought, reveals its inadequacy as soon as controversial issues come into play, when describing them requires showing "their mutual relationships and the argumentation networks forming as a result of their coexistence." It is hard to stay impartial when you have to judge the cohesion of someone else's argumentation involved in a dispute and being modified as the dispute progresses. Rogalski considers this theoretical problem on the example of the debate on Catholic modernism that took place in the last decade of the 19th century and in the early 20th century. "However, when this kind of description is used, questions inevitably need to be asked about the truth or probability of hypotheses, arguments, or entire argumentation strategies. Neither the category of truth nor the category of probability can be eliminated when using value judgments." Therefore, the author wonders how we are "to work with" these categories.

Juxtaposing "Hannah Arendt's Marranic evasions and the truth of her cryptotheology," **Rafał Zawisza** successfully points us to such an interpretation of the Gospel by Arendt, as an expert on the writings of Augustine of Hippo, that would allow for the simultaneous use of the hermeneutic tradition of Jews and Christians for explaining at least some of the mysteries of human existence. Thus, he accents the importance of natality as a counterbalance to mortality, and also the beginning of any human action, as well as extracting the idea that "labor, work, and action are 'intimately connected' with birth and death." Natality, Zawisza tells us, lies at the foundation of "the cryptotheology of singularity." This cryptotheology enabled Arendt to offer her distinctive reinterpretation of the message on the birth of Jesus. By highlighting Arendt's peculiar flirtation with two theological traditions in her oeuvre, the paper's author reveals a new dimension of truth hidden beneath that which is seemingly "sloppy" and imprecise.

Piotr Kałowski considers the problem from the volume's title in the context of the achievements of contemporary psychology.

First confirming the importance of psychotherapy, the author also points out that the reasons it is effective are not fully clear. Hence, he investigates how the notions of truth and falsehood apply to a situation when we know how a sequence of causes and effects proceeds, but we do not know why. With the help of methodological tools developed by narrative medicine, he indicates the importance of changes that occur during therapy in an area defined by a patient's narrative that is the result of reconciling many internal dialogues. The previously undisputed credibility of such a narrative can sometimes be traumatic, and its reorganization under the guidance of the right therapist, i.e. one who guarantees a safe relationship, can bring positive effects. This method, inspired by postmodernist ideas, could – according to the author – effectively support the much more popular cognitive behavioral therapy which, however, was developed in different historical circumstances.

Anna Milanowicz offers some thoughts on the relationship between truth and untruth in irony. From a psycholinguistic viewpoint, the author characterizes the intention behind ironic messages, seeing irony as the result of a certain type of social experience. The essay invokes the Socratic tradition related to cognition and the source of "storytelling" (building stories and relationships with the audience) in dramatic irony. The theory of Negation of Expectations in Irony (NEI) is proposed. The relationship between "ironic" untruth and lies is outlined. Finally, the ambiguity of "ironic" meanings is described from the perspective of gender binary stereotypes.

Adrianna Smurzyńska discusses a problem familiar to cognitivists, namely mentalization, or attributing mental states to others. The source of this competence has yet to be fully explained. The author focuses on simulation theory, which assumes that you can get to know others by simulating their mental states. This process can take place automatically and unthinkingly (intuitively), or "on a reflexive level" when one tries to put oneself in another's shoes. In this theory, "our own mind is treated as a tool which enables us to take another person's perspective." Identifying the mental states of others is only possible, however, when the person doing this does not have any mental disorders, since the "abilities to differentiate perspectives and separate one's own and others' mental states seem to be necessary conditions for adequate mentalization. The capability to simulate others' mental