

Summary

The aim of this dissertation is an anthropological analysis of medical and anti-medical discourse in virtual space, on the basis of which three myths relating to medicine and health are distinguished: the myth that self-healing is possible; the myth that doctors want to harm us; and the myth that conventional medicine is harmful. Based on the work of mythologists such as Roland Barthes, Joseph Campbell and Marcin Napiórkowski, contemporary myth is here treated as an unconscious principle of human thinking. Rooted in and drawing on colloquial knowledge, occurring in the form of imagery, beliefs and connotations, it determines the human way of being in the world, and thus influences the way messages are perceived and interpreted, and what decisions (including those concerning health concerns and treatment) are made. Myth, considered as an invigorating, stimulating and empowering force, is presented as a source of a sense of security in postmodernity, whose hallmark is human functioning in cyberspace.

The theoretical foundation of reflections on contemporary myth in virtual space is provided by the works of representatives of the Frankfurt School - Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas, among others, whose reflections on the social and cultural condition of man in the postmodern world have been enriched by the considerations of Jean-François Lyotard, Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman and Tonino Cantelmi. Considering the conditions under which modern man functions in a world in which the myriad of information flowing through the media goes hand in hand with a lack of ability to verify it, the reality of post-truth is described. Post-truth occurs as the conditions of knowledge transmission, in which facts are no longer relevant and the information distributed by the media is primarily based on emotions and values.

Drawing on the achievements of medical anthropology and the phenomenology of knowledge, a netnographic study was conducted to describe medical and anti-medical discourse in virtual space. The concept of the discursive worldview made it possible to show how the way information is transmitted and the modality of websites influence the formation of opinions on conventional medicine and its specialists. The netnographic research, which combined discourse analysis with participant observation, also showed how media content can influence decisions regarding health concerns and the choice of treatment methods for diseases, and how this content influenced behaviour and action strategies during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The spaces in which the research was conducted were social media (mainly pages dedicated to New Germanic Medicine on Facebook, websites correlated with the activities of authors publishing in the paramedical journal „Harmonia. Twoje zdrowie, Twoja Odpowiedzialność”) and alternative media (sites such as „wRealu24”, „Wolne Media”, „Odkrywamy zakryte”).