Misinformation : beliefs rather than the Truth

With the advent of new technologies and with social media becoming ubiquitous, how we get informed has considerably changed and it becomes harder than ever to distinguish truth from misinformation. This evolution in the status of truth is addressed by four documents ; an article by Peter Pomerantsev from *Granta* and an extract from an essay by K. Viner released in *The Guardian*, both published in 2016, explore the causes of this change while a 2016 article from *The Telegraph* based on an interview of psychologist Daniel Kahneman together with a website cartoon focus on the psychological motives driving our decisions. These documents explore/assess how/why the Truth seems to be losing ground and what consequences this might have on society. 120 – 5 = 115

We have entered an era where the Truth and the reliability of facts do not seem to matter anymore and where various/different versions of the truth have now become a possible alternative – what Peter P calls the “post-truth” era. As PP and KV both explain, the traditional media sources, particularly the printed press, that were once believed to transmit reliable truth everyone could assent to are now being questioned. However this distrust is accompanied with a blind but solid new trust in ‘alternative truths’ and the disinformation they carry along. 89

Technology and social media ~~appear to~~ play a decisive role in this shift and in the fast spreading of misinformation it generates. As Viner argues, given that the internet has become ~~most~~ people’s primary source of information, it is also a formidable vector of disinformation that spreads through a never-ending flow of what she and PP call “disinformation cascades” – a phenomenon exacerbated by social platforms’ algorithms that encapsulate users in ‘filter bubbles’ provided with content based on/ tailored by their online profile, thus enclosing them/users in a dangerous circle of misinformation.

The cartoon illustrates this evolution, showing people queuing in front of two desks, one for ‘information’ where the employee is holding a unique sheet of paper while the ‘misinformation’ desk is covered with several piles of papers, suggesting this desk offers multiple versions of facts among which people choose the “truth” that best suits their feeling, following a psychological process that Viner and DK identify as being driven by emotions rather than rational decisions. 160

Indeed such blind acceptance of alternative truths is reinforced by psychological biases which, as DK explains, make humans ~~prone to~~ prefer~~ring~~ to believe what they FEEL to be true, ~~often because it is comforting~~. Therefore, as people struggle to find their bearings, they lose trust in mainstream political or media institutions that used to dispense a consensual Truth. Instead, as all articles describe, they decide to believe the alternative truths proposed by strong and reassuring political figures such as Putin or Trump who play on those emotional reactions described by DK and PP, and exploit ~~/take advantage of~~ this distrust or ~~of~~ people’s nostalgia for a more secure past, motivated/fed/fueled by ~~the~~ economic hardships ~~these people endure~~ and the fear they engender. DK adds a piece to the puzzle by explaining how humans’ brain-work makes them prefer quick and emotional responses to logical but slower ones. Hence the behavior of the man in the cartoon : rather than wait patiently for information, he would rather join the faster queue for misinformation. 170 – 14 = 156

This polyphony of voices, each presenting their version of the truth as equally valid, has opened a “post-fact era” only robust and rigorous media outlets may help protect/guard society from/against. 30

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Cf remarques plus bas

Remarques diverses

Tout d’abord concernant le comptage des mots, je rappelle que les titres des journaux ainsi que les noms propres comptent chacun pour 1 mot, que ce soit dans l’introduction ou dans le corps de la synthèse.

Par ailleurs j’ai laissé certaines des options que j’avais choisies initialement et que j’ai dû modifier ou enlever pour rentrer dans la limite du nombre de mots – limite que je dépasse de 6 mots néanmoins.

Sur le fond, vous verrez en lisant ce corrigé ainsi que les copies de vos camarades que plusieurs types d’organisation des idées étaient possibles pour rendre compte de ce dossier tout en suivant le guide de la problématique. En effet la construction générale étant basée sur les causes et les conséquences, il est naturel et normal que celles-ci puissent suivre des chemins différents étant donné que parfois une chose est la conséquence d’une autre mais l’inverse est parfois tout aussi vrai. L’essentiel est que le discours et les explications suivent une logique claire pour le lecteur.

Bonne lecture et bonne suite de vacances à toutes et tous.

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