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"Post-truth" – Challenging Academia to Re-think Truth?

Introduction

Is there any truth in "post-truth" phenomena – and if yes, what would this mean? Should we take "post-factual" as a fact – and if the answer were no, what would be the consequences in talking about all this? What, in a certain contrast, is being indicated by a recently published Ukrainian book entitled "Persecuted for the Truth"[1] – and what does this mean in regard to "post-truth" in the Western European context?

Doubting the real gravity of the topic, I'd like to refer explicitly to reflections by Peter McCormick, as presented in the article he contributed to this volume, by which he shares his observation that "talk of post-truth" generally turns out to be "mostly confusing, too complicated, and seriously misleading"[2], and in which he

particularly mentions "the intuition that the very idea of truth is … a profoundly personal matter"[3], and therefore concludes: "After all is said and done, there is no post-truth".[4] I do not intend to repeat his profound reflection, but I basically agree with it. However, I suggest taking "post-truth" and "post-factual" itself as a fact in its phenomenological sense (albeit rather a unclear one) – since there can be no serious doubt about phenomena concerning a kind of multifaceted, though still to be clarified sort of "post-truth"-reality. A keen view on today's public sphere cannot miss phenomena of transformation in dealing with reality and its "creative interpretation" or even construction. Such phenomena, which are commonly labelled "post-truth", can be noticed as having a global nature in the public space and especially in the area of politics. Though the terms involved – in particular, truth, reality, objectivity, hard/alternative facts – deserve special reflection, "post-truth" is characterized as rather distant from what is called "objective facts", which therefore are significantly "less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief".[5]

At this point it is already evident that it is about no less than "understanding", describing, and defining of facts and reality, and critically re-discovering "truth". This becomes even more obvious in regard to discerning the concept and content of what is called "factual knowledge", or "belief in facts", and also "trust in emotions", or "personal belief". Academia feels challenged here for good reason, and claims to have to play a role of its own in this

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[1]   *Persecuted for the Truth. Ukrainian Greek-Catholics behind the Iron Curtain* Andrew Sorokowski, Roman Skakun, ed., (Lviv: Ukrainian Catholic University Press, 2017).

[2]   See in this anthology: Peter McCormick, "One Big Thing: Responding Ethically in a Post-Truth World".

[3]   Ibid.

[4]   Ibid.

[5]   Cf. Oxford Dictionary: *Definition of post-truth* - https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth ; see also: Renate Köcher, "Interessen schlagen Fakten" (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No 45, 22 February, 2017, http://www.ifd-allensbach.de/uploads/tx_reportsndocs/FAZ_Februar2017_Fakten.pdf.

particular debate, especially by focusing on "truth in post-truth" as an academic core issue. This the more, since beyond more general "post-truth" phenomena academic work is also faced with questions about its seriousness and objectivity[6]. Dealing with this challenge would involve two questions, amongst others: (a) Is there any truth in post-truth – and if yes, in which way and how would we have to elaborate an appropriate interpretation? (b) More radically, if "post-truth" indicates in a way the beginning of the end of truth – how far and in which way would this shape the idea and reality of future "academia"?

This essay will not address all implications of these questions, it rather intends to explore some challenges to "academia" that are bound to "post-truth" phenomena, and that will clearly underline talking about "post-truth" being "complicated". The relation to "academia" is just one dimension in view of "post-truth", but it is an inherent one, as will be shown in the further course of this text.

1. Diversity and complexity

Instead of just using the term "post-truth"-era it may be more appropriate to speak about *"post-truth"-attitude* to life – with *producers and users* of this attitude, even though both groups may overlap to some extent and are not hard to distinguish in motivation and intention. According to statements of representatives of post-truth oriented political groups, as well as according to analyses from

surveys a significant group of "post-truth"-users feels extremely burdened by diversity and corresponding complexity of life[7]. Part of our contemporaries perceive the experience of being exposed to a somehow obscure "world of facts" and a continuously growing flood of facts as rather confusing and hardly manageable, up to the point that they become tired of dealing with it and would rather give up trying to cope with it. In other words: what some would praise as way to new horizons with great, exciting potentiality and even global opportunities is apparently perceived by others as a source of fear, disorientation, excessive demand etc.; and this is not limited to particular social groups. Accordingly, increasing awareness of diversity and complexity as a kind of burden is at least often cited by the followers of protagonists of political action aligned with post-truth[8].

This kind of diversity and complexity concerns a wide variety of fields within the present living environment (at least in so-called "modern" societies) – for instance social conditions, political processes, cultural and religious heterogeneities, even coping individually and socially with everyday life. And all this seems to still be increasing through digitalisation, the rather fast pace of society, the economic and social effects of global developments and of political conflicts etc., so that in general "public politics"

[6] See e.g.: Jan Petter Myklebust, "Half of the public does not trust research – Survey", *University World News. The Global Window on Higher Education*, 30 September, 2017, http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20170930043900131; also: Manuel J. Hartung, Andreas Sentker, "Raus, raus, raus! Die Wissenschaft steckt in einer Vertrauenskrise. Sie muss sich der Gesellschaft öffnen – viel radikaler als bisher gedacht", *DIE ZEIT* Nr. 16/2017, http://www.zeit.de/2017/16?.

[7] See: Knut Bergmann, Dominik Enste, Hans-Peter Klös, "Postfaktisches Zeitalter? Gründe für ein verändertes Wahlverhalten" https://www.iwkoeln.de/studien/iw-kurzberichte/beitrag/knut-bergmann-dominik-enste-hans-peter-kloes-postfaktisches-zeitalter-gruende-fuer-ein-veraendertes-wahlverhalten-323576

[8] See e.g.: Bernd Murawski, "Über den Erfolg des rechten Populismus", https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Ueber-den-Erfolg-des-rechten-Populismus-3735555.html?seite=all; A. Perger, "Populismus, Identität und Gemeinschaft in Zeiten der Unsicherheit. Die kulturelle Herausforderung für die Soziale Demokratie", http://www.frankfurter-hefte.de/upload//2011-06_Perger_web.pdf

as well as "orientation in it" become "more complex"[9]. Some of this is in no way new; on the contrary, for quite some time there were already clear indications that increasing and concrete developments of all kinds of "multi" would be perceived by some parts in society as "too much" rather than being regarded as an asset – this primarily in terms of a tension between personal life and the "multi". – Globalizing societies repeatedly faced this phenomenon in the recent past. Evidence of this includes the public debate about phenomena like multi-national life conditions, multiculturalism, multi-ethnic and multi-religious contexts, even multimedia communication etc. which apparently goes hand in hand with a kind of general and vague feeling of overload, frustration and exclusion from participation. In quite a number of countries this takes concrete shape in debates, campaigns, and political and legal action, for instance in regard to refugees and migration, to so-called foreign infiltration, to national interests (e.g. Brexit, the "America first" slogan), to the upholding of a predominant culture ("Leitkultur"), to social and cultural (dis-)integration etc. Part of this has also been addressed in the academe, e.g. in research on "identity and multiculturalism", on "social diversity and heterogeneity", and on "social identities" etc.[10]; in this context reference may be made to some associated phenomena being discussed mainly in political science, for example "increasing dissociative

tendencies" in society, accompanied by changes in the party landscape in Western Europe from "catch-all-parties" to diversification[11], as well as the so-called "transformation of milieus and fragmentation of the political space"[12], and not least strong intentions of quantifying approaches for social comparison and foremost for social ranking[13].

In any case, complexity and diversity remain a major problem. In the wider background, one may feel reminded of the long-lasting and apparently ongoing effects of dichotomous or segmenting ways of thinking and of description of reality or even of "the one and the many", as widely discussed in the long history of occidental thought.[14] Even though rather abstract, such basic issues may become a challenge whenever they become in a way concretized within the self-conception of humans.

Put in negative terms, what is indicated by all this could be called a feeling of lack of unity, or of missing something like wholeness, or of being forced to search for entirety, even "entirety in diversity". What is being expressed in this regard – and what could be noticed even in public demonstrations and marches in Western Europe and the United States – occurs on a personal level as well as in social contexts. Therefore it seems to be

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[9] Andreas Wirsching, "Weimarer Verhältnisse?", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* No 217, 18.09.2017, 6 (translation: A. J. Buch).

[10] Cf. Alois Joh. Buch, "Universalism and Diversity. Reflecting on features of globalization – with reference to *Caritas in Veritate",* (Ukrainian Catholic University Press, 2016), 26-61 – According to theories about "social identities" it is quite enlightening to see the usage of so-called "categorising processes" for making social life easily understandable and better manageable; see: "Soziale Identität (B.S.)", *Lexikon der Psychologie,* "http://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/ psychologie/soziale-identitaet/14513

[11] See: Wolfgang Merkel, "Der Niedergang der Volksparteien", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No 246, 23 October, 2017: 6; the respective debate refers inter alia to reflections on "catch-all-parties" resp. "Volksparteien" as discussed by Otto Kirchheimer (ibid.).

[12] Cf. ibid.

[13] See: Steffen Mau, *Das metrische Wir. Über die Quantifizierung des Sozialen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017); the author stresses an "new cult of quantifying" (10) and so-called evidence-based "Big Data" "algorithmic authority" (203) which finally may lead to growing social segregation and inequality (10, 204 et seq., 208).

[14] Rather enlightening in this regard: Heinz Heimsoeth, *Die sechs großen Themen der abendländischen Metaphysik und der Ausgang des Mittelalters*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974), esp. 18-60.

of particular relevance, though for quite some time it has been underestimated both by parts of the media and of the political elite. Even if this desire for something like "entirety" cannot or can only in part be fulfilled, or if at worst it may turn out to be largely illusory or an impossible task in view of factual global diversity, the problem remains: what it would mean to cope with this impossibility as a person that is urgently and vitally claiming a kind of entirety in existential and practical terms. Although "entirety" is not a simple issue, as philosophers particularly know too well, it is worthwhile to take this problem in its basically human dimension seriously, not least from a socio-political and also from an ethical point of view. It should be noted that social scientists have pointed at some phenomena which underline the significance of all this, particularly in respect to what is called "erosion of socio-moral milieus" which is going together with a loss of "normative moral authority" of certain institutions in regard to "interpretation of world, society and of politics".[15]

To make things even less simple we may add: Here we are touching somehow the sophisticated philosophical debate about "leftovers of problems", as Nicolai Hartmann had put it – i.e. of unsolved problems which even may be insoluble, but which however remain rather crucial[16]. Though decisions concerning relevant fields

of politics and of social living together should not only be built on emotions and beliefs, we can at least find something positive in the above-mentioned "emotional dimension" of "post-truth": Even if not as such providing problem-solving approaches the kind of substitution of truth by emotions may at its best be perceived as an attempt to re-gain an approach to personal integration, reputedly serving at least to a limited extent to reduce the feeling of vagueness and fear in view of diverse complexity.

Consequently, enhancing in-depth insight in this, and fostering the respective public debate, could very likely help to better understand why, as formulated in respective definitions[17], in "post-truth" public opinion in an (only somehow) unreasonable way "emotion" or "personal belief" appear to have the upper hand over truth or facts – apparently for notable reasons. Thus, one can hardly deny some underlying issues of what is labelled "diversity and complexity", which are at least flagging one important problem for clarifying thought and speech about "post-truth". As part of the factual basis of "post-truth" phenomena it has to be noticed that quite a number of contemporaries struggle in trying to integrate complexity into their individual and social life – which in fact means trying to integrate a rather wide diversity of *interpretations and perceptions of "realities"*. Or, alternatively, they give up in doing so by eying so-called disburdening solutions, one of which is "post-truth" with an assumption of reduced complexity, or by eying recipes of (doctrinal) unambiguousness in the representation of reality, although this may not be less untruthful. That is why the moral dimension of daringly making use of this problem by "post-truth"-producers becomes even more obvious as well.

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[15] This was stressed, with special reference to Germany, by Wolfgang Merkel (see above): "… The individualization in society … and the erosion of socio-moral milieus lead to changing attitudes of citizens in regard to participation". (translation: A. J. Buch).

[16] Following Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), one of such most striking, leftovers of problems' (808) in the field of ethics relates to "human freedom" with regard to the tense relation between ethics and religion, in particular concerning the so-called "antinomy of providence"; the latter as "teleological, final determinism" in religion (814) has in Hartmann's view consequently to be understood as "strictly antithetical" (815) to the "demand for freedom" (ibid.) as phenomenologically being reflected in ethics.

[17] Cf. Oxford Dictionary: *Definition of post-truth*, see above.

2. Political simplification and academic specialisation

Assuming perception, experience and also "managing" of diversity and complexity despite its multifaceted connotations as based on some *fundamentum in re* we can say: Certain politicians react to such diversity and complexity by (over-)simplification, whereas the academe acts and reacts with specialisation. While the first seems to be a phenomenon of the present, the latter links back to the Western history of sciences, particularly to the emergent scientific and technological process from the early modern era on. Psychologists stress that complexity of perception of reality can indeed become quite a burden, both individually and socially, and that simplification can become a strategy to handle this. Also this specialist interpretive approach may be one more aspect contributing to understanding the kind of interaction of producing "over-simplifying" and therefore per se "post-truth" political campaigns on the one side, and of a kind of grateful "market" of appreciative recipients or users on the other.

From a moral point of view however, there is without any doubt a major difference between the two reactions: This in particular if simplification, which in part is fostered by digital media[18], becomes a strategic means and hence is purposely intended to serve political ideologies, or to create resentments, and thus presents itself in forms of demagogy and systematic populism – which, different from so-called "democratic populism"[19], in the case of over-

simplification means denying and hiding significant aspects of reality and therefore turns out as *per se* "post-truth" populism (with indeed "alternative facts" etc., which in ethical terms could also be called producing a tissue of lies). Specialisation in the academe, on the contrary, aims at deeper, more sophisticated insight into spheres of reality, including reflection about methodology of such insight, and, ideally speaking, intends to serve truth.

Both reactions towards diversity and complexity can be considered "successful". Political simplification apparently is shaping public opinion and attracts voters, those which I call users, to agree with it and to support respective political parties; academic specialisation leads to enormous development of knowledge, technologies, health service etc. Beyond success another similarity can be found which seems to be more important – namely, both ways of dealing with diversity and complexity are somehow failing to keep track of what some philosophers and also social scientists would carefully call the whole of reality, and of the meaning of individual life and of life in society. The scientific approach to reality, which is aware of its methodological and content-related specificities and of its principal incompleteness and limitations, in some way requires by its essence a selected view on the respective subject of research, which may be further focused by individual interest and ambition – something I would call an "aspective approach" to reality. Here is precisely one of the reasons for the success of scientific-technological processes and progress, however tied to a kind of temptation to identify the "aspective part" with reality and its perception as a whole[20].

[18] Cf. Andreas Wirsching, see above; he stresses that ideologigally filled "echo chambers ... permanently act by echoing abstruse fake news" (translation: A. J. Buch). Cf. also: Andreas Merkel, see above.

[19] See: Andreas Voßkuhle, "Demokratie und Populismus", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No 271, 23 November, 2017, 6 – who, by mentioning Chantal Mouffe, points at interpretations like domesticated populism, but argues that political populism is to be characterized as per se antidemocratic.

[20] See: Manuel J. Hartung, "18000 Fächer. Wer soll das alles studieren?", *Zeit Online* 30 August, 2017, http://www.zeit.de/2016/31/studiengaenge-faecher-angebot ; and see esp. Manuel J. Hartung, "Wer braucht Designpädagogen? Es gibt zu viele Studiengänge", *DIE ZEIT* Nr. 44/2017, http://www.zeit.de/2017/44/hochschule-studiengaenge; cf. also Ludger Honnefelder, "Dankesworte", *Jahres- und Tagungsbericht der Görres-Gesellschaft 2016*, (Bonn, 2016), 33-36, esp. 24.

Scientists, experts, and alert observers who are interested in human issues are perfectly aware of the issues regarding the "aspective" and "holistic". And so are, in particular, academics who are professionally involved in the areas of social sciences, humanities, and especially in philosophy and ethics. But there is still more in this "aspective" approach towards understanding of significant reality and towards the notion of truth does not remain an exclusive strategy of academia, instead it became in part popularized over time as an overall pattern of perception of reality and can therefore be seen as a characteristic of contemporary thought, of perception of reality and of self-perception. As such it seems at first glance to serve in reducing complexity. But at the same time it may create an impression of becoming confronted with an unconnected variety of "aspective" dimensions which can cause the kind of search for entirety and of respective desires as mentioned before. However, this sort of, often emotionally charged, simplifying "pop-culture" of thought and interpretation of individual and social reality may also serve to some extent as a suitable starting-point for the current production of *intentional "aspective" post-truth-populism*. Though this context should be noted as important in clarifying "post-truth" phenomena, we have again to underline a major difference: while certain political forces try to benefit deliberately from "populist simplification", a number of experts in the academe who are particularly sensitive to an overall view, try to engage in trans-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary dialogue; so, in regard to dealing with the "aspective" there is also a significant moral difference.

As an aside, however important, beyond this ethical difference another similarity should be noticed too: The just mentioned endeavour for trans- and cross-disciplinary dialogue aims at something comparable to the desire and task of those who in everyday life feel burdened by diversity and complexity, namely to cope with the diversity of "aspective" reality. This is not at all surprising, since as human beings all and everybody are in different ways challenged with intellectual and life-organizing "integration" of manifold and often diverse aspects of reality, be it predominantly by rational means or with a more emotional approach, though both as we know do not necessarily contradicting each other. Otherwise one would be left with a disintegrated diverse complexity, which is not at all simple or abstract. Inter alia philosophers, and also ethicists, are professionally familiar with this matter and also with its potential impact in concrete individual and social life, especially when they get involved in debates about human and ethical implications of findings or decisions in highly specialised areas e.g.: biotechnology, digital technologies, nanotechnology, environmental technology etc. Historians also, often supposed to be particularly trained in overall views, report on growing challenges in obtaining an overall picture in view of highly sophisticated sources and documents e.g. in contemporary history. Similar indications can be found in the area of social and political sciences with regard to quite multifaceted and complex factors of "modern" individual and social life as well as of political processes, in particular in their intercultural and global interconnection.

3. Challenging "post-truth": re-thinking truth

Reflection about truth in precisely a philosophical-critical way has of course to be aware of the interaction of "understanding" and "interpretation", or in epistemological and gnoseological regard of basically "interpreted truth". Thus, what has been said so far may remind one of the essential problem of "hermeneutics" and its long-lasting extensive discussion, which looks rather abstract but seems to gain some quite practical significance in view of the phenomena around "post-truth". Without going into detail about this discussion, which is always related to navigating between the Scylla of naïve

realism and the Charybdis of pure scepticism, it may be help-
ful to recall what ethicists have described as "personal certainty"[21].
The latter, being interconnected with sound reflection on "anthropo-
logical truth", "moral truth" and "insight into meaning"[22], concerns
precisely the challenge of figuring out the specific significance that
experience and perception of reality may have for one's personal life
and thus for one's convictions and guiding principles of living and
acting. This *personal dimension of truth* was probably in a way left out
for quite some time in academic debates, and, in part, of contem-
porary thought as well. This particularly applies to personal signifi-
cance of so-called fact-based or evidence-based information, if only
because it was unconsciously forgotten or hidden especially in some
parts of the scientific approach to and research of reality. We can
perhaps see a key element for proper analysis and better under-
standing of the lack of integration as has been mentioned in view
of the current political "popular culture" exactly in the personal and
at the same time social meaning of truth, "post-truth", and the cor-
responding search for an integral approach to "reality of life".

In this context it is not unimportant that "personal certainty"
contains both a gnoseological and an ethical notion as well, and
therefore may also be called "moral certainty". The way it has been
shaped in academic discussions, "personal certainty" could probably
somehow serve as a pattern for how to reflect upon and how to
approach the aforementioned challenge and task of integrating di-
verse complexity and its moral ingredients. This all the more, since
it aims at combining a kind of personal reflection, individual dedi-
cation and moral conviction on the one hand, with keeping open

the ongoing challenge of integration of realities and their elements
of truth on the other. In other words, post-truth reflection would
finally have to include the personal meaning and the relational di-
mension of insight into reality, and also the basic human aspiration
toward significant truth and knowing. All of this indicates that a lot
about truth and "post-truth" could be expected from intensified an-
thropological clarification, since it would concern a core element
both of truth-seeking and of truth realization[23]. Therefore, recon-
sidering anthropology in this context – including various perspec-
tives from philosophy, social sciences, and theology – would make
particular sense in view of the urgent and vital search of contem-
poraries for the kind of "entirety" as has been pointed out before[24].

The personal dimension of truth and its anthropological founda-
tions should be kept in mind when looking at the specifically inter-
esting effects and phenomena of "post-truth", namely at the exact
claim of academics and primarily of scientific institutions to safe-
guard and to be respected in its main mission and prime duties –
which means to work on and represent scientific, fact-based, and
rational views in post-factual times, and evidence-based insights
in regard to "post-truth" attitudes[25]. At its core, this would actually
involve the "academe" as such, at least insofar as academia consid-
ers itself to be dedicated to a sense of truth, which consequently
would imply feeling called to defend "truth" versus its growing
"post-truth" denunciations. Taking up a role in this as academics

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21 Wolfgang Cf. Kuhlmann "Begründung", in *Handbuch Ethik, 3rd ed.* (Stuttgart –
    Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2011), 391-325, esp. 320-321.

22 Klaus Cf. Demmer, *Moraltheologische Methodenlehre* (Freiburg–Schweiz: Uni-
    versitätsverlag, 1989), 119-136.

23 Regarding the importance of anthropology in the wider sense cf: Immanuel
    Kant, *Logik* (Jäsche-Logik), A 25; also Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Ver-
    nunft* (KrV), B 833; See also footnote 1 in this essay.

24 See also in this anthology the essay by Edward Alam, "Responding to the Chal-
    lenges of Post-Truth: Some Anthropological Reflections" – with special consid-
    erations on "anthropologies" and on how to think about truth and human life
    in contemporary epistemic contexts.

25 Cf. Science March Germany, http://marchforscience.de/.

and academia, two things should not be overlooked: (a) As explained above, the academe has in its own way, though different in intention and moral implications, contributed to some extent to a highly diversified presentation and to the respective perception of diversity and complexity and also to the subsequent problems in coping with this in current everyday realities, respectively in what is perceived as such. In other words: At least practically, even if unintended, the interesting and exciting task of academics, researchers, and scientists in different areas has its downside: a serious challenge for individuals and societies. (b) The academe can play an efficient role in regard to "post-truth" if the challenge to academia is taken up in the best academic way; this would in principle mean not to exclude any aspect of the problem, especially not its highly disputed hermeneutic implications. It would also mean taking "post-truth" as a challenge not only from the outside, but also to the inside, namely adopting a self-critical attitude and to work even harder on significant intermediate competence which would foster trans-disciplinary dialogue and serve the search for individual and social coping with the widespread "truth" in perception and experience of reality – and to do both truthfully[26].

In short: As far as academia is concerned about and challenged by "post-truth", it basically comes down to re-thinking truth – a task that is closely linked to fundamental and inevitable ingredients of serious academic work and which becomes even more urgent under the given "post-truth" circumstances. There is probably some additional

challenge arising in this context, namely to reflect anew on "ethos of academics" and "science ethics". In this regard, the German philosopher Ludger Honnefelder made a rather thoughtful remark: "Value-free methodology is not in contrast to binding to values … as ethos of academics"[27]; positively formulated, it should probably be added that insisting critically on re-thinking truth would require something like truthfulness as a rediscovered *academic virtue*. It is only fitting then, that recent reactions towards "post-truth" from the academe indicate rather ambitious goals, since they in part claim "rethinking of truth" to be done for the sake of humanity – the basis of life, of living together and not least also of serious academe and science as well. Which is why such "rethinking" of truth as a trans-disciplinary endeavour is rather fundamental: "If this fails, it would lead to threatening erosion of the cultural significance of science. […] Only if the question concerning the role of science and research within the entire meaning (Sinnganze) is not left to itself, academia will be able to fulfil the social expectation […] to provide also reflective knowledge which is basic as orientation for *knowledge based society*"[28]. Thus, responding as academia to "post-truth" phenomena implies taking up "responsibility" in the literal sense, clearly and carefully showing that the scientific community can also be of high importance in safeguarding reliable, future-oriented, and humane societal and individual life as far as it commits itself to rational, fact-oriented thought and argumentation, and thus to truthful public and democratic discourse[29].

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[26] Cf. Bernhard Pörksen, "Die Postfaktische Universität", *DIE ZEIT*, 30 December, 2016, http://www.zeit.de/2016/52/wissenschaft-postfaktisch-rationalitaet-ohnmacht-universitaeten. Self-criticism would also be required for serious analysis of abuse of power within academic institutions. See: Agarwala Anant, Anna-Lena Scholz, "Machtmissbrauch in der Wissenschaft: Macht Schluss damit", *DIE ZEIT*, 13 November, 2017, http://www.zeit.de/2017/46/machtmissbrauch-wissenschaft-universitaeten-strukturen.

[27] Ludger Honnefelder, "Dankesworte", see above, esp. 35 (translation A. J. Buch).

[28] Ibid., 35.

[29] Cf. Jan Petter Myklebust, see above, who quotes Ole Petter Ottersen from Karolinska Institute Sweden: "In a vital democracy it is important that debates are held on a common platform of facts and evidence. This platform must be built on research that is sound, solid and trustworthy. The present survey tells us that we as researchers might need to sharpen up and be more self-critical".

Conclusion

On the whole, it is not surprising to notice that beside other phenomena it is precisely "academia" that perceives "post-truth" as rather important and as a challenge. The main reason for this is not anxiety "ad intra" in terms of becoming "post-truth"-affected as academia itself and being endangered to give up academic commitment to the concept of truth and reality. As has been shown, it is much more a basic concern "ad extra" about general "post-truth" labelled erosion in regard to seriousness of truth-related approach to reality, and in regard to significance of academic endeavours contributing to this approach.

Therefore, in a way contradicting the false promises of life-management by populist "post-truth" simplification, that may become a threat to humane development, freedom, peaceful co-existence of cultures, and, finally, to the human being as such, the academia's response would favour re-considering precisely "truth" and "facts" by focusing continuously and unswervingly on understanding and shaping what is called "reality". Exactly this "reality" provides a broad field for human curiosity and thirst for knowledge, and in all its diverse complexity and its entirety it provides a basic source for human life and humanely living together. Precisely in this respect, deeper insight could be gained from sound anthropological reflection and discourse. In view of the above, it is quite clear that the role of the academe – especially of science, of philosophy, and of humanities – in all this has to be self-critical, foremost since they have unwillingly, probably even against their best intentions, contributed in some remarkable way to problems that belong to the larger context of emerging "post-truth" phenomena.

Of course, academia's involvement, as reflected in this paper, will not simply solve problems of post-truth; rather it is an attempt to better understand challenges and to analyse concerns in the context of post-truth phenomena. Hence, it is hopefully more than accidental having chosen "post-truth" as an overall challenging topic for this anthology, which provides a perfect setting, trans-disciplinary and combining theoretical and practical views as well, and which as such also proves academia being specifically challenged – not least to re-think truth in and beyond so-called "post-truth".