

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-178-7-21>

MISINFORMATION AS A SUBJECT OF ETHICAL ANALYSIS IN DIGITAL CULTURE

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It is becoming increasingly difficult to discern the truth. Since the media began to play the role of communicators, not just linear informants without feedback, in the digital culture of media publications have virtually disappeared such qualities as reliability or credibility of the publication, expert evaluation of information. Instead, they were replaced by impersonality, rhyme, and simulacra. Accordingly, the creation of informational content turned from its goal into a means of audience increasing, effective monetizing, and occasionally ousting of competitors.

Resonant political events, environmental or economic crises, pandemics, that are disturbing mass consciousness – they all have something in common. They have not been fully studied or are difficult to explain scientifically. The more difficult it is to understand them, the easier it is for such events to capture the mass consciousness and stimulate the production of one's own explanation of reality. The average consumer of a media product is not taught to distinguish between truth and half-truths, facts and fakes, scientific theories and conspiracy theories, and therefore recklessly consumes and recklessly spreads unverified or deliberately false information such as climate change denials or claims that Covid-19 is simply "Influenza", and vaccination against Covid-19 and other infectious diseases – are experiments on people that deliberately weaken the immune system, cause infertility or even be a way of bio-technological manipulation, digitization of everyone on the planet, "chipping". Increased apocalyptic attitudes in the crisis of all epochs have led to a confrontation between scientific knowledge and religion, antagonisms between reason and faith. They have also led to widespread warnings and outright bans on Covid-19 vaccination as an imaginary fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Fake news, conspiracy theories have become both a defining feature of our time and a new pressing problem that needs to be addressed in the face of total

skepticism, suspicion, increasing discredit of science and expertise [9, p. 121]. Scientists are increasingly raising the issue of the crisis of confidence in expert knowledge. Sometimes it is possible to observe a complete rejection of it, which characterizes this situation as a growth of thoughtlessness, rise in conformism, ignorance and passivity in the individuals' behavior [10, p. 160]. The outlined realities of our time are the consequences of the information revolution in the digital culture. The information that has become publicly available generates axiological and epistemological defects, one of which is the "presumption of competence" [8], which degrades classical professional knowledge.

Based on the fact that the satisfaction of information needs is one of the key existential needs of the digital culture, we should talk about the permanent demand for information that shapes the supply market. As a result, the modern understanding of news content as a media product is constantly changing and improving in response to consumer demand and media popularity ratings. The main content of this media product is operative information about socially important and topical events with analysis of facts, as well as operative information without comments or stream information in the form of live broadcast of events (stream). These realities give rise to a culture of information consumption, which includes, in particular, the ability to distinguish reliable information from misinformation or propaganda, which is important to limit their dissemination and counter them.

The influx of unverified information, which can be easily obtained from Internet resources, is so impressive in its volume that today this phenomenon is considered as an information pandemic – infodemics [1]. We are already seeing the negative consequences of infodemics at the individual, local and globally on social levels, but the whole complex of its threatening impact on the biological and social nature of man is still difficult to predict. This gives grounds to modern philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists and social scientists to understand infodemics as a problem in two directions: 1) uncontrolled production, dissemination and consumption of information to such an extent that it is difficult to verify the truth; 2) uncontrolled and deliberate production, irresponsible dissemination and unreflective or even unconscious consumption of misinformation as false information that distorts the real state of affairs, provokes distortions of reality. The second direction is the most dangerous, because it is associated with infection like the spread of biological pathogens with all the following consequences.

A definition needs to be made now to the concept of misinformation. It is useful to find out why are not any of us safe from its effects on consciousness. Certainly, fake news has been around for a long time, but we are all well aware that it is now traveling much farther and faster through the Internet than was previously possible through traditional means of communication. It has not

yet been established what exactly to consider as misinformation, on what grounds and what are its main types and forms. Therefore, we are guided by the most general definition, meaning by misinformation as "certain types of information that lead to misperceptions of the actual state of affairs in the world" and mean in fact untruth or false knowledge [10, p. 159]. Based on the empirical approach, the scope of our research includes conspiracy theories, fakes, fake news, post-truth, alternative truth, alternative facts, which we classify as modern types of misinformation.

Based on the interdisciplinary research of British scientists in the field of cognitive psychology Karen Douglas, Robbie Sutton, Aleksandra Cichochka, Patrick Leman and Marco Cinnirella, we can state that all types of misinformation have a common core: untruth, distorted or completely false knowledge [2; 4]. This gives grounds to establish kinship between different types of misinformation. For example, the philosopher Anandi Hatiangadi considers conspiracy theories as information that does not have sufficient supporting evidence and therefore, in her opinion, belongs to the category of fakes or fake news. In general, the researcher calls fake news "publicly available content that positions itself as reliable factual information, but in fact misleads or, at least in some cases, is created for the purpose of deception" [3]. That is, fake news is usually presented as reliable factual information, when in reality it is false or misleading. In our opinion, according to the logic of reasoning, the definition of "fake news" includes not only news content, but also any other forms of misinformation related to new media (publications on websites, text blog materials, video blog content, messages, posts, reposts, memes, voice conversations, etc.) [9].

The essential relationship between "fake" and "disinformation" is emphasized in the work of Ukrainian researcher O. Pryhornytska. In particular, it is emphasized that fake news is not innocent, entertaining, but deliberately harmful and one that causes negative emotions. Therefore, the following definition is proposed: "fake is a specially distorted news, event or journalistic material that contains false or distorted information that discriminates against a certain person or group of people in the eyes of the audience" [7]. Thus, misinformation means the collective name of various types of false information and false knowledge. That is, misinformation includes unverified, false or openly fabricated information that is unconsciously or intentionally created and disseminated under the guise of reliable factual or scientifically proven knowledge.

Although most of us consider ourselves as protected to misinformation, criticized, and resistant to manipulative influences, the psychological prejudices, epistemic needs, and epistemic limitations that are inherent in us affect our ability to separate facts from fiction far more than we think. On the one hand, modern researchers emphasize a clear correspondence between

cognitive needs and susceptibility to misinformation, such as encouraged belief in conspiracy theories. In particular, it is argued that "the production of conspiracy theories is stimulated by the need to satisfy cognitive interest, requests for knowledge ("the need for cognitive closure"), which is based on the desire to get a direct answer to your question, devoid of uncertainty or ambiguity" [10, p. 162; 5]. Thus, the extinction of the need for the ultimate satisfaction of knowledge automatically reduces the level of attraction to a simple explanation of complex social phenomena and a person's susceptibility to current misinformation.

On the other hand, there are also a number of individual epistemic distortions, limitations that can distort the process of cognition, and thus contribute to the distortion of cognitive outcomes, to transform knowledge into quasi-knowledge, pseudo-theories. Such illusions of thinking include lack of meta-knowledge, bias of confirmation and confabulation [10, p. 163]. They perform compensatory and therapeutic functions, provide the subject of knowledge with feelings of conviction in meaning-making, independent comprehension of events, critical maturity, etc., but are obstacles to obtaining objective knowledge, as well as epistemic and moral defects.

As a result of the application of the analytical and empirical approaches, it has been established that, in essence, misinformation is information that includes fakes, fake news, conspiracy theories, post-truth, alternative truth. The relationship between them is revealed on the basis of such essential characteristics as untruth, distorted or completely false knowledge, which have a negative impact on individual and social consciousness. The phenomenon of misinformation as a component of digital culture requires scrupulous permanent study. Thanks to the latest communication technologies, which are constantly improving, it is able to acquire a new look, and thus have a latent impact on individual and social consciousness which is confirmed by research in the field of modern communicative practices [4].

The word is a weapon with which information and cultural wars are waged in society, which collect many more victims than in real hostilities. Therefore, an effective means of combating information interventions is self-education, non-formal education, which is increasingly understood as a necessity. Involving specialists, using data from modern science and current research can raise the general level of education and responsibility of citizens, overcome ignorance and revitalize modern society.

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