



Presentation

Issue 28 (Autumn 2025): Ideological and advertising discourse in universities and the media

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Co-edited by Jean-Marie Lafortune (Université du Québec à Montréal), Ina Motoi (Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue), Ligia Tomoiaga and Anamaria Fălăuș (Université Technique Cluj-Napoca), this issue is devoted to ideological and advertising discourse in universities and the media. What are the roles and the outcomes, the limits and the effects of this discourse on the deliberative capacities of citizens and the ability of societies to develop, in a coherent and inclusive manner, during a post-truth era, serving as a foundation for increasingly authoritarian political regimes, and the maximum capture of human brain time available for commercial purposes?

In the wake of the conference held on September 6 and 7, 2024, in Baia Mare, Romania, colleagues from different disciplines – education, psychology, discourse analysis, philosophy, social work, linguistics, philology, language sciences, social communication and politics – present their research. Originating from various regions of the world, their articles reflect distinct ideological dynamics, circumscribed by forces specific to each historical and geopolitical situation. They bear witness to two phenomena at work: the denunciation of the democratic deficit, which is widening everywhere in the world, as well as the resistance efforts and the quests for meaning that are set up as counterparts.

Section 1: Doctrinal and advertising logics at the University

Three articles (Trudel and Martineau, Beaupré, Oblin) put forward the market logic imposed on universities in recent decades, focused on increasing productivity and the number of clients. They dissect the falsely virtuous intentions of this logic, masked by the promotion of a false consensus among academics in the form of ideas and values supposedly admitted and accepted without real debate. Money leads the university, whose functioning moves away from public service: the institution transforms into a service provider, students into clients and professors into producers of applicable knowledge. We look for performance, efficiency, yield and attraction capacity by modifying the evaluation criteria of research and teaching. With the help of advertising speeches around employability, excellence and innovation, the neoliberal doctrine dominates the

University and transforms its management mode, while inserting itself into social relationships between individuals and the institution, and among the individuals themselves.

The articles by Gabriela Scripnic and Ana Daniela Farcaş investigate the strategies and the means used in order to render teaching into ideology: persuading through seduction and indoctrination. In the current context of general competition between universities, persuasive strategies are applied to attract potential candidates and enhance their influence. The self-reinforcement of the image of the institution follows two paths, one using subjective self-assessments to bolster facts, and the other, extracting general values from philological doxa in order to seduce. Different types of discursive ethos emerge from this juxtaposition: that of proclaimed high performance, that of tradition emphasizing its perpetuation, that of the teaching elite who confer academic excellence, and that of dynamism, a quality associated with the pragmatism that characterizes the young generations. Not so long ago, mass indoctrination was introduced with the aim of instilling in students values, goals, rules and a way of thinking. The Soviet model imposed in Eastern Europe aimed at establishing a social order based on the prohibition of capitalist production, or even more broadly of private property, and its replacement by compulsory collective ownership. The didactic act was then redirected toward a politically influenced education while the autonomy of institutions was abolished by replacing university senates with scientific councils ensuring compliance with the orders of the Party.

Ina Motoi unfolds, in an ethnographic narrative, the configuration of the transformation of feminism through the ideological struggles carried by four waves and several currents that have influenced university teaching of social work. Have we witnessed a transmutation from one wave to the other, forming the continuity of the same movement through a socially constructed definition of gender or a dispersion of ideologies opposing social representations of women to a breaking point? Do the new forms of activism that claim to be feminist contribute, by challenging the biological binarity of the sexes and advocating a confusion between sex and gender, to the erasure of women from public space?

Starting from the observation of a misuse of data for economic purposes, Stéphane Trudel puts into perspective the usurpation of university education and of the media by manipulators of knowledge and information. The use of the notions of critical thinking and reflexivity as masks of the virtue of the University's market implications induce a strong conformism. Whereas indoctrination replaces learning nourished by questioning and doubt, the author posits the importance of laying the ethical foundations of a common language through the development of critical authenticity as an understanding of shared knowledge. How can we develop an epistemology that goes beyond ideological discourse antagonistic to the university mission?

Section 2: Ideological and advertising conditioning in the media

What is the scope of exercising journalistic freedom in the new social order imposed by the verticality of economic decisions? Where the plurality of points of view is absent, the contradictory opinion is proscribed and the critical dimension is evacuated, the slogan replaces the real. What then becomes of journalistic investigation methods when ideologies state their truths?

The texts by Alina Ganea and Fabiano Ormanez put this question into perspective. The label of political correctness, increasingly claimed, applies to two situations: on one hand, the valorization of a neutral language, favoring propriety and the erasure of hierarchies, and on the other, a critique

of this posture as codification in the service of an ideological conformism. The tension between the two postures makes the politically incorrect (PI) emerge, as a return to truth and freedom of expression. The analysis of online discourse demonstrates through which significant regularities this double movement is highlighted. This analysis articulates three forceful lines of thought, namely the criticism of the normative control imposed by the PC, the re-evaluation of the PI as counter-discourse, and the strategic use of these categories as tools for ideological and advertising positioning. Moreover, advertising is understood as a discursive practice of controlling meaning and information, inserted into the logic of capitalism. It is not limited to selling products, but also disseminates values, constructs new ways of imagining social representations, while actively participating in the (re)production of cultural stereotypes. The ideological tensions of a society are marked by the conflict among symbolic inclusion, historical domination, and the emergence of a new discourse of political resistance to the PC.

Eriola Qafzezi's article examines two political speeches delivered in the media in May 2024 by Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, to the diaspora established in Greece and Italy. His rhetoric intertwines national identity pride and memory and sacrifice based loyalty. Thus, it uses emotionally charged language and discursive strategies that contribute to persuade by coding its perspective ideologically in order to shape relationships. Rama's discourse simplifies political complexities into affective, morally polarized narratives that mobilize identity and loyalty. The co-occurrence of words reveals deeper structures that reinforce inclusion-exclusion and political legitimacy, amplifying persuasion in the public sphere, which attests to the control of media discourse.

Snizhana Holyk analyzes the way in which old age is constructed through the discursive framing of language and journalistic strategies in the articles of *The Guardian* (2022-2024). Medicalization and ageism are found in media representations focused on productivity, individual responsibility, autonomy and self-regulation of advanced life, valuing it as a personal achievement according to neoliberal credos. If aging is a social construct, ageism is also co-created by society as its negative counterpart. However, elderly people who do not constitute a uniform group, their life paths differ and do not all easily stand out. Media discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of aging and old age.

The article by Madiha Touab presents the use of linguistic and iconic specificities of Moroccan culture within advertising posters aimed at raising awareness about health, violence against women, and the environment. Cognition and emotions are mobilized in order to support citizens to get involved, motivate themselves, and develop a sense of self-efficacy. The following steps are identified: attract attention, generate interest, create a desire, and provoke action. Social advertising uses *ad personam* and *ad populum* arguments, subjectivèmes, description, appeal to common opinion, examples, and expressive messages. The response of the public, however, indicated a more nuanced than expected reception.

Oana Benedicta Feher proposes an analysis of four televised debates on medical themes in the French and Romanian mediatic space during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2023). Two types of discourse oppose each other: one integrated into the ideological context, to ensure consensus, and the other controversial, questioning this context. The first carries an institutionalized common vocabulary, inscribing itself in a problematic adopted by the media, while the second allows to question the ideology imposing a distortion of reality. The purpose of controversial speeches is to

induce the necessary doubt in order to encourage reflection without making global statements of total value.

Section 3: Unmasking propaganda to grasp ideologies

The absence of criteria to distinguish effective social practices from discursive and prescriptive registers imposed on them on an ideological level has stripped the analysis of its critical spur. Like all propaganda, this acritical promotion of values functions as a filter that reduces the examination of its discourse to a single interpretative version by separating what amounts to falseness and illusion from what pertains to truth and knowledge. The ideology founding the era of post-truth, characterized by disinformation and polarization, considerably hinders the open and reasoned exchange of ideas as well as the honest quest for information and knowledge.

Anamaria Fălăuș follows the course of a teenager after a sexual assault, taken from a story by Laurie Halse Anderson. The teenager is caught between trauma and healing, social isolation and the struggle to express herself. The novelist thus analyzes the functioning of institutional propaganda of the educational system and the media, disseminated by school policies and peer groups aimed at stifling the protagonist's voice. Her inner dialogue, however, reflects a resistance, a growing awareness of how the media depicts women, of power and social relations, and of the media messages that are taken on by her peers. Through this analysis, the mechanisms of control and influence on societal norms and expectations are made visible.

The Council of Europe declares that media freedom and the safety of journalists continue to deteriorate in Albania, despite the narrative of significant progress in promoting a free press since the fall of communism. Daniela-Carmen Stoica and Xhensila Mirashi examine how state propaganda has turned the Albanian media into vassals. The transition from a one-party system to a liberalized but contested political representation has relied on three strategies to shape public opinion: information control, the manipulation of media accounts and mobilization of social media platforms. Consequently, the political powers target journalistic practice and the critical freedom of the media.

Naima Hamdi's article addresses the ideological discourses on Amazighness in Algeria, disseminated by both traditional and social media, that fuel identity tensions and contribute to the construction of stigmatizing representations. Her analysis focuses on hateful statements made by political and religious figures of conservative or Islamist currents and their discursive strategies to designate the Amazighs as a threatening otherness. The virality of these stereotypes contributes to their trivialization and legitimization. There are three axes of symbolic exclusion: the devaluation of the Amazigh language, racist and discriminatory discourse against them, and a nationalist discourse, where they do not play a «good» role.

In the context of the increasing use of social media and its regulation, Duílio Fabbri Júnior analyzes the political discourse around the recent conflict between Elon Musk and the Brazilian judiciary. Detaching persuasion from factual verification becomes a deliberate deployment of emotionally charged rhetoric. A qualitative examination of the publications and reactions disseminated on platform X identifies the rhetorical strategies of both camps, consolidating convictions as truths in the construction of arguments (generalizations, emotional appeals, mutual accusations of censorship, authoritarianism, and ambiguities), which accentuate the political divide in Brazil.

Ioan-Claudiu Farcaş examines the effect of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on propaganda. Currently, we have gone beyond propaganda based on simplified emotional narratives and slogans intended for a mass audience, to propaganda consisting of nuanced, complex and hyper-personalized disinformation. It is now important to understand the proliferation of fabricated content: imitating legitimate sources, adding cloned voices and deepfake images, developing false scenarios by exploiting psychological vulnerabilities through cognitive biases, false memories, and the weakening of critical thinking. The strategic goal of AI-driven propaganda is to reduce public trust in information by confusing truth with falsehood.

Concluding the issue, Jean-Marie Lafortune demonstrates in his article how media concentration and the commodification of university knowledge has led to the decline of press and academic freedom since the beginning of the 21st century. However, these freedoms are the guarantors of an informed public opinion and common decision-making based on knowledge subjected to fact checking, thus meeting an obligation of “transparency” and rigor. In response to the throes of neoliberal ideology that has redefined the rules, many journalists and academics turn to activism. Nevertheless, the production of information and knowledge based on ideological discourse, regardless of its source, leads to a dead end.

The next issue of the Journal is to be published in spring 2026. The deadline to submit an article or report for this issue is March 31, 2026 (see guidelines: <https://edition.uqam.ca/atps>). Please note that we accept texts at any time for publication in the off-theme section.

Enjoy the reading!

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