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**Problematizing ‘truth’ and ‘falsehood’ in a Contemporary  
Media Landscape**

**Mohamed Handour**

*Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Beni Mellal  
E-mail: [handourmohamed73@gmail.com](mailto:handourmohamed73@gmail.com)*

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**Abstract**

Digital media provides invaluable opportunities for youngsters to get involved in and interact with popular and participatory culture. It has the potential to enable them to develop their cultural competencies and hone their social skills. Nonetheless, it has been increasingly assumed that social media networks can turn out to be counterproductive when they are utilized as a vehicle for spreading falsehood, prejudice, slander, rumor, and disguised propaganda, all of which fall under the rubric of misinformation and disinformation. Be that as it might, in a post-truth era, fact and fiction intermingle in such a way that the media consumer is required to rigorously vet and reflect on any bit of news to see how much reliable it is. This cannot be done unless critical thinking is adopted as one among other components of analytical strategies. The contemporary literature points out that dissemination of falsehood is much more rampant today than ever before. This paper is an attempt not to disclose some deleterious effects of “falsehood” on “truth”, but to problematize the binary logic in contemporary media discourse. “Post-truth” itself is imbued with blind spots and moments of contradictions which dismantle the spuriously adequate grounds on which it stands. Inspired by Fredrick Nietzsche’s perspectivism and post-foundationalist theories of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, this paper questions the conceptual clarity and stability of discursive categories exhorting our students to navigate this intricate post-truth wilderness armed with critical thinking to become not only savvy media consumers, but also vigilant critics.

*Keywords:* Truth, Falsehood, Post-truth, Discursive Analytical Strategies, Critical Thinking.

## 1. Introduction

In a media saturated world where information and communication technologies have become ubiquitous and pervasive, the physical and cultural borders that separate individuals, groups and nations are less significant and meaningful – if not almost obliterated – than ever before. They have recently lost their distinctive features and conceptual markers as they have degenerated into bridges that connect people worldwide in a virtual landscape that is occasionally exalted above narrow provincialism making the binary polarity of us versus them less and less tenable. The unprecedented porosity of these borders suggests that cultural encounters and human interactions are always on the rise, particularly by dint of social media networks whose power in spreading information is omnipresent and ineluctable. Outside the realm of economics, politics, and ideology, people – especially teenagers – celebrate cultural differences whose individual meanings they strive to connect in what Anthony Giddens characterizes as “a Many – windowed house of human culture as a whole” (Said, 2000, p. 382).

In a post-foundationalist<sup>1</sup> society, the emergence of virtual communities, groups, clans, organizations, and associations across borders suggests that traditional and mainstream media channels have lost the prerogative of monopolizing, managing, and controlling the production, distribution, and consumption of information; it is hard to stem the flow and circulation of an overarching gamut of news in the present-day information world. This democratization of media allows competing perspectives to surface and consequently other truths to emerge, disempower the status quo and sap its corollary attempt to mute and exclude revolutionary and counter-hegemonic discursive articulations. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are living in a contemporary era best depicted by Oakeshott (1991) in his metaphoric allusion to a non-foundationalist conceptualization of politics. “Men sail a bottomless and borderless sea,” he argues, “there is no harbour for shelter, nor floor for anchorage, neither starting-place, nor appointed destination” (p.60). This metaphoric underpinning of the nature of politics and their effects in a post-factual epoch is not a mere hyperbole that the proponents of political orthodoxy would berate as an impenetrable poststructuralist waffle, but rather a succinct reflection of what is currently happening in a world without borders. With the advent

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<sup>1</sup> Post-foundationalism is a term that Ernesto Laclau favors over what he regards as the intricate waffle of postmodernism, which he equates with anti-foundationalism. He cogently argues, unlike some postmodernist thinkers, that we cannot act without a ground. However, he still insists that no ground is fixed and permanent questioning totalities, universals, and absolutes. In his seminal work, *Emancipation*, he avers – in reaction against the universalism of Jurgen Habermas and the particularism and contextualism of postmodernism – that he is comfortably ensconced in the middle ground between the two extremes (1996, p. VIII).

of the information society and the process of globalization, antagonisms are mitigated and therefore relations among humans – who are no longer “cultural cocoons”, but “multicultural mosaics” – have substantially improved.

In the age of a globalized and information ruled world wherein everything is in a state of flux and turbulence, there is much tendentious debate about which news can be interpreted as ‘fact’ and which can be construed as ‘fiction’. Phrased somewhat differently, news consumption needs to be handled with sheer reticence and careful examination to minimize access to “falsehood” and magnify exposure to “truth.” Be that as it might, this paper takes issue with “Truth” (with capital ‘T’) as a singular noun and instead suggests “truths” (with a lowercased ‘t’) as a more appropriate category in a society wherein the dividing lines between information and misinformation are shadowy and vague. This does not mean that we have the intention to conduct the analysis against the backdrop of the often-caricatured realm of postmodernism which holds a sceptical attitude towards reason and truth casting aside both as relative, arbitrary, and groundless. We instead take the challenge inaugurated by post-foundationalism and occupy middle-of-the-road position drawing on the poststructuralist politics which at one and the same time interrogates the possibility of any stable and unshakable ground underlying social reality and affirms the possibility of a myriad of grounds which seek to install a temporary and precarious foundation. The next part of this endeavour offers a theoretical account of some basic tenets of the so called “post-truth era.” While lauding critical thinking and rational enquiry as invaluable assets for dealing with any piece of news, the last part of this paper shies away from providing any alternative option to those among our teenage students who are vulnerable to giving free rein to their emotional tendency rather than critical faculty when dealing with a given bit of news. Part of our objective is to eschew the anchorage of ‘truth’ in a well-defined ontological landscape and suggest instead what is said to be a sound interpretation of the news we access or receive day in day out given that even what we take for granted may turn out to be a discursive construct, if not a smokescreen or ideological veil.

## **2. The Indeterminacy of “post-truth” as a Concept**

IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board) works in collaboration with other groups to fight and stem the spread of fake news by supplying the potential information consumer with sobering diagnostic tools that would enable him / her to distinguish between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood, reliable and unreliable news as if the distinction between

them were simple and lucid. Given the constructive function of discourse<sup>2</sup>, it is somehow challenging to draw a permanent dividing line between these entities. Seen in this light, one would concur that there is no absolute or universal Truth that resides in a transcendental site beyond geographies, epochs, subjectivities, and species. Concepts themselves, according to Kosleck (1988), are laden with a wide range of political and social meanings and as such they create an open-ended space of signification which can evolve into a complicated semantic battlefield. Both “Truth” and “falsehood” are not pre-discursive categories given that the world is not only there to talk about; conversely, it is discourse which shapes and imparts meaning to the world. It is under the tyranny of the third person singular, present indicative (M is P) that the delimitation of ontology becomes possible. Because the term “post-truth” is clamped tight in the embrace of discourse, it would acquire significance only as a fluid category whose meaning is constantly shifting.

The attempt to set the concept of “post-truth” in the theoretical framework of post-foundationalism does not entail a complete erasure of the ground. Unlike anti-foundationalism, which regards truth as groundless, a post-foundationalist approach advocates a perpetual critical interrogation of “metaphysical figures of foundation – such as totality, universality, essence, and ground” (Marchart, 2007, p. 2). Though the ground is put under erasure or “sous rature” – to use Derrida’s term – the aim is only to weaken its ontological status. So, instead of having something called “truth” as such, we end up having the trace which extends the domain and play of signification over and over ad infinitum (Derrida, 1978, p. 280).

This extreme Nietzschean perspectivism goes so far as to deny the possibility of any ontological stability and fixity claiming that universal truth predicated on a logocentric essence is nowhere punctually present, or more pertinently it is permanently disseminated. According to Norris (1987), Derrida inaugurates the portmanteau *différance* to “suggest how meaning is at once ‘differential’ and ‘deferred’, the product of a restless play within language that cannot be fixed or pinned down for the purposes of conceptual definition” (p.15). Discourse is open to a myriad of interpretations that seek to debunk any pernicious claim to unity, uniformity, and homogeneity. The introductory part of this paper calls into question that rigid demarcation of realms seeking to dismantle the reductive ethos of the binary logic and discursive regimes of truth inherent in the Western metaphysics of presence. This

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<sup>2</sup> “Social entities only become meaningful through both linguistic and non-linguistic discursive articulation. As such, the meaning of something is never pre-given but is, instead, constructed through social practices” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, pp XIV- XV).

theoretical rendering of discourse once more lends credit to the difficulty involved in identifying once for all which piece of news, or mode of signifying is right, and which one is wrong. The dyad of truth and falsehood cannot let go of the binding ties of relativism. In this respect, Ernesto and Mouffe (1985) cogently point out that “the era of normative epistemologies has come to an end, so too has the era of universal discourses” (p. XIX). Since truth as a sign is resistant to ontological delimitation and conceptual definition, we have a little chance – especially when confronted with a sheer amount of information – to set up a permanent bulwark against the encroachment of “falsehood.” This annoying moment of undecidability compels a set of questions: After all, how can one convince the information consumer to embrace one piece of news as fact and cast aside the other as fiction given that both are shaped by discourse? And how can one trust one discursive articulation as relevant and distrust the other as the opposite? How is it possible to make sure, for instance, that all the diatribe leveled against the anti-Covid vaccination, and its long-term adverse effects is a mere rumor when it emanates from a number of doctors around the world and is shared – via social media at a large scale – even among intellectuals? Is there a way to sift and vet such a discourse to find out how much ‘truth’ and ‘falsehood’ it contains?

The questions above are not meant to be answered but are raised for mere critical reflection and consideration in the so-called post-truth era. These and other queries show how intractable it is to draw a dividing line between genuine and fake news in matters and issues generated by dint of *human* discourse. Whatever is spoken or written by man often degenerates to a rhetoric infused with aporias, blind spots, conceptual twists, and moments of undecidability, which makes any given narrative subject to a perpetual dislocating textual force. In this context, Foucault (1972) exacerbates our skepticism about discursivity when he argues that “The manifest discourse... is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this ‘not-said’ is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said.” Since what is manifestly stated in the text still hides what latently lies beneath the surface, it will be somehow critical to delve into a given discourse to ‘disclose the unsaid’ and therefore lay bare its concealed stratagems and smokescreens.

Amidst all the intricacies that affect the ontological status of discourse and weaken its reliability, the process of selecting a piece of information based on its relevance remains a relatively difficult task for the news consumer or even critic. Since the politics of poststructuralism – the terrain where we have found the main inspiration of our theoretical reflection – problematizes the demarcation of realms, it becomes rather challenging to deal

with news production, distribution, and consumption within the framework of well-defined asymmetric dualities and divisions. “The boundary is Janus-faced”, argues Bhabha (1994), “and the inside/outside must always itself be a process of hybridity...generating other sites of meaning...” (p.38). Though this quote concerns the problematic issue of national culture which – as a product of discourse – cannot be unified nor unitary, it may also apply to the significance of media discourse which is polarized around the position of both truth and falsehood. The underlying reality of this discourse may also be said to be Janus-faced, especially when a piece of news is accepted by some and repudiated by others on such grounds.

To further problematize this tendency towards drawing a clear-cut distinction between true and false news, it would not be exaggerating to celebrate the post-truth era as the outcome of what Ernesto Laclau pithily describes as “the democratization of democracy<sup>3</sup>.” This radical conception of democracy implies that a plurality of perspectives, interpretations and voices that have been suppressed and silenced before are allowed to surface now at a time when freedom of expression knows no limit due to a widespread propagation of social media channels. A cacophony of new voices and a gamut of newly written perceptions are widely disseminated at the click of a button. Hundreds of digital channels have appeared on the fringes of the mainstream media and many alternative facts destabilize the grand discourses or dislocate them in extreme cases. It is no longer necessary to study journalism to become a reporter when YouTube and Facebook offer anyone the opportunity to have his/ her say and share it with others on a large scale. Hence new coinages such as YouTubers, Facebookers and similar jargon are used in our information ruled society.

The fast circulation of all kinds of news is the cost of the democratization of media and its consequent freedom of expression. Though we are somehow skeptical about the dichotomous rendering of reality, given that the demarcation of boundaries is untenable in a globalized and information ruled society, it is incumbent on us as educators and teachers – especially those entrusted with teaching teenagers – to equip our students with efficient critical tools not to help them decide on the ontological status of a piece of information along the simple lines of “truth” and “falsehood”, but to treat any news with cautious reticence and analyze it as a discursive formation that is resistant to a simple dichotomizing force. In tune with Newman (2001), it can be argued – before moving to the next part to disclose some of

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<sup>3</sup> There is much talk nowadays of a 'democratization of democracy'. There is nothing wrong, in principle, with such a perspective, and at first sight it seems to chime with our idea of a 'radical and plural democracy' ( Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. XV).

the underlying principles of post-truth era and its implications for news production and consumption – that “our time presents us with an open horizon, a horizon that allows us to construct our own reality, rather than having it constructed for us (p.4).” Providing a cursory account of the post-truth age and its ramifications in relation to the production, transmission and consumption of news is compounded with raising our teenage students’ consciousness to how to handle social media discourse and helping them develop critical insights to be active news’ consumers.

### **3. Post-truth Era**

The empowering function of digital media is undeniable in this contemporary globalized and information ruled landscape. As we have previously mentioned, social media channels – when appropriately used – provide invaluable learning opportunities. Our students are allowed the chance to get involved in participatory culture by joining online communities such as Facebook, messages boards, game clans, etc. and take part in different forms of activities that would be impossible a few years ago (digital sampling, fan video making, fan fiction). Social media also contributes to the building of teamwork spirit among learners who may get engaged in online group work activities through creating WhatsApp or Facebook groups for instance. As such, they boost their learning and social skills by interacting with others in far off places. In times of crisis – as it is the case under the effect of Covid 19 – we cannot overlook the role these channels play to bring students together and facilitate distance learning through regular interactions with their teachers. In short, social media channels are currently part and parcel of our everyday existence, but we are desperately required to use them with sheer caution and vigilance, and with moderation at times, to shun their adverse effects in this post-factual period.

#### **3.1. Systemic media education in a post-factual age**

The ubiquity of digital channels, coupled with the democratization of media, means that a rigorous critical treatment of social media discourse has become mandatory for any active information consumption. Looking at language as a mere representation of reality – as a system made up of a set of discursive articulations that function under the tyranny of discursive practices – I refrain from incarcerating the analysis in the prison house of binary oppositions that are the outcome of social practices and normalizing regimes of truth. That is why, I deliberately enclose these dichotomies with inverted commas to sap them of their logocentric weight.

Digital media literacy should not be solely directed towards detecting “misinformation” in a particular piece of news as the latter does not lend itself to a simple sobering diagnosis given the intricate nature of media discourse, but also to equipping students with critical tools needed to delve into all types of discursive articulations and unearth what Michel Foucault calls “the half silent murmur” of a hidden discourse. The primary goal that should be set for media education is to provide a fertile ground for our students to become critical thinkers rather than naïve media consumers. To make them savvy, the onus is on the teacher to draw their attention to questioning the taken-for-granted reliability of any piece of news. Not all students are expected to come up with a single interpretation of a given discourse, but with a multiplicity of truths none of which should be cast aside as a supplementary adjunct. Instilling this spirit of perspectivism in our students has the advantage of extricating them from the tangles of a binary way of thinking which is predicated on a facile hierarchization of reality. In modern structural linguistics the term “falsehood” is not without value as it serves to confer identity on its antonym “truth.” In this regard, DE Saussure contends that “there are no positive terms, only differences. Something is what it is only – through its differential relations to something else” (Newman, 2001, p. 10). Rather than sharing a piece of information with others soon after they get it, our students should take time to reflect on it critically to disclose its aporias and blind spots and consequently shake – if not dismantle – the ostensibly adequate grounds on which it stands.

While a non-discursively mediated access to the things themselves is unthinkable, immediacy soon loses to linguistic representation and is therefore replaced by one form or another of discursive mediation. Once language interferes with the world, it takes on the form of discourse which is not simplistically polarized around binary oppositions but is built around multiple voices that come into play in one single text or speech act. The scope of a spoken or written discourse is too broad to break down into a well demarcated set of binary opposites – or into true or fake news in our case. Since the boundary between fact and fiction is Janus- faced, our students should look at media discourse outside the ambit of the epistemic duality of right and wrong, or true and false as a piece of news is open to other possibilities that may encompass both truth and falsehood or neither of them. It is when our students reach this moment of undecidability that critical thinking begins to operate, and the interpretation process is set free from the shackles of the logocentric logic that seeks to set up a permanent ontological boundary between entities.

This relativity of truth and falsehood does not exempt our students from reflecting on how much a particular bit of information is relevant and worth sharing with friends and family members. It is incumbent on them to know that whatever they read and share through digital media is not a reproduction of truth – which is perpetually deferred and subjected to a sort of fluidity characterized by both slippage and spillage – but a mere representation or discursive articulation which is governed by a set of signifying practices. It is true that we cannot operate without ground, but no ground is ever firm and eternal. In the political sphere, for instance, there is no absolute or universal site of political legitimacy. All politics is about competing (antagonistic) ways of understanding and giving meaning to the world. Nevertheless, misinformation does not comprise only the dyad of truth and falsehood whose bogus ontological stability has been critically interrogated in the bulk of this paper. It also includes rumors, bigotry, slander, discrimination, and prejudice that are likely to exert a pernicious impact on humans and their relationship with others.

Against these practices, people – especially students – must take every single precaution. Unlike the dichotomy of truth and falsehood which is not founded on permanent and unshakable grounds as the dividing lines between these categories are fuzzy and can be easily displaced, the words above are laden with repugnant and socially unacceptable mores that should be abolished. One should think twice before clicking on the button to share a discriminatory statement, for instance, because this would incite hatred and generate prejudice among individuals. Identifying a piece of news as fake or true is not as serious as promulgating information, on groundless evidence, that might tarnish a person's reputation and consequently undermine his public image. Nonetheless, there is no way to say that a piece of information that goes against the mainstream narrative or destabilizes the commonsense norms is false and is therefore unworthy of being disseminated. Not all 'fake' news should degenerate to the level of a rumor, slander, or disguised propaganda. "We all suffer under the tyranny of normality," argues Newman (2001, p.4), who proceeds to note that some types of power cannot operate without our consent. The totalizing logics of power can implement their discursive practices to foist falsehood on a piece of news simply to exclude it from the mainstream discourse which is pinned down within an identity that is true and natural to it. In tune with the grand narrative overtones of the official discourse, we may, consciously or unconsciously, consider anything that runs against the dominant ideology undesirable and wrong. And because we are born into ideology and we collude with it in the construction of its subjects, to echo Louis Athusser's view, we tend to misconstrue any information that runs

against the current of the commonsense as misleading and should therefore be suppressed. Cannot we sometimes embrace “fake” news discourses as a way of superseding grand political and scientific narratives or disturb social practices and discursive regimes? These discourses that are relegated to the margins of mainstream narrative have the capacity to disrupt the status-quo.

Though this paper is an attempt to read these media related categories against the grain, not everything included under the umbrella of mis/disinformation is an excuse to spread falsehood when it is synonymous with rumor, slander, discrimination, disguised propaganda, etc. This reading, which is carried out against the backdrop of post-foundationalist theory, is aimed to prevent the binary oppositions of fake versus genuine and truth versus falsehood from rejoining the logocentric order of semantic and conceptual stability. By so doing, our students will be hopefully alerted to the ruses inherent in *human* discourse and rather than decide whether a piece of news is true or false, they should deal with it critically in order to disclose its gaps, silences and contradictions. Though it is only possible to castigate existing institutions from within an inherited language – “a discourse that will always have been worked over in advance by traditional concepts and categories” (Norris, 1987) – our students are required to dislodge these concepts through the process of internal distancing and defamiliarization to prevent them from turning into established routine habits (p. 16).

### **3.2. Critical thinking as a prerequisite for handling media discourse**

So as not to fall in the quagmire of semantic decidability and its condescending reductive ethos that feeds on the dyad of inclusion and exclusion, it would be critical to deal with contemporary media narrative against the backdrop of discursive analytical strategies. Since discourse, or discursive formation, is generated by language in contexts where power relations and ideological totality’s function, it would be fundamental to look at a piece of news from different perspectives so as to weaken its ontological status and prevent it from establishing itself into a commonsense habit of thought. This stringently critical attempt to de-ontologize media-generated information can be seen as a *sine qua non* of critical thinking and a condition of its existence as an alternative to the polarization of discourse into right/wrong, substantiated/ unsubstantiated, etc.

A discursive articulation or category is intricately resistant to conceptual stability and clarity. Hence, it would be inadequate to critically address it within the context of binary oppositions. When reading a piece of information, a subtle critical analysis is required to

disrupt the ostensibly dividing line between opposing elements. A written text or speech act is viewed as a site wherein a multiplicity of voices come into play, which makes it unmonolithic and extraordinarily multivalent. This being the case, our students should learn to go beyond method that can be pithily described as the rules and procedures required to produce scientific knowledge to analytical strategy that is liable to take them from “first-order observations of ‘what is out there’ to second-order observations of the point that we are watching from when we observe ‘what is out there’. From being to becoming” (Anderson, 2003, p. Xi). By so doing, they are likely to sharpen their critical insights and embrace perspectivism as a tool that questions the ontologically overdetermined *being* of a particular object and opens the horizon of its epistemologically oriented *becoming*. What is out there is held into abeyance and is supplanted by how ‘reality’ out there happens to occupy the ontological status it has been granted by discursive regimes of truth.

Information is a product of discourse and discourse is founded on smokescreens and stratagems that only readers equipped with critical thinking as a tool of analysis can disclose and deconstruct. Far from being a nihilistic practice, deconstruction is a process, an activity of reading irreducible to method or concept. One of its aims is to dislodge and put out of joint the authority of “to be” and lay bare the logocentric culture that is confined in the prison house of ‘being’ and “closes off the possibilities of change and becoming” (Newman 2001, p. 3). In this regard, when they stir their critical thinking into action, our students have the potential to interrogate the reliability of the forward bar that sets apart such opposites as right / wrong, true /false, origin /repetition, etc.

As Jacques Derrida posits (Bawarshi, 2003), pure perception does not exist: “We are written only as we write, by the agency within us which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external” (p. 16). In the interstices of this claim lies the idea that whatever is written or spoken goes through a stringent process of inclusion and exclusion and is exposed to the tyranny of a normalizing regime of truth that keeps perception under control. And since “history is the hazardous play of dominations” (Mahon, 1992, p. 112), according to Nietzsche, our students had better look at discourse not as an innocent production of signs, but rather as a set of power-governed statements. Those granted the prerogative of power and knowledge are in a position to generate systems of meaning that are polarized around the antithetical positions of truth and falsehood. One salient tenet of critical thinking is to question the institutionalized and commonsense discourse and disclose its aporias and blind

spots in order to de-ontologize and catapult it to the region of contingency, impermanence and indeterminacy.

Since to deconstruct is to evince the impossibility of a distinction, what matters more when reading a piece of information is to question the so-called self-evident facts and propositions. As concepts contain an undecided abundance and surplus of meaning, any attempt to anchor them in the monad of semantic decidability and ontological fixation plays in favor of ideological totalities that seek to homogenize signification and suppress difference. This being the case, our students had better subscribe to the epistemologically determined conviction that the world out there is shaped by discourse – by the perspectives held by individuals, organizations, and institutions. By so doing, the text or speech act generated by *human* discourse will be read as an inter-text and the ontological dimension of Truth will be de-ontologized. The student's priority will no longer be the polarization of new media discourse around the positions of truth versus falsehood, but the extension of the domain of signification to the realm of indeterminacy and ambiguity. Discourse will be exalted to the site wherein language is viewed as an open-ended process of interpretation and a means that can be used to achieve the transvaluation of values.

Our students need to direct their academic attention towards becoming researchers that delve into media discourse and lay bare its intricacies far beyond the facile parochialism of binary logic. History and experience have repeatedly shown that what media has once branded as 'falsehood' or rumor may turn out – after a lapse of time – to be 'truth' and the other way round. Hence, it would be somehow nihilistic to argue that we can operate without a ground, but it would be equally pertinent to point out that no ground is fixed or firm when we embark upon the laborious and sophisticated task of discourse analysis. That's why, we see fit to conduct this study according to discursive analytical strategies whose central goal is "observations of observations as observations" (Anderson, 2003) unlike that of method which is the adoption of rigorous rules and procedures to produce scientific knowledge ( p. XIII).

Finally, this sub-part tackles critical thinking within the framework of the analytical-strategic discourse. The main emphasis is laid on the epistemologically determined analysis which deals with new media discourse as a process of signification that can only be de-ontologized into a potentially infinite range of interpretations beyond the narrow scope of binary oppositions. Rather than looking for truth or falsehood in a discourse, university students should be equipped with sophisticated critical tools that serve to blur the dividing

line between polarized entities and cast meaning to the regions of impermanence and contingency. This way what is out there would become less significant than how a certain discursive formation gains prominence and ascendancy.

#### 4. Conclusion

In sum, this paper is a critical endeavor to address the dyad of truth and falsehood in contemporary media discourse. The approach adopted to conduct this study is that of post-foundationalism advocated by such theorists as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Post-foundationalism is built around tenets that overlap with those of poststructuralism at several points. Central to this approach is the idea that we cannot operate in the absence of a ground, but no ground is permanent and firm. Because reality is erratic and protean, this paper questions the normalizing institutions of knowledge that are predicated on the dominant tendencies to polarize discourse around clear-cut antithetical categories.

When reading new media discourse, it is recommendable to eschew pinning down the identity of words in a context that is true and natural. Because discursive reality is Janus-faced, this paper shies away from anchoring it in the prison house of hierarchized dichotomies as of truth versus falsehood. Critical thinking implies looking at *human* discourse as a site wherein a multiplicity of voices comes into play; none of which should be backgrounded and relegated to the margins of the Master narrative. Hence the text should be exposed to a scrupulous critical analysis to lay bare its smokescreens and veiled ideologies.

This paper is also skeptical about “being” and interrogates the delimitation of ontology in order to set the tone for “becoming” as an open-ended process of interpretation. That is why, we have opted for discursive analytical strategies instead of method as a tool for contemporary media discourse analysis. In other words, we see fit to adopt an epistemologically rather than ontologically determined research and address “how” instead of “what” questions. By so doing, the reductive ethos of discourse is undermined when other facts and possibilities are likely to come to the fore outside the parochial ambit of the binary logic inherent in the metaphysics of presence.

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## **AUTHOR BIODATA**

Mohamed Handour is currently working as an English teacher at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Beni Mellal. He belongs to the Research Laboratory on Culture and Communication. He has published a number of papers in the sphere of literary and cultural studies. His interests include, but not limited to, Diaspora Literature, Literary and Cultural theory, and Creative Writing.