The Ambivalent Creation of Truth in the Digital Age

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The Ambivalent Creation of Truth in the Digital Age

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Abstract

Truth is a complex concept that was able to fascinate the individuals since the dawn of time. The relevance of the truth is confirmed by the centrality that the concept has had in the philosophical debate. The philosophers, from the Presocratics onwards, have questioned the concept of truth providing different interpretations.

The global, cosmopolitan and liquid society in which we live can be represented as a labyrinth where it is difficult to navigate as the great narratives are entered into a crisis. The crisis of values and the consequent social anomie, on one hand, and the collective effervescence and democratizing power of the network, on the other hand, open the space to an interpretative antonymic perspective. So the truth can be perceived as an artifact produced by the culture industry in order to become an instrument of political propaganda and social indoctrination in a digital risk society. But, at the same time, the shared horizon of participation, produced by the advent of the digital age, introduces us in new scenarios in which the individual, as a digital prosumer, is able to exercises his/her own right and duty to speak the truth.

Like Socrates taught us the search for truth is a process of looking inside ourselves and the aim of this essay is to highlighted that in a social context that gathers more visions of the world, the problem is not in the interpretation of the truth that we choose, but in the way truth is communicated to others, and especially in the use we made of it.

Keywords: collective intelligence, culture industry, truth.

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> *"Truth is singular. Its 'versions' are mistruths."*
> David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

Introduction

The analysis of the concept of truth has a fundamental importance for our lives. The development of modern science has given special relevance to the epistemological truth offered by science, but there is also an existential meaning of truth: the truth is not just something we know, but something that illuminates our path and guides our actions. Although the truth is an integral part of our "being in the world" (as an existential experience), it is very difficult to define it.

About the concept of time S. Augustine of Hippo confessed: "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know"[1].

We could say the same for the concept of truth.

We often assert that something is true and another thing is false, but if someone asks us to explain what the truth is, we are not able to provide a clear definition. In order to analyze the concept through the lens of sociology to outline its evolution within the digital society I think it is necessary a propaedeutic digression dedicated to how the concept of truth has been analyzed in philosophy.

This because the philosophers, from the Presocratics onwards, have examined the notion of truth and they provided different interpretations, which could help us to shed light on this complex matter.

The truth, through the pages of the philosophy history, has been understood as correspondence between language and the things that are named, as revelation of being or manifestation of phenomenon, such as compliance with a rule or concept, such as coherence and finally as usefulness.

The concept of truth in philosophy

The interpretation of the concept of truth as correspondence it is explicitly formulated for the first time by Plato.

Plato has left us two conceptions of the concept of truth. According to the first, truth coincides with the concept of "to be true". We must remember

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[1] The original quote is "Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio" taken from the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Series I, Volume I, Confessions, Book XI, Chapter 14.

that for Plato, "being" is not what is offered to our senses in everyday experience. Sensible things are images, shadows of proper reality which is represented by the world of ideas (*Timaeus*, 1961). If we look at an object reflected in a mirror, we know that the object in itself is more true of its reflected image, thus the world of ideas is the true reality of which things are copies.

The truth coincides with the "being", Plato tells us in one of his most important dialogues, the *Republic* (1963), and in the *Phaedrus* (1995) calls the world of ideas, "the plain of truth".

The second conception of Plato argues that the truth is the correspondence between language and things. Plato tells us that there can be a true speech and a false speech, as true belief and a false opinion.

In the *Cratylus* (1953), Plato gives us a clear statement of the theory of correspondence when he says: "true is the speech that tells things like they are, false is what says things as they aren't".

In this conception, which will be inherited by Aristotle and will remain in the history of Western philosophy, the truth is a quality, a property of the speech and it coincides with the correspondence between language and the things that are named.

From the fourteenth century the concept of truth as correspondence loses its metaphysical reach and it assumes a strictly logical meaning, we could say "semantic".

William of Ockham in his work *Summa totius logicae* (2009[1508]), written in 1323, addresses the issue relating to the words and concepts and the problem of truth. Unlike the words, which are conventional sounds, the mental terms, or concepts, are natural signs *predicable* (intended in the Aristotle logic) of more things.

Only in this sense *they* are universal. Ockham rejects all forms of realism that considers the universal as really existing, even if only potentially, in the things themselves.

It is in the demonstration of the in-existence and uselessness of universals (intended as things in themselves) that we find the actualization of the methodological principle called Ockham's razor, although he has not been the first to formulate it. It is an economics rule that prescribes to not introduce explanatory principles more numerous than necessary (or "entities must not be multiplied without necessity"). Thus Ockham states that the truth is not an entity endowed with independent existence by the proposition, the truth of a proposition coincides with the true proposition, and so it is the same for the falsehood. For William of Ockham truth or true proposition amounts to a denial of the metaphysical value of the word.

The second fundamental concept of truth can be interpreted as the revelation of being*,* as in the interpretation of Saint Augustine or as a manifestation of the phenomenon according to the vision of Cyrenaics. The conception of truth as revelation has therefore two forms, the metaphysical or theological one and the empirical one.

The key feature of the metaphysical approach is the emphasis on the *evidence*, perceived as the definition and criterion of truth. But the evidence is obviously nothing else but the revelation or manifestation of God.

According to Augustine (*De vera religion*e, 1937) we know something starting by our senses, but our knowledge is not only passive because we can assent, dissent or suspend the judgment (*Epochê*).

The intellect is involved in transforming the perceivable image in an intelligible image, so it is the intellect that decides whether something is true or not.

The intellect judges according to criteria which are eternal, immutable, universal, necessary. These criteria are in us, but they are not ours because they are adjectives only divine. To find the truth, individual must not get out of himself, but he must come back to himself "*in interiore homine habitat veritas*" (the truth inhabits in inner life of man). Augustine adds that if you have a changing nature, you have to transcend also yourself and you will able to find the light of reason, God, who in His transcendence sheds light on your journey to the truth.

If the theological approach to the truth is a divine revelation, for the empirical approach the criterion of truth is the feeling: just the feeling is certain because we cannot know anything about the nature of the objects that cause it.

The third conception of truth is the one that considers it as conformity to a rule or concept.

The most important expression of this definition of truth is due to Immanuel Kant. For the philosopher, an expression is true when it corresponds to a phenomenon, and so to the reality inasmuch it manifested to the senses of the knowing subject in a space-time order, which is originated by the same subject. The issue was to find a criterion for truth itself. The criterion of truth, according to Kant, can affect only the shape of the truth and it is in accordance with the necessary and general laws of the intellect. For Kant the act of knowing is "to judge", and so to unify the multiplicity according to a common representation. The various ways in which the mind unifies and synthesizes are the pure concepts of intellect or categories. This term is derived from Aristotle. But Aristotle's categories are "*leges entis*", ways of being, for Kant are "*leges mentis*", i.e. ways through which it operates the act of thinking. The categories are functions or pure concepts according to which

the intellect thinks, namely it does its work of unification the sensitive material.

The opinion expressed by the intellect must be consistent with the laws of the understanding, otherwise the intellect would contradict itself.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1990[1781]), Kant argued that what contradicts the laws of the intellect is false because the intellect, in this case, contrasts with its own laws. The concept of truth as conformity to a rule has an important area of validity in moral truth, which can be understood as the compliance of the human act to the moral law.

The fourth conception of truth is the notion of truth as coherence which appears in the English idealistic movement during the second half of the nineteenth century and that was shared by all members of this movement both in England and in America.

The theory of truth as coherence was expressed for the first time in the work of Bosanquet *Logic, or the Morphology of Knowledge* (2011[1888]), but it was Bradley in his book *Appearance and Reality* (1968 [1893]) to spread it.

The philosophy of Bradley starts from the Platonic theme of the individual experience of reality full of contradictions and comes to envision the establishment of a true reality composed by the absolute consciousness, which is the unity of subject and object derived from Hegel.

According to Bradley what is contradictory cannot be real, then the truth or reality is perfect coherence. For the philosopher we are able to evaluate the degrees of truth that human thought can reach, and this depends on the degree of consistency they possess, even if such consistency is approximate and imperfect.

The perfect coherence that belongs to ultimate reality, which is the infinite or absolute consciousness, it is not simply the absence of conflict, but it represents the abolition of multiplicity and, thus, a form of harmony that the human mind are not able to understand.

The fifth conception of truth is the one that considers the truth as usefulness. This definition belongs to the English pragmatism, but Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to formulate it.

The text wherein it appears for the first time this definition of truth is *On Truth and Lies in a Extra-Moral Sense*, originally written in 1873.

In this text, Nietzsche says that an absolute and eternal truth doesn't exist: truth and lies are not other than linguistic constructions and the essence of language lies in its structuring in metaphors. He defines the truth: «A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has

forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins» (Nietzsche, 1982 [1873]: 46-47).

The sense of Nietzschean thought about truth (which will be central in the Foucault reasoning), however, on a closer inspection, it is not only the finding of nothingness, of emptiness and therefore of what not make sense, but it is an invitation to remain always with the possibility of perpetual doubt, knowing that the truth cannot be caught in a stable form, but what is held to be true is determined by the value that it has for life, then its usefulness (utility for us).

It was the Pragmatism movement to spread this notion of truth as usefulness that was supported primarily by William James.

The work of James called *Pragmatism* (1995[1907]) contains a series of lectures held by James in 1906 in Boston in front of an audience of non-specialists. This text contains the famous lecture *Pragmatism's conception of truth,* in which James, in a conversational tone, presents his view on truth. James says that our first duty to acquire the truth it is justified by excellent practical reasons.

The core of his thought in fact can be summarized as follows: the truth of an idea is not to reflect the reality, but depends on the practical effects that it produces.

These practical effects are not those experienced on the basis of the scientific method, but those received by the individual in the course of their individual actions. The practical value of true ideas is obtained, then, in the first place, by the practice importance that their objects have for us.

The objects of the ideas do not always have the same importance. But, since each object a day can become important, it is clear the advantage of having a "reserve of truth", which James calls "*in excess* of ideas", which will (would, could) be true in possible circumstances. We store these truths in excess in one corner of our memory.

When one of these excess truths becomes practically relevant to some of our needs, we will pull it out from the place where we have kept it, and after we will put it in operation in the world our belief in it will become active.

The truth, therefore, is the result of a process of verification and truth, says James, it means to take account of reality. Any idea that will help us to deal with the reality (practically or intellectually); everything that is able to adapt our lives with the general framework of reality effectively, it will answer adequately to the conditions required to be considered a true idea of the reality.

Truth as a cultural artifact

After introducing the philosophic theories about truth, it is time to face with our present wherein truth, and its creation, represents a complex and current matter.

The global (McLuhan 1989), cosmopolitan (Beck 2003) and liquid (Bauman 2000) society, in which we live, can be represented as a labyrinth in which is difficult to find an orientation because we have lost the reference points able to indicate to humankind a route to follow in the processes of choice based on a system of shared values.

The great narratives (as it affirmed by Lyotard, 1979), which had assumed the role of giving sense and reason to the society, are entered into crisis and this process leads to the loss of the unity under a common denominator that provided the guidelines that were norms for the individual.

The awareness that we are witnessing a wide losing of norms that are able to provide a guide to the individuals led us to re-actualized the concept of anomie.

The individual, overwhelmed by this excessive supply of possibilities, finds himself in a state of social and emotional deregulation that seems to recall a lack of shared moral norms capable of driving people within the infinite opportunities of our society, a conceptualization that leads to Emile Durkheim's anomie (1977 [1893]). The French sociologist precisely defined "anomie" as a typical risk of modern society unable «to bind to itself its members, to ensure their adherence to the same and shared order of values, beliefs and expectations» (Jedlowski P. 2009 [1998]: 75, translated by author).

Thus individuals are looking for interpretative codes and hermeneutic models in order to move within a society that seems deconstructed in its institutions and liquefied in its basis of values. Today, even more than yesterday, the individual is in search of certainties and forms of truth that can relieve the sense of social disorientation.

The advent of the digital society, characterized by immateriality and unlimitedness of the virtual universe, has produced an increase of this pervasive uncertainty (Turkle, 2012 and 2015).

The crisis of values and the consequent social anomie, on one hand, and the collective effervescence and democratizing power of the network, on the other hand, open the space to an interpretative antonymic perspective.

According to the first interpretation, the truth may be perceived as a cultural product whose aim is to become an instrument of political propaganda and social indoctrination, bringing to light the problems that arise from the affirmation of a risk digital society (Lupton, 2015).

In this sense the communication theories have focused their attention on the manipulative power of the media (Neumann, 1993) and then on the production of a truth as a cultural artifact.

A significant contribution of this perspective was provided by the critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the Dialectic of Enlightenment (1997 [1944]) in which it is outlined the concept of *Culture industry*.

With the notion of culture industry, the two Frankfurt School sociologists wanted to focus on the ambiguous complexity of capitalist ideology that seemed to suppress the dialectic between culture and society. Through this perspective, there is not more space for critical thinking or cultural differentiation but all that is being proposed is characterized by homogeneity and standardization. As affirmed by the authors: «The sociological theory that the loss of the support of objectively established religion, the dissolution of the last remnants of precapitalism, together with technological and social differentiation or specialisation, have led to cultural chaos is disproved every day; for culture now impresses the same stamp on everything. Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. [...] Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce» (1997: 120-121).

Through this process the cultural industry is able to create a manufacturing of consent which eliminated the critical function of culture, inhibiting the ability of individuals to raise a protest against existing conditions.

The culture industry bases its social function on obedience and indoctrination, letting the desires and expectations of consumers correspond to the proposals produced by the manufacture of consent, whose aim is to create false and induced needs (Marcuse,1968 [1964]). So «The result is the circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger» (1997: 121) This system, linked to the processes of standardization and rationalization of distribution in order to meet the needs of a mass market, is defined "industrial" because assimilated to the organizational forms of industry rather than to a logical and rational production. The culture industry is not a product of the technology or the communication media, but it is caused by the economic interests of capitalism. In fact, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, « [...] the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest. A technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself. It is the coercive nature of society alienated from itself» (ibidem). For the two philosophers, the power of technology was in fact the

power of the economically stronger and then the technology was seen as a legitimization of the established power.

In this epistemological horizon, the truth takes on the function of a reality that transcends individuals, despite not having a sacral foundation. It is an artificial construct that is imposed from above (according to the broadcasting system of communication), providing mass communication users the criteria that become shared norms, passively accepted by individuals who do not participate in any way to their creation. "Being in the true" means adapt to a previously established model of truth that provides certainty, but not freedom of exegesis and action.

Following the same line of interpretation of the Frankfurt School, we can find the contribution of Noam Chomsky.

The American linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky is one of the most radical critics of the "power of the media" in the era of totalitarian regimes (1988, 1989, 1996). He argues that the distribution of standardized cultural products constitutes a threat to the highest values of culture with the result to deprive individuals of the ability to problematize life in its various multi-faceted issues. To this end, the totalitarian regimes utilize pervasive forms of propaganda: a conscious, methodical and planned use of persuasion techniques to achieve specific goals designed to support those who organize the process of the media.

According to Chomsky, the goal of totalitarian cultures was to dominate individuals in order to distract them, providing them (through a controlled system of communication) simplifications and emotionally captivating illusions, in order to address the users to harmless or irrelevant issues from the social point of view.

In the collective imagination the totalitarian cultures, based on the systematic monitoring of the critical spirit and divergent thinking, refer to the dystopian literary genre, where truths are produced on purpose in order to maintain the autopoiesis of the same power system, as it happens in *1984* of George Orwell (1949).

The control can be expressed through coercion and violence, or through the supply of distractions, such as in the interpretation of Chomsky, in order to pacify the individuals with the aim to distance them from reality, as described in the *Brave New World* (1977 [1932]) by Aldous Huxley. In these visions the truth becomes a product, a commodity that has its own mystique (Setiffi, 2008), a real cultural artifact.

Interestingly Morozov uses the instruments of control described in the two dystopian texts with the aim to apply them to the contemporary world and the digital society in order to warn us about the risks linked to the network as coercive power.

In the volume *The Net Delusion* (2011), Morozov emphasizes that the promise of the internet as a source and a tool for the annihilation of totalitarianism and as a boost to the diffusion of the democratization process, in order to become reality, would necessarily have to get rid of what he calls "cyber-utopianism" and therefore blind faith in the ability of the internet to represent, by itself, a force capable of overthrowing the established order in those states wherein the present governmental forms are dictatorial.

So he underlines the risk linked to an unaware use of the power of the internet, adding that the same totalitarian governments use the tools of the internet to spread their control based on what he calls the trilogy of authoritarianism: censorship, propaganda, and surveillance. As affirmed by Morozov: «Despite the reductionist models that have made many in the West believe that information can destroy authoritarianism, information also plays an instrumental role in enabling propaganda, censorship, and surveillance, the three main pillars of Orwell-style authoritarian control. The Internet hasn't changed the composition of this "trinity of authoritarianism," but it has brought significant changes to how each of these three activities is practiced. The decentralized nature of the Internet may have made comprehensive censorship much harder, but it may have also made propaganda more effective, as government messages can now be spread through undercover government-run blog» (Morozov, 2011: 82). Plus, the network could be used to provide to the users forms of distractions that have the aim to quell the collective consciousness: «Thus, as far as distraction is concerned, the Internet has boosted the power of the Huxley-inspired dictatorships. YouTube and Facebook, with their bottomless reservoirs of cheap entertainment, allow individuals to customize the experience to suit their tastes» (Morozov, 2011:80).

Through this perspective we can assume that the truth can be seen as a product able to direct the individuals in order to dictate an agenda setting (Shaw, 1979) of topics, through an assertive and not dialogical process, whose primary purpose is to maintain the established order.

Truth as a collective creation

If the anomie is the symbol of the loss of common ideals able to provide the individuals with a guide to orient themselves in a multi-faceted world, another central concept in Durkheim's thinking production is able to define the participatory sharing horizon to which we assist with the advent of the digital society: the collective effervescence.

The French sociologist, in the book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915), introduces us to the concept of "collective effervescence", explaining

how there are times when a set of individuals placed in the context of a group are able to elevate themselves to a higher level of analysis, to overcome the boundaries of their own knowledge. A new force, creative and revolutionary, is instilled in individuals, allowing them, through the power of collectiveness, to regenerate the social forms and enrich them with new visions of the world that the isolated individual would not have had the tools to perceive and imagine.

If for Durkheim, society was more than the sum of individuals, at the same time, a meeting based on the sharing and comparing of knowledge is able to give a best sense of the world in which we live and, within the participatory process of the digital universe, this concept can become the exemplification of a vision of the network as the source of a truth created collectively.

Digital platforms become an arena of communication in which users have the freedom of speech to make their voice heard "from the bottom", narrating their experiences. They are not only producers of what is narrated, but at the same time become consumers of the "truth" of the others, and for that reason they perfectly embody the *Ideal type* of the user's network: the prosumer.

This neologism created by the *crasis* (producer + consumer), was coined by Toffler in 1980; the futurologist intended to delineate the figure of a consumer who takes an active part in the production process with his activity, independently that is related to the material or symbolic field.

Users who meet in the network freely exchange what they know or what they have with others who have knowledge or objects, goods or services that they are looking for: «While capitalistic organizations seek, by definition, to make a profit, they are opposed in this by the cyberlibertarian ethic which is not only about individual freedom on the Internet, but is also very much concerned with making much of what is found on Web 2.0, especially information, free of charge and universally accessible (Levy, 1984). Cyberlibertarianism is the backbone of the open-source movement, and provides the ideological underpinning for the development and proliferation of nonprofit webbrowsers (Mozilla's Firefox as opposed to the for-profit Microsoft Internet Explorer), operating systems (Linux versus the for-profit Apple OSX or Microsoft's Windows), encyclopedias (Wikipedia versus the for-profit Encyclopedia Britannica), and so on. As a result of the existence and success of these non-profit entities, and more generally of cyber-libertarianism, users increasingly expect that what is on the Internet be made available free of charge. Obviously, such a notion and reality are anathema to capitalism, at least in its traditional form» (Ritzer Jurgenson, 2010:13)

With the digital prosumerism therefore it opens a new form of capitalism and the companies must take into account the emerging new consumers, active, informed and equipped of critical sense.

Nowadays the digital narrations are able to create a common language and a code of information transmission that, through a "bottom-up" logic, give life to an equal and shared horizon of participation.

Our everyday experience in the field can become the experience of millions of users and they themselves can represent a guide for the choice of each individual "navigator" of specialized sites in a participatory culture based on convergence. As affirmed by Jenkins, in his work *Convergence Culture*, thus «By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they wanted. Convergence is a word that manages to describe technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes, depending on who's speaking and what they think they are talking about». (Jenkins 2006: 2-3) The convergence is connected with the creation of a "collective intelligence," using the term coined by Lévy (1996): «None of us can know everything; each of us knows something; we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our skills. Collective intelligence can be seen as an alternative source of media power» (Jenkins 2006: 4).

This process is due to communication streams that flow into the network, so it emerges a new form of pervasive power based on the *sociability*, as understood by Simmel (1997), who identified in the act of sharing one of the most peculiar moment of a joyful and delightful social situation in which it is possible to overcome the individualistic behaviours in favour of social relationship. A communicative sociability that paves the way for new forms of participation.

The democratization process whereof we are witnesses, which according to Joi Ito is based on a "sharing economy", is defined by O'Reilly "The Architecture of Participation" (2004) inasmuch exemplification of the sum of the individual digital practices aimed at increasing the public good of all users through the process of participation and sharing in order to create a cognitive surplus (Shirky, 2010).

This approach makes the users more open to sharing and implementation of knowledge as affirmed by Rheingold (2012) who suggests that the Internet makes us smarter because intelligence is the ability to read into things in the world, if the world changes, we must change with it as resilient individuals, otherwise our universe shrinks and with it our ability and opportunity to communicate with others.

The individuals then feel a strong need to communicate, to exercise their right and duty to tell the truth, their truth. This concept refers to *parrhesia*, Greek word whose meaning is precisely: "to tell the truth." It is a virtue which has made its appearance for the first time in Euripides (fifth century BC), which was then subsequently lost in the pages of history.

It was recovered thanks to the critical thinking of Foucault (1985), and thanks to a series of conference he held at the University of California at Berkeley in 1983, a year before his death.

In the analysis of Foucault it is central the goal of creating an ethic of truth through a critical approach to philosophy. The aware use of this virtue represents a challenge to the power wherein Foucault sees the origin of the exercise of critique.

About pharresia Foucault affirmed: «There are two types of parrhesia which we must distinguish. First, there is a pejorative sense of the word not very far from "chattering" and which consists in saying any or everything one has in mind without qualification. [...] Most of the time, however, parrhesia does not have this pejorative meaning in the classical texts, but rather a positive one. "parrhesiazesthai" means "to tell the truth". But does the parrhesiastes say what he thinks is true, or does he say what is really true? To my mind, the parrhesiastes says what is true because he knows that it is true; and he knows that it is true because it is really true. The parrhesiastes is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true. The second characteristic (the first one is frankness) of pharessia then, is that there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth» (Foucault, 1999 [1985]: 3[2]).

I think it is interesting to hypothesize a parallel between this virtue, understood in a philosophical sense, and the desire of communication of the network users of being able to express their own opinions and therefore the truth about their own life experiences.

Central theme throughout the process of interpretation of Foucault is the power that he imagines to be unstructured or not coercive but rather he imagines it as dispersed and pervasive. This happens because "Power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1998).

We can therefore understand the power as a meta-power or regime of truth that pervades the society and in which there is constant flow of recreation and negotiation. Not only the courage and the will to tell the truth refers to the yearning of users to express their opinions, but at the same time

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[2] Translation taken from: Digital Archive: Foucault.info, 1999. http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/, last visited: 05/09/2016.

it is possible to establish a correspondence between the power that permeates the whole web society and the fluid power in the hands of network users.

We are therefore faced with a antonymic scenario, because the truth can be represented as a tool to indoctrinate the masses, becoming a risk to democratic forms, or the truth, as an act of individual and collective responsibility, is able to find new channels through which individuals can make their voices heard.

Conclusions

In the social context that belongs to us and to which we belong, more visions of the world coexist, more readings of the truth, sometimes similar, sometimes contradictory; the problem is not in the interpretation of the truth that we choose, but the way wherein truth is communicated to others, and especially in the use we made of it.

If the subject is ready to talk and share his truth with the others, but he does not claim that his truth becomes an "incontrovertible belief", I think that knowledge can grow and the individuals can grow with her.

Like Socrates taught us the search for truth is a process of looking inside ourselves, it is dialogue with others, it is a continuous verify these certainties. In this intersubjective dynamic, the language is an authentic tool for the presentation of ourselves and of our own vision of the world that aspires to confront with the perspectives which belong to others and not with the aim to deny their value. However, if the individual wants to impose his narrative about the world as dogmatic and indisputable truth, the society will become a closed system, not an open society as taught by Popper, in which individuals become hostages of the truth that belongs to others. In this case, the language is a tool of power that seeks to influence the others, preventing them from expressing themselves freely. This is in my opinion the ambivalence in the creation of truth.

Popper spoke to us in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1952 [1945]) of those who are carriers of a totalitarian thought to which all must conform.

Plato and Hegel are identified as samples of a single way of thinking that does not allow for deviations from the norm inasmuch they possess the truth.

In The *Republic* (1963) of Plato in fact the philosophers are the ones who control the fate of the state inasmuch they alone are the holders of the true knowledge.

All the times that the individual has claimed to be the holder of absolute truth, he has also demanded the acceptation of his view of the world, imposing to everyone else his rules, which could not be rejected inasmuch as non-compliance is perceived as a violation of the sanctity of true. Our

hermeneutical freedom of search for truth must always respect the research of other individuals; this does not mean to fail in my right to profess my conception of the true, but it does mean seek confrontation with the other.

In this way, the creation of the truth becomes a shared path where others are not antagonists of a struggle in which each tries to assert its supremacy, but fellow travellers, united by the desire to understand and to share their knowledge.

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