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# Philosophy modules on journalism courses at Polish higher education establishments and the search for meaning. A few remarks for discussion

## Introduction. The search for meaning. The search for truth

The purpose of this article is to answer the question of the extent to which Polish universities prepare students majoring in journalism to engage in academic reflection on the category of meaning and to continue the search for truth in their future careers. The issue concerns a major philosophical notion which is relevant to the higher education of people who will pursue careers in the media. I have noticed a strong correlation between the terms *meaning* and *truth* [in Polish, 'sens' and 'prawda', respectively], and I consider the search for truth to be implied by the search for meaning.<sup>1</sup> The discussion also addresses the ethos of the journalist profession and the outcomes of the post-modern era.

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1 M. Drożdż, "W poszukiwaniu antropologicznych kontekstów wykluczenia społecznego. Inspiracje personalistyczne", *Studia Socialia Cracoviensia* 2014, issue 6(2), p. 84; K. Śnieżyński, "Filozofia sensu jako odpowiedź na kryzys metafizyki. W stronę nowej «filozofii pierwszej»", *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 2008, issue 22, pp. 215–234; E. Sienkiewicz, "Zagadnienie prawdy w filozofii", *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 2006, issue 20, pp. 309–325.

At the outset, I believe that will be useful to pose the following question: *What does it mean to search for truth?* In the text *Co się dzieje z prawdą dziś?*, Jadwiga Puzynina wrote:

When considering the situation of truth in our contemporary times in the most general terms, one should conclude that around the notion, and, in turn, the word itself, there exists a confusion which, in fact, covers the entirety of our contemporary intellectual and spiritual lives. That confusion is most noticeable in the philosophical theories of truth.<sup>2</sup>

One could posit after Gottlob Frege that the expressions “the search for truth” and “the search for meaning” are undefinable, yet one should also accept the epistemic definition of truth, or Richard Rorty’s pragmatic-solidaristic definition.<sup>3</sup> Many philosophical propositions argue that the attempt to indicate one concept of truth as the horizon of understanding of reality acceptable for all is something of an utopia. Numerous horizons of the perceptions of human existence exist, numerous modes of viewing and evaluating actual reality, and understanding truth as the grounds for searching for the meaning of life. Michał Drożdż noted that “contemporary post-modern culture treats the public sphere as something axiologically neutral, shifting the possible axiological references to the sphere of private life.”<sup>4</sup> That, in turn, will imply there are doubts about the need to seek out truth, since efficiency and success may be more important.<sup>5</sup> Then, Józef Tischner in the book *Myslenie w żywole piękna* posited:

If philosophical thinking was to reject the notion of truth, it would cut off the branch on which it sits. The rejection of the notion in philosophical thinking may only occur in the name of truth about that thinking, and therefore it would have to assume that which it intends to reject. Of course, a question arises as to what the notion of truth means. Yet neither in that matter are we completely free. Without going into overly complex issues, and focussing on the basics, one can say: truth indicates that which is contrary to illusion. If the opposite of illusion is a being itself, then truth is a being itself.<sup>6</sup>

2 J. Puzynina, “Co się dzieje z prawdą dziś?”, *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Język a Kultura* 2008, issue 20, p. 35 [unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish].

3 J. Puzynina, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–36; S. Judycki, “O klasycznym pojęciu prawdy”, *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 2001, issue 49.1, pp. 25–62.

4 M. Drożdż, “Medialna produkcja i dekonstrukcja sensu”, *Media i Społeczeństwo* 2012, issue 2, p. 24.

5 *Ibidem*.

6 J. Tischner, *Myslenie w żywole piękna*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Krakow 2013, p. 7.

In this article I adopted the assumption that any notion regarding the search for truth in journalism education at university level is basically discussed during classes in reference to philosophical subjects, though I cannot preclude the possibility that these issues may also be discussed during other classes. Therefore, I verified the presence of such issues (e.g. the history of philosophy, introduction to philosophy, journalist ethics, the ethics of communication) in the curricula of full-time studies at the journalism and social communication majors in the 2018/2019 academic year, which were listed in the TOP 10 of the *Perspektywy. Dziennikarstwo i komunikacja 2018* ranking.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the analysis applied to the most prestigious universities which offer studies in journalism. I analysed the contents of the websites of individual university units in terms of the numbers of hours of classes in philosophy, and considered possible axiological declarations which emphasised, e.g. the significance of respecting truth in the journalism profession, and philosophy (broadly defined) in the education of future journalists.<sup>8</sup> I assumed those details could be useful in assessing the degree of the focus of university level education of future journalists on the search for meaning.

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7 *Perspektywy. Dziennikarstwo i komunikacja 2018*, <https://www.perspektywy.pl/RSW2018/ranking-kierunkow-studiow/kierunki-spoleczne/dziennikarstwo-i-komunikacja> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

8 I collected the study material from the details available at the following websites:  
*Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw*, <https://www.wdib.uw.edu.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań*, <https://wnpid.amu.edu.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University in Kraków*, <https://media.uj.edu.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Institute of Media Education and Journalism, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw*, <http://media.uksw.edu.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Chair of Journalism and Social Communication, Faculty of Philology, University of Lodz*, <https://katedradziennikarstwa.wordpress.com/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences, University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow*, <https://wsiz.rzeszow.pl/uczelnia/wydzialy/wydzial-administracji-i-nauk-spolecznych/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń*, <https://www.wpism.umk.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Institute of Journalism and Social Communication, University of Wrocław*, <http://dziennikarstwo.uni.wroc.pl/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019];  
*Institute of Political Science and Journalism, University of Silesia in Katowice*, <http://www.inpidz.us.edu.pl/index.php> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].  
*Faculty of Social Sciences, the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin*, <http://www.kul.pl/aktualnosci,11044.html> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

In the text, I refer to empirical studies conducted by Małgorzata Laskowska regarding education related to journalist ethics in Poland, as presented in her monograph *Kształcenie w zakresie etyki dziennikarskiej w kontekście mediów społecznościowych*.<sup>9</sup> She conducted surveys in the period from October 2015 to July 2016, among 768 students of journalism at eight Polish higher education institutions<sup>10</sup>, with the goal to, e.g. evaluating the education in terms of journalist ethics, and defining how aware students were of the contemporary ethical dilemmas related to the utilisation of social media.<sup>11</sup>

My analysis of the curricula of journalism studies and the results of Małgorzata Laskowska's study trigger the following question: *Would it not be advisable to place greater emphasis in higher education on caring for the ethos of journalism, and less emphasis on lectures in media ethics or philosophical classes?* As Michał Drożdż indicated "the main problem of contemporary journalism and the entire media sphere is not the lack of appropriate ethical regulations, but rather difficulties with the practical application of the principles, norms, convictions and virtues," and thus he posed the question: *Is it possible to have the journalist ethos without ethics, and what would the basis of educating and shaping the consciences of journalists be?*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this academic reflection also considers the situation in which university standards of preparing future journalists do not guarantee that their education will be focussed on the search for meaning. In this context, the question posed by Mikołaj Krasnodębski is of great significance: *Are contemporary universities still searching for truth? Do they only refer to contemporary trends and popular intellectual currents, e.g. post modernism, without having analysed them critically?*<sup>13</sup> Maybe Andrzej Maryniarczyk was right to claim that contemporary universities are struggling with the fear of ethos, with the escape from *universitas*, and with the fear of reaching truth?<sup>14</sup> Even if such a diagnosis is excessively

9 M. Laskowska, *Kształcenie w zakresie etyki dziennikarskiej w kontekście mediów społecznościowych*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warsaw 2018.

10 The academic institutions studied by Małgorzata Laskowska were mostly the same as the ones I selected for this article. Laskowska included UWM in Olsztyn which I omitted, whereas in my study I included WSliZ in Rzeszów and UMK in Toruń which Laskowska omitted. Putting those differences aside, what seems important is the provision of the same Polish contexts and a minor time gap between both studies.

11 M. Laskowska, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

12 M. Drożdż, "Etos dziennikarski bez etyki...?", [in:] *Etyka dziennikarstwa. Edukacja. Teoria. Praktyka*, eds. E. Pawlak-Hejno, J. Pleszczyński, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2012, p. 31.

13 M. Krasnodębski, "Kultura klasyczna podstawą suwerenności duchowej uniwersytetu", *Człowiek w Kulturze* 2014, issue 24, p. 345.

14 A. Maryniarczyk, "O zapomnianej misji uniwersytetów", *Człowiek w Kulturze* 2004, issue 16, pp. 50–53 [as quoted in: M. Krasnodębski, *op. cit.*, pp. 345–346].

unilateral and harsh, that does not mean that it should not incline one to reflect on the role of universities not only in transferring knowledge but also in shaping the ethos.

## Philosophy classes in the curricula of journalism courses at academic institutions in Poland

I analysed whether the frameworks of full-time journalism and social communication major studies included classes with a philosophical character (e.g. media ethics, ethics of communication, ethics in public relations, media philosophy) as obligatory or elective course-based lectures, and, if so, then to what extent.<sup>15</sup> I referred to that feature as a “SUBJECT” and within it I identified the following categories:

1. mandatory – philosophical subjects are mandatory in the curricula of journalism studies;
2. elective – philosophical subjects are elective in the curricula of journalism studies;
3. none – no philosophical subjects were identified in the curricula of journalism studies.

In Table 1, I presented the results of the analysis within the studied feature of “SUBJECT”, indicating the number of mandatory and elective hours dedicated to philosophical subjects in full-time first-cycle studies in journalism and social communication majors.<sup>16</sup> Table 2 presents the corresponding results for full-time second-cycle studies, while Table 3 includes a summary of the results for first and second-cycle studies.

**Table 1.** Studied feature: “SUBJECT” – number of hours of philosophical subjects in the curricula of full-time first-cycle studies

University/ Feature being studied	Mandatory	Elective
University of Warsaw	30	0–60
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań	75	0
Jagiellonian University in Kraków	35	0
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw	60	0
University of Lodz	56	0

<sup>15</sup> I refer to information regarding the 2018/2019 academic year. I have also applied a simplification which consists in assuming that a subject does not cover philosophical issues if the area of philosophy is not referred to in its title. I based the study on the contents of the websites of the universities specified in footnote 8, including their subpages.

<sup>16</sup> Depending on the major, the numbers of mandatory and elective hours may differ.

University/ Feature being studied	Mandatory	Elective
University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow	n.d. (no data)	n.d.
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń	60	0
University of Wrocław	60	0
University of Silesia in Katowice	30	0
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	90	0

Source: own study.

**Table 2.** Studied feature: "SUBJECT" – number of hours of philosophical subjects in the curricula of full-time second-cycle studies

University/ Feature being studied	Mandatory	Elective
University of Warsaw	0–30	0
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań	0	0
Jagiellonian University in Kraków	0	30
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw	60	0
University of Lodz	28	0
University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow	n.d.	n.d.
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń	0	0
University of Wrocław	30	0
University of Silesia in Katowice	0	0
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	0	0

Source: own study.

**Table 3.** Studied feature: "SUBJECT" – number of hours of philosophical subjects in the curricula of full-time first and second-cycle studies

University/ Feature being studied	Mandatory	Elective
University of Warsaw	30–60	0–60
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań	75	0
Jagiellonian University in Kraków	35	30
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw	120	0
University of Lodz	84	0
University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow	n.d.	n.d.
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń	60	0
University of Wrocław	90	0
University of Silesia in Katowice	30	0
John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin	90	0

Source: own study.

At the University of Warsaw, journalism studies offer elective courses in journalist ethics – in full-time first-cycle studies in journalism, in media science on the journalism minor (30 hours of lectures and 30 hours of tutorials), and a mandatory course in philosophy (30 hours of lectures). Between the minor modules of press photography, advertising photography and publishing photography on the above-mentioned major I have found no differences regarding the numbers of hours or the statuses of the modules of these philosophical courses. Then, on the public relations and media marketing minor students are assigned only 30 mandatory hours in philosophy in the curriculum. As for the curriculum of full-time second-cycle studies, I have found no philosophical courses on the documentary, reportage, television film minor, the journalism minor or the press, advertising and publishing photography minors. The curriculum of the public relations and media marketing minor at second-cycle studies includes a subject called Ethical Aspects in PR as part of a mandatory 30-hour course.

Regulation No. 8 of the Chancellor of the University of Warsaw, dated 21 January 2016, on establishing the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies included a list of organisational units included in the faculty, including the Chair of Media Law and Ethics (Katedra Prawa i Etyki Mediów).<sup>17</sup> The fact that the Chair was established indicated that the university's academic and teaching staff conducted intensive research in axiology. The current framework of the faculty does not, however, include any references to media ethics in either of the names of its chairs.<sup>18</sup>

At the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, studies in journalism and social communication are conducted at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism. I found in the curriculum of full-time first-cycle studies mandatory classes in philosophy, consisting of 45 hours (30 hours of lectures and 15 hours of tutorials), and journalistic ethics (30 hours). As for the curriculum of full-time second-cycle studies, I did not find any philosophical classes on either of the minors. Research in journalism and social communication at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań is conducted at the Department of Journalism, the Department of Social Communication, and the Department of Press Systems and Press Law at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism. The names of the departments do not include any direct references to the notions of media ethics.

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<sup>17</sup> *Monitor Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. Zarządzenie nr 8 Rektora Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego z dnia 21 stycznia 2016 r. w sprawie utworzenia Wydziału Dziennikarstwa, Informacji i Bibliologii*, p. 12, <https://www.wdib.uw.edu.pl/images/Zarzdzienie-Rektora-Regulaminy-WDIB.pdf> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

<sup>18</sup> *Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies. University of Warsaw. Faculty Structure*, <https://www.wdib.uw.edu.pl/wydzial/struktura-wydzialu> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

The curriculum of full-time first-cycle studies at the Institute of Journalism, Media and Social Communication, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, offers mandatory classes in philosophy of 20 hours and in journalist ethics – 15 hours. The range of elective subjects at second-cycle studies offers media ethics of 30 hours. The names of the Institute's departments do not include the words *philosophy*, *ethics* or *axiology*, which might indicate that the philosophical perspective on media and communication is not central for the Institute's research.

The students of full-time first-cycle studies at the Institute of Media Education and Journalism, the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, are required to complete philosophical subjects: Fundamentals of Journalist Ethics (30 hours) and Introduction to Philosophy (30 hours), while the students of second-cycle studies are required to complete classes: Contemporary Challenges of Media Ethics (30 hours) and Ethics in Business and PR (30 hours). Within the framework of the Institute, research is conducted into the ethics of the media and communication, which is indicated in the name of one of the chairs: Chair of Media Theory, Ethics and Law [Katedra Teorii, Etyki i Prawa Mediów]. Since the beginning, journalism studies at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University have been conducted at the Faculty of Theology, which implies a considerable number of philosophical subjects in the curriculum.<sup>19</sup> The Christian nature of the university provides the second major proof that its students may expect higher education in journalism focussed on the world of values.<sup>20</sup>

In the curriculum of full-time first-cycle studies at the Chair of Journalism and Social Communication, Faculty of Philology, University of Lodz, I found mandatory classes in the Fundamentals of Philosophy (28 hours) and Journalist Ethics (28 hours). Then the curriculum of full-time second-cycle studies includes Media Philosophy (28 hours). The chair's website states the following: "The Journalism and Social Communication major belongs to the humanities and social sciences. The focus of research of Journalism and Social Communication covers both the principles (journalist ethics, values, social norms, media law, etc.) and communicational social practices (methodology of journalistic work in its different

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<sup>19</sup> *Instytut Edukacji Medialnej i Dziennikarstwa UKSW w Warszawie. Historia Instytutu*, <http://media.uksw.edu.pl/?mod=my&id=7084> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

<sup>20</sup> "[UKSW] is a state-owned university of Christian inspiration, strictly linked with the Catholic Church. The status of the university obliges all of the academic community to nurture and develop humanistic, Christian and national values. Every academic teacher and every student should be aware of those duties. Academic teachers of the non-ecclesiastical faculties do not require the "missio canonica" from the Great Chancellor, nevertheless the rector endeavours to engage employees who are well suited for working in a university of a Catholic nature." (*Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie. History*, <https://uksw.edu.pl/pl/23-uniwersytet/historia-i-patron?start=4> [accessed on: 24.03.2019]).

varieties, modes of influencing people, use of various codes in communication, the principles of proper language usage, etc.)”<sup>21</sup> The quoted statement indicates that particular attention in higher education in journalism is placed on issues associated with the ethics of the media and communication.

Journalism and Social Communication studies at the University of Information Technology and Management with its seat in Rzeszów are conducted at the Chair of Media, Journalism and Social Communication at the Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences. The subjects offered on full-time first-cycle journalism and social communication studies include the Ethics of the Media and Social Communication, and Applied Philosophy in full-time second-cycle studies. The chair’s website lacks any information on the number of hours of such classes, which is why Table 1–3 include the following remarks: “n.d.” (no data).

At the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń full-time Journalism and Social Communication studies are conducted at the Chair of Journalism and Social Communication at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies.<sup>22</sup> First-cycle studies offer the following mandatory philosophical classes: Journalist Ethics (30 hours), Philosophy (30 hours). In second-cycle studies I did not identify any philosophical subjects.

At the University of Wrocław, Journalism and Social Communication studies are conducted at the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication at the Faculty of Letters. First-cycle studies offer mandatory philosophical classes: Philosophy (30 hours) and Journalist Ethics (30 hours), while full-time second-cycle studies offer modern philosophy (30 hours).

At the University of Silesia in Katowice, studies in Journalism and Social Communication are conducted at the Institute of Political Science and Journalism. The curriculum includes 30 hours of Journalist Ethics on first-cycle studies. In second-cycle studies I did not find any classes of a philosophical nature.

Journalism and Social Communication studies are conducted at the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. At full-time first-cycle studies, there are mandatory lectures in: Ethics (30 hours), History of Philosophy (30 hours), and Journalist Ethics (30 hours). In second-cycle studies I did not find any subjects of philosophical nature. It must be

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21 *Katedra Dziennikarstwa i Komunikacji Społecznej. Wydział Filologiczny Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, O Katedrze*, <https://katedradziennikarstwa.wordpress.com/katedra/o-katedrze/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

22 *Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu. Wydział Politologii i Studiów Międzynarodowych. Katedra Dziennikarstwa i Komunikacji Społecznej*, <https://www.wpism.umk.pl/katedra-dziennikarstwa-i-komunikacji-spolecznej/> [accessed on: 24.03.2019].

stressed that it is a Catholic university, which means it should be assumed that its university education permanently refers to Christian values and philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

I did not analyse the specifications of the issues of the above-mentioned classes. Nonetheless, one might assume that students gain knowledge in various streams of philosophy.

The aforementioned studies by Laskowska indicated that according to 77% of the respondents, Journalism Ethics is a necessary subject at Journalism Studies<sup>24</sup>, while 45% of the respondents evaluated these classes as “high” or “very high” level.<sup>25</sup> Around 52% of the respondents offered basically positive evaluations of the contemporary nature of the topics of the classes in Journalism Ethics.<sup>26</sup> 21% of the respondents evaluated their attractiveness as “average” and 15% as “low” or “very low.”<sup>27</sup> The competences of the instructors of the classes in Journalism Ethics were generally evaluated positively: as much as 34% of the respondents evaluated instructor competences very highly and 28% highly.<sup>28</sup> Regarding the general tendencies in placing emphasis on the individual elements of the curricula of journalism studies, Małgorzata Laskowska argued:

There is a major global emphasis on: the issues of dividing information from opinion, the problem of journalist impartiality, the problem of the reliability and verifiability of journalistic sources, and the issues associated with the protection of journalistic sources. There is less emphasis on such elements of the curricula related to journalist ethics as: issues associated with access to information which is confidential, sensitive or of strategic importance for the state, issues regarding the display of drastic content, issues of conflict of interest, issues of commercial use of a journalist’s image (e.g. in advertising), and the issues of journalist autonomy in relation to the owners of their medium.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The website of the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication of the John Paul II Catholic University reads, e.g.: “The Institute of Journalism and Social Communication of the John Paul II Catholic University responds to the new areas of interest and the new social and cultural needs of the Lublin region, Poland and Europe. It has joined the search for the key to the true restoration of socio-cultural life in Poland, mainly by associating it with the highest values, ethics and all cultural bonds in integration with Europe and the world.” (*Instytut Dziennikarstwa i Komunikacji Społecznej Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II. Witamy na stronach Instytutu Dziennikarstwa i Komunikacji Społecznej*, <http://www.kul.pl/o-instytucie,12156.html> [accessed on: 24.03.2019]).

<sup>24</sup> M. Laskowska, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 251.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 252.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 253.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 253–254.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 353.

Laskowska's report indicated that there exist many problems which, according to the students of Journalism Studies, are not raised during courses in Journalism Ethics. Those include, e.g.: current events in the ethical context, no presentation of the relationship between ethics and the profession of journalist, new media vs. ethics, ethics vs. the law, no practice, excessive load of theoretical content, and the general form of classes.<sup>30</sup> Her studies have proven that despite the fact Journalism Ethics is present in the curricula of Journalism Studies, it does not always meet the educational expectations of students.

### Ethics as an academic subject vs. the journalist ethos

The fact of placing intensive attention on ensuring high standards in the preparation of future journalists does not guarantee that their future work will be focussed on the principles of deontology, nor is it ensured by the multitude of codes of ethics.<sup>31</sup> One should, however, appreciate the presence of philosophical subjects in the curricula, which can indicate university authorities' care about the education of the students of journalism, ensuring that it is aimed at the search for meaning.

Michał Drożdż noted that, on the one hand, journalism ethics is a subject that all think should be covered, yet, on the other, "it is still valid in the context to pose the question of how in the world of ethical pluralism, the pluralism of the world of values and the diverse understandings of ethics and its justifications, one can fulfil a common and universal ethical goal: to defend people and their personal value and dignity."<sup>32</sup> Can one consider the search for purpose in the context of university education as a mode of fulfilling the protection of individual human value and dignity? According to Drożdż, an objection to the validity of universal normativism in ethics will result in treating moral principles only as customary and pragmatic principles, and the division into individual-private and public-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, pp. 354–355.

<sup>31</sup> M. Drożdż, "Etyczne aspekty mediów integralną częścią nauk o mediach", *Studia Medioznawcze* 2013, issue 55(4), pp. 11–23; A. Baczyński, "Uczciwość dziennikarska, czyli o potrzebie etyki zawodowej w mediach", *Studia Socialia Cracoviensia* 2012, issue 4(1), pp. 35–51; D.A. Ojcewicz, "O konsekwencjach nieprzezwyciężania etyki dziennikarskiej w dobie nowych mediów", *Civitas et Lex* 2014, issue 4, pp. 7–19; M. Wąsicka, "Idealny model dziennikarza w zderzeniu z rzeczywistością", *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne* 2013, issue 2, pp. 295–310; R. Leśniczak, *I principali doveri professionali nella formazione di giornalisti: un'analisi della formazione accademica e professionale nei diversi paesi dell'Europa*. unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rome 2010, pp. 184–196; R. Leśniczak, "Dziennikarz i informacja – integralny model formacji dziennikarskiej", *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne* 2011, issue 20, pp. 194–195.

<sup>32</sup> M. Drożdż, "Etos dziennikarski bez etyki...?", p. 31.

social ethics.<sup>33</sup> A renunciation of normative ethics will result in ethical subjectivity, which cannot serve as the basis for building an objective journalistic ethos.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of whether philosophical issues appear in the curricula of journalism studies, it is important to ask about how ethics is understood by the instructors, and about their acceptance or rejection of normative ethics. Therefore, it is valid not only to ask whether ethics/philosophy are present in the curricula, but it is also important to ask: *What kind of ethics/what kind of philosophy?* to be able to further specify whether university journalism education helps one to find meaning.

Jan Pleszczyński claimed that it would be a utopian attitude to view codes of ethics or university journalism education as the only and exclusive factor which can solve the problems of journalism ethics. This media researcher and philosopher went on to argue that the goal is not to reproach academics for the fact that by teaching from their university pedestals they add little to the profession of journalism, nor that it is to “close one’s eyes” to journalists’ failings in terms of their competences.<sup>35</sup> Pleszczyński noted that “journalism has become a common and mass profession, not one for the chosen ones, a profession for everyone,” while the attachment to the traditional ethos can only be found in some of the few journalists who completely identify with their profession.<sup>36</sup> This diagnosis, proved by media researchers, indicates a need to differentiate between journalism ethics as professional ethics and journalism ethics as a university subject.<sup>37</sup>

Stanisław Olejnik noted that the ethological approach to professional work does not only consist of a special technique of identifying individual professions, but about the content of the ethos of the people who perform a profession. Olejnik understood ethos not as much as a fixed mode of external conduct, but rather as a fixed internal approach to specific activities, founded in higher human mental capacities.<sup>38</sup>

University education in journalism does not guarantee a high journalist ethos, and most importantly, at the theoretical level, the transfer of philosophical knowledge of a theoretical nature. Such knowledge is offered to students of journalism by the leading academic institutions in Poland. That is because the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, pp. 32–33.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> J. Pleszczyński, “Jaka etyka dziennikarska jest potrzebna i możliwa?”, [in:] *Etyka dziennikarstwa...*, p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> B. Dobek-Ostrowska, P. Barczyszyn, A. Michel, “Zmiana w dziennikarstwie. Kultura zawodowa polskich dziennikarzy (badania ilościowe)”, *Studia Medioznawcze* 2013, issue 52(1), pp. 11–27; M. Laskowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–156.

<sup>38</sup> S. Olejnik, “Etos i etyka pracy zawodowej”, *Collectanea Theologica* 1957, issue 28(3–4), p. 541.

journalist ethos is created not by curricula or collective declarations, but by people: the masters, teachers, guides. At this point it would be worth quoting the title of Simona Mancini's book *Chi me lo fa fare*, which, by raising the issue of teacher responsibilities, indicates the reality of the freedom of instructors in deciding on the degree to which they shall fulfil their vocation, based more or less on the ethos of the profession they fulfil.<sup>39</sup> That is an apt reflection of the situation of university instructors who conduct classes in the field of philosophy. They might not only explain the major currents of philosophy, but also interpret, criticise or accept them. As Lucyna Szot noted, the Polish media system, apart from in-court verification, lacks any clear and uniform criteria for verifying the level of professionalism of journalists.<sup>40</sup> Formal professional education is not central for the journalistic practice and people do not seem to notice the correlation between professionalism understood as professional reliability and formal education.<sup>41</sup>

Education which consists of searching for meaning and truth is not legal but deontic in nature. It is not ethics but the law that constitutes the dominant regulator of social life. The fact of moving from professional ethics to law is unacceptable, as ethics clearly emphasises the moral dimension of humanity whereas the purpose of the law is to organise society and manage the community.<sup>42</sup>

Today, it is widely accepted that journalists' adhesion to deontic principles and the search for meaning leaves much to be desired. Therefore, the philosophical knowledge acquired at university is not enough to be sure that a journalist will become a person who will search for meaning and truth. So what could complement intellectual education at universities? The answer is not an easy one, considering the context of the post-modern era, in which the society is defined through the notion of post-industrial society, a society of knowledge, a consumer society; it rejects or questions whether it is possible to reach the truth, understood classically as the correspondence of matter and the mind (*adequatio rei et intellectus*).<sup>43</sup> In the modern era there exists "a pre-figurative generation in

39 S. Mancini, *Chi me lo fa fare*, Kimerik, Patti 2015.

40 L. Szot, "Profesjonalizm dziennikarzy w Polsce", [in:] *Współczesne media. Status. Aksjologia. Funkcjonowanie*, eds. I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2009, p. 192.

41 Ibidem, pp. 192–193.

42 J. Pleszczyński, *Etyka dziennikarstwa...*, pp. 153–154.

43 A. Guzik, "Postmodernizm, postprawda, postekspersi w mediach mainstreamowych", [in:] *Postprawda jako zagrożenie dla dyskursu publicznego*, eds. T. Grabowski, M. Lakomy, K. Oświecimski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie, Krakow 2018, pp. 143–162; R. Leśniczak, "Komunikowanie polityczne w epoce postmodernizmu i postprawdy. Analiza debaty przed wyborami parlamentarnymi w Polsce w 2015 r.", *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne* 2018, issue 2, pp. 182–184.

which the older general cannot keep up with the changes and, as a result, former cultural patterns are no longer viable [...] Young people have been deprived of their compass, a sense of direction. That is why they are so desperate in their search for norms. And since there are none, they create their own ones as the world of authority figures has crumbled.”<sup>44</sup> Several decades ago Furio Colombo, an Italian journalist, writer and politician, wrote about a post-journalist era in which the creation of a media piece was not determined by facts, but by more or less covert centres of power.<sup>45</sup> Various conflicts of interests become revealed within the field of the journalist profession, which hinders the search for such representatives of the press of whom it could be said with certainty that they care for a high journalistic ethos. Marco Benadusi, a media researcher and a journalist, indicated the triad of forgery, conspiracy and populism, which, according to him, induces the omnipresent manipulation of information.<sup>46</sup> Within the post-modern dimension, there only remains a space for a multitude of discourses, none of which insists it is the true one.<sup>47</sup> Within that perspective, one cannot agree with and accept Iwona Hofman’s proposition that serious journalism is the cure for the confusion regarding the fundamental deontic principles or the post-modern vision of the inability to engage in a search for meaning or truth by those who are training to fulfil the profession of journalist at university, or soon after embarking on their professional careers in journalism.<sup>48</sup> As Hofman aptly noted, quality journalism is “a kind of information and opinion writing on topics which are important for recipients within global or local perspectives, authenticated by the stature of its author; an autonomous writing which is distinctive for its respect of the communicational relationship.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, serious journalism is one of the possible paths to complement journalistic education at university in the context of the search for meaning.

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44 A. Guzik, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

45 F. Colombo, *Post giornalismo. Notizie sulla fine delle notizie*, Editori Riuniti, Rome 2007.

46 M. Benadusi, “Il falso nell’epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica”, *Mondooperaio* 2017, issue 4, p. 6.

47 H.-G. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, Bompiani, Milan 1983; J.-F. Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna*, Milan 2014; R. Rorty, *La filosofia e lo specchio della natura*, Feltrinelli, Milan 2004.

48 I. Hofman, “Media w warunkach kryzysu demokracji liberalnej”, [in:] *Zmierzch demokracji liberalnej?*, eds. K. Wojtaszczyk, P. Stawarz, J. Wiśniewska-Grzelak, Aspra JR, Warsaw 2018, pp. 253–270.

49 I. Hofman, “Dziennikarstwo poważne – wartość w mediach na przykładzie Polski”, *Communication Today* 2012, issue 2, p. 99.

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Rafał Leśniczak

## **Uniwersytecka filozoficzna formacja dziennikarska w polskich uczelniach wyższych a poszukiwanie sensu – kilka uwag do dyskusji**

### *Streszczenie*

Tekst artykułu odnosi się do zagadnienia uniwersyteckiej formacji dziennikarskiej w kontekście filozoficznych kategorii sensu i prawdy. Autor analizuje programy wybranych polskich ośrodków akademickich na kierunku dziennikarstwo i komunikacja społeczna oraz odwołuje się do badań dotyczących kształcenia w zakresie etyki dziennikarskiej w Polsce, przeprowadzonych w latach 2015–2016. W refleksji naukowej wskazuje niewystarczalność formacji akademickiej we właściwym przygotowaniu dziennikarzy do wykonywania profesji zawodowej wobec wyzwań epoki współczesnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** formacja dziennikarska, sens, prawda, filozofia, etyka, uniwersytet.

## Philosophy modules on journalism courses at Polish higher education establishments and the search for meaning. A few remarks for discussion

### Summary

The article refers to the issue of journalism education at university, in terms of the philosophical categories of meaning and truth. The author analyses the curricula of selected Polish higher education institutions in the majors of journalism and social communication, and refers to studies on education in journalism ethics in Poland conducted in 2015–2016. In his academic reflection, he indicates the inadequacy of university education for the proper preparation of journalists for fulfilling their profession when faced with the challenges of the modern era.

**Keywords:** journalist education, meaning, truth, philosophy, ethics, university.

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