

*The Post-Truth Era and Fake News**Farah Chassib Hasan*farahhasan273@gmail.com*Prof. Sanaa Lazim Hassan***UNIVERSITY OF BAGHDAD- COLLEGE OF
ARTS/DEAPRTMENT OF ENGLISH****DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.31973/hk4pdt34>**ABSTRACT:**

Post-Truth Era is a term used recently by *The Oxford Dictionary* and it deals with facts that have no much importance in our current world. People show no interest to know the truth and they believe what match their interests and desires. Disinformation, misinformation, alternative facts and fake news are the phenomena of the post-truth era. Correlating the information becomes more complicated, challengeable and devastating due to technological development. Therefore, post-truth is a type of ideological superiority where its proponents attempt to force someone to accept a belief whether or not it is supported by solid facts. Currently, individuals are misled and manipulated by fake news. Thus, the study gives much weight to the importance of understanding the post-truth era. It argues that post-truth discourse has influenced the perception of people. Moreover, it emphasizes that the current era is but an illusion and has nothing to do with truth since it has completely disappeared and is represented by chaos and apathy.

Keywords: facts, fake news, information, Post-Truth, truth.

Introduction

The Oxford Dictionary of 2016 coined the term "post-truth era" to emphasize that the appealing to personal feelings and attitudes are much important than the objective truth and the public interests. The typical reader's response to facts that have lately lost their worth is chaos and disinterest. Additionally, *The Oxford Dictionary* continues saying the prefix "post" refers to an era in which the specified concept which is post-truth has become unimportant or irrelevant. It is considered a "violent expression of moral reprobation, which in polite conversation tends to be avoided." The post also relates to how truth has been hidden and melt down to be unimportant (Keyes,2004,p. 16).

The use of the term "post-truth" significantly increased 2016 because it is frequently used in the context of the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the presidential election in the United States according to the *Oxford Dictionary*. the election of Trump when “alt-right” and “Brexiters” highlight the political context of 2016 when facts are concealed and replaced by outright lying. Though post-truth appears specifically after those events, it is a comprehensive phrase that seizes the times (Mcintyre,2018,p. 5).

According to Klaus Benesch, the term "post-truth" accurately describes the irreversible shift in our society's mentality that has occurred from the earlier, truth-centered era to the present, alternate-truth-centered social and cultural environment. Benesch's favorite terms for this period include "fake news," "alternative truth," and "truthiness," which refers to a time when the truth is meaningless. In 2005, Stephen Colbert created the term "truthiness" to describe the state in which someone is consistently convinced that truth is a feeling that one has regardless of the reality. It is also connected to alternative facts, deception, and false news, all of which are suitable terms to define the society of the post-truth period. Truth is fictionalized in the post-truth age, and it is turning into a weaponized falsehood(2020,p.1).

Methodology:

This study adopts the analytical descriptive method to show the problem of this study, which is that individuals are easily manipulated by social media, propaganda, and fake news. It tackles the emergence of post-truth, its types, the development of truth in philosophy, and how it is interrelated to post-truth.

Truth in Philosophy:

Truth itself has been a controversial subject throughout history, and there are many unanswered problems surrounding both the idea of truth and the post-truth period. Is it, for instance, about lying? Is this an era of politics? Lee McIntyre argues that it is more accurately a worry voiced by those who place a high value on the idea of truth. People that provide the alternate version of the truth only provide that version of the truth. Deception has become commonplace in all spheres of life; it is only a way of speaking, and it has become routine (Keyes, 2004, p. 11).

Darwin's theory of evolution holds that no matter how honest chimps or humans are, nature does not take it into consideration. Her exclusive focus is on how adaptable creatures may be. Historical speaking, Darwin and his view of reality are far more in line with Immanuel Kant and the credibility of science. Darwin's notion of truth is either pragmatism or instrumentalism; our inclinations for "survival of the fittest" are enhanced, and our tendency for hunting down or

thwarting enemies are linked to our ability to deceive others. Trust is therefore social, not spiritual, and is not internal but external. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin makes the connection between truth and faithfulness, asserting that "there cannot be fidelity without truth"(Keyes, 2004, p. 23).

Because of this, it's crucial to define truth simply. Perhaps Aristotle's famous definition is "to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." The "correspondence" approach, which holds that the truth or falsity of a statement is decided by how well it conforms to reality, has long been considered to be correct. Despite the fact that there doesn't seem to be much debate among philosophers on the importance of truth as a value, there are several well-known conceptions of truth (coherentist, pragmatist, and semantic), which reflect various interpretations of the proper theory of truth (Whiting, 2013, p. 220).

Modernism, which places a strong emphasis on facts and knowledge with a scientific bent, has a tight relationship with truth. In contrast, post-truth is strongly related to post-modernism, in which falsehoods and fake news have taken the place of the truth. According to Benesch, there is neither false news nor an alternative in the post-truth era; rather, he contends that people today are experiencing a "unprecedented epistemological crisis," which makes it difficult for them to tell the difference between fact and fiction(2020,p.3).

The itemization of democracy in society and its institutions, which is brought on by enormous technological advancements that have a direct influence on both public and private life, is by no means has a direct relation to post-truth era. In its aftermath, it has become too difficult to defend the truth claims, and they are under increasing pressure. Even if there are many obstacles to achieving rational conversation, it is proposed that they be overcome by political action rather than by using philosophy. The majority of people begin to believe particular truths about truth itself. The connection between the statement and the object, which are both regarded as being unchanging and immovable, is directly tied to how the public understands truth, which is similar to what Martin Heidegger observed. Additionally, he asserts that truth and deception are intricately linked, indestructible, and incomparable in the controversial section of *Being and Time*. (Benesch, 2020, p. 3).

Societies interpret "honesty is the best policy" in different ways; for instance, the Moroccan term "haqq" connotes responsibility and obligation, while the ancient English word "trouthe" denotes loyalty, honesty, and dependability. Factuality is referred to by the German term *wahr*. Truth is now twice as important to English speakers; it

should be understood to mean correctness, factuality, and sincerity. The aforementioned issue is not only one of semantics; rather, communication is a reflection of morals and values. Philosophically, the idea of truth may be traced back to Plato, who warned Socrates against the dangers of false knowledge claims. Socrates believed that ignorance might be overcome if a person admitted they did not completely understand the truth or that they knew nothing at all. To assert that one does not want to be taught because he already knows the truth, however, is too risky. Then he could be a reckless individual who presents a serious threat to society (Keyes,2004,p. 23).

The ongoing argument between truth and post-truth has a long history, according to Italian media scholar Chiara Cappelletto, the LMU graduation conference speech titled "Alternative Facts: Between Fact, Fiction, and Politics," he emphasized that "the idea of an impersonal truth based on factual data is relatively recent in Western culture." In classical oratory and rhetoric, the orator's persuasive skills are crucial, and the factitiousness of the circumstance largely rests on one's ability to convey his argument in a convincing manner that should be logical and factual. In addition, a multitude of academic disciplines, including epistemology, language philosophy, rhetoric, poetics, ethics, etc., investigate truth as a notion(2017, p.3).

The majority of academics are hesitant to link reality to any type of impersonal, objective truth. For instance, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, a proponent of structuralism, the relationship between the signifiers (words) and signified (meaning) is arbitrary; the signified carries an inherent and immutable meaning, whereas the signifiers depend on their contextual interpretation and can convey various meanings to both listeners and speakers. So, figuring out what words really mean might be risky. Linguists tie language to human usage, which is crucial in the portrayal of our world, including the reality that is evaluated as true or false, rather than trying to depict reality as it is.

Martin Heidegger (1887–1966) provides an excellent illustration of the connection between truth and being in "Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth." He relates truth to our being in the world and bases it in the circumstances of individuals rather than its predetermination and self-evident material reality. As a result, Dasein and language are intrinsically linked to truth. Ontological interpretation holds that there was no truth before Dasein. The being-in-the-world, the "I" of a person, and who existing in time and space are the three things that should be taken into account when determining what is true. Heidegger argues that, even while an utterance may represent an undeniable part of the reality, it nonetheless engages the interlocutor in various interpretations that are

not all true or verifiable. This is true regardless of whether the interpretation is based on correspondence theory or not. From the same perspective, he adds that since that language has an intuitive and performative level and our being-in-the-world is determined by the changeable mode of language, that is, disguised and closed off by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity" (Benesch,2020,p. 4).

According to Heidegger, truth must "discover the being toward which it is" in order to be verified. What is shown is the assertion's discovering being, or the affirmation of the speech action that has the ability to reveal. Evidently, Heidegger's critique of the notion that truth results simply from the correlation between verbal claims and nonverbal realities is consistent with postmodern and poststructuralist theories of language. It also diverges significantly from other linguistic perspectives, such as the deconstructionist one, which presupposes ongoing interaction between signifiers and, as a result, ongoing deferral of meaning. Since being and falsehood are equivalent from an ontological perspective, if "Dasein is in the truth," as Heidegger claims, then "Dasein is in untruth" ,then being and falsity are alike (Benesch, 2020, p. 5).

Modernists used the term "euphemasia" to make unpleasant terms like "liar" more elegant. It may be referred to as "enhanced truth Truth lite, soft truth, faux truth, and neotruth". The "ethical twilight zone" is where post-truthfulness may be discovered; in other words. It's where one strives not to see himself as dishonest when his morals and actions are at odds. Reassessing beliefs is something that is enjoyable to do at *the Ledger-Book*. According to morality, earlier generations tended to believe that a man may be either virtuous or not. Truth, however, is a sliding scale or slippery in the post-truth era. People opt for what suits them best. As a result, ethics in society have undergone a significant change. For instance, morality has become relative rather than absolute, shifting from a "set menu" to a "buffetstyle ethic" where people only choose what is appropriate for us. Since societal environment does not place a lot of value on honesty, dishonesty is on the rise. The main reason why people lie is because of their circumstances; most people are truthful under some conditions and dishonest under others. Situations that excuse dishonesty have increased while those that promote honesty have drastically decreased (Keyes, 2004, p. 16).

The Decline of Traditional Media and the Rise of Social media

In the past, neither the invention of social media nor the presidential elections marked the beginning of fake news. In actuality, it was developed with the idea of news. With the widespread dissemination of news following Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing machine in 1493, false news first appeared. The verification of news was difficult to do in that time period. A variety of news sources had emerged, from eyewitness accounts from tradespeople to formal publications by political and religious intuitions. However, their reports lacked objectivity and journalistic ethics. Fake news persisted throughout history even after the scientific revolution and the Age of Enlightenment. After the French Revolution (1789), In Paris, there were several stories that described an approaching bankruptcy. Opposing political parties disputed this with various arguments and indirect blame. The readers of the past were quite similar to the suspicious and knowledgeable readers of today. Fake news took shape during the American Revolution when it was spread quickly by the British and Americans. Following that, fake news persisted both in America and worldwide. However, eventually, objective truth starts to appear. In factual news' emergence, according to Michael Schudson's *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspaper*, fake news declined more as a result of the popularity of objective newspapers and Associated Press initiatives to promote nonpartisan reporting. However, the independent publications continued to publish anything they pleased. When the Associated Press began to grow towards the end of the nineteenth century, impartial reporting wasn't the primary standard or practice in the field. The major newspapers in the next century paid close attention to the intriguing articles that provided specific details. The main shift in newspaper content was the emergence of sensationalism in all of its forms. This was the outcome of the conflict between media titans William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, and it gave rise to "yellow journalism," which had its roots in the 1890s but was characterized by "salacious, over-the-top, scandal-driven journalism" and a focus on entertaining readers rather than providing information (Mcintyre, 2018, p. 100).

The current technology development, which alters society's worldview and has new consequences and dynamics for interactions between organizations and people, is the key factor that contributed to the formation of the post-truth period. The connections have grown increasingly intricate, terrible, and difficult to understand. The widespread adoption of knowledge is a clear indicator of rapid technological advancement. There is no place for objective truth when there is no supporting evidence. Facebook is one of the most popular

social media platforms that tries to address societal demands. According to Levitin, Facebook is one of the most significant platforms for reporting fake news. Since cynicism, ignorance, apathy, delusion, political spin, and lying have been known for decades, the post-truth period is not intended to establish its many manifestations. Instead, it plays a vital role in illuminating how to recognize the actuality of reality. When a person ignores fundamental truths, he must suffer the deadly ramifications; the diversity of our society and their rejection of reality has a life-altering cost (Keyes, 2004, p. 14).

Unsurprisingly, conventional media saw a severe collapse as a result of the internet's extremely crucial position in society. In the United States, print newspaper circulation peaked in 1984. A long-term decline began when TV cable acquired market share, and things really started to go south in the 1990s with the extensive public availability of the World Wide Web. When the financial crisis hit in 2008, many newspapers fell into a self-feeding loop where their revenues dropped, they cut employees, their offerings dwindled, and subscribers kept leaving. Analysts recently issued a warning that newspapers were incentivizing readers to cease purchasing by providing progressively less in print. The bulk of papers now have much fewer and smaller pages, making them less in real size. "I just find it inconceivable that. "I can't prove that this is driving circulation, but it's certainly something that if I were a newspaper publisher would keep me up at night" (Mcintyre, 2018, p. 90).

Many social media platforms play a role in the emergence of the post-truth era. For instance, when Facebook was first introduced in 2004, it offered users the opportunity to connect with real and virtual friends, share interests and ideas, and engage in a variety of communities. As Facebook matured, "news aggregator" became a very common term. People posting their own experiences on their pages and the "trending stories" section, which was managed and moderated by Facebook, are what gave these stories such prominence. Facebook was personalized and only showed the news items that people were most likely to be interested in based on likes. Naturally, other firms try to engage more, not only by displaying user material but also by creating a different network for news stories that have gathered from many sources. Both YouTube and Twitter were introduced in 2005 and 2006. The line between fact and opinion became even blurrier with the advent of social media as a news source as individuals shared stories from blogs and alternative news websites as truth, regardless of how accurately such stories were reported. When the US presidential race heated up, social media information became politicized and matched "motivated reasoning" that was made stronger by technology advancement(Mcintyre, 2018, p.93).

The updated news is only the news that interests the public as opposed to the factual news from less acceptable or desirable mainstream news. Unintentionally, people feed their desires with news which are consistent with their existing beliefs without bothering themselves to look for accurate information or patronize traditional news sources. Psychologically, such kind of belief is called confirmation bias which is similar to the motivated reasoning that is aforementioned. According to recent survey which is carried for the US adults, it is reported that 62% of those adults are getting their main information from social media while 71% of them are getting their main information from Facebook. This reflects a fundamental change in the source of news content. How can the community identify the reliable stories if the vetting and editing are declined recently? With the existence of traditional news, it gets too challenging to distinguish between well-sourced and fact-driven news and what is not (Mcintyre, 2018, p.93).

“News Silos” is a popular problem of recent years due to its danger on the audience since it feeds the polarization and the fragmentation in its contents. Getting the main news from social media allows others to tune out the sources that they do not like or simply unfriend the friends who oppose our political views. The accuracy of facts and the algorithm which Facebook uses to determine whether those facts are reliable or fact free mainly depends on “likes” that others do or the person himself can do. How ironic and dangerous that the Internet which gives anyone reliable information by people who eagerly look for them, has for certain individuals but an echo chamber. Additionally, there is no editorial control over what is presented as “news”; how can one know if he is being manipulated or not? (Mcintyre,2018,p.95).

In *Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform*, the author thinks that Facebook and Twitter are “incubators” of “fake news” rather than improving the lifestyle of society or enabling them to take their decisions freely. Three words are commonly used recently: misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda which are interchangeably used. All are intended to mean false information to mislead the public in the form of informative content such as social media, published books, and so on (Persily, N., and Tucker, etc, 2020,p.24).

Ways of Subverting Truth:

Subverting truth has different ways. First of all, it's important to understand that sometimes individuals mistakenly communicate erroneous information. Thus, there is "falsehood". Second, "willful ignorance," which is when most of people do not bother to search for the accurate information and embrace it even though it is false, is blamed on the person's laziness because the knowledge is so accessible in the post-truth period. Thirdly, lying refers to the deliberate telling of false information with the goal to deceive. The third one is seen as a turning point because it poses a threat to the audience. Every lie has a target audience, and one would not have said it if there were no one listening. As a result, he switches from being the lone fact interpreter to a fact forger. As a result, the transition from one stage to the next is hazy and ill-defined. Additionally, coming up with "avoidance mechanisms" like justifications for lying offers people a motive to lie and deceive others. Dishonesty, according to post-modernists, is not just not as awful as it formerly was, but really not bad at all. People prefer to refer to falsehoods as "misspoken", "exaggeration", or "misjudgment" instead of calling them out as lies. Additionally, they refer to others as being "in denial" rather than accusing them of lying, it is no more stigmatized but is still acceptable (Keyes, 2004, p. 15).

A clear example of subverting truth in the post-truth era is the Iraq occupation, when the president of America, George W. Bush, perfectly knew that to occupy Iraq, he needed a conceivable narrative to mislead the world community. His manipulative narrative is "Iraqi Freedom". Later, he claimed that he pursued freeing an oppressed people from their evil dictator, who had weapons of mass destruction (Keyes, 2004, 213).

Disinformation is fraudulent information that is intentionally spread and is referred to as "false, mistaken, or misleading" information in literature. Misinformation, on the other hand, is untrue information that is spread with the intent of misleading others. Because disinformation and fake news both aim to deceive others, or "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers" (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017, P.5), the terms are often used interchangeably.

Truth or post-truth is an uncomfortable concept that describes the present political, social, and cultural conflicts of our day. Additionally, it juxtaposes two opposing world views; the one is based on verifiable facts, while the other depicts the post-factual world, which is viewed as a sea of fake news and misinformation in which the rival representations are engaged in a never-ending battle.

Post truth, in McIntyre's opinion, the reason why this ever happens is the following question, which is as crucial. Someone doesn't contest an unarguable or easily verifiable fact for no reason; they do so when it benefits them. It is often advantageous to dispute the fact when a person's views are threatened by a "inconvenient fact." This form of post-truth connection to facts only arises when a person is striving to affirm something that is more important than the truth itself, which can happen either at a conscious or unconscious level (because sometimes the person one is seeking to convince is ourselves)(13). Thus, truth is more related to satisfying one's emotions and convincing him/her that he/she is telling the truth.

Conclusion

Media manipulation, which is used as a tool to twist the truth and manipulate public opinion. This reflects real-world instances of media manipulation that perpetuate post-truth dynamics, such as the spread of false information through social media platforms. Also, political propaganda employs techniques to disregard the objective truth in favor of emotional appeals and divisive rhetoric. Finally, public apathy and normalization, for instance, the gradual acceptance of the fake truth echoes the normalization of unrelated facts when post-truth dynamics go unchallenged. Post-truth is about how people respond to reality, not to reality itself. The cognitive bias can be overlooked if everyone has the capacity to think deeply and be aware of reality.

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عصر ما بعد الحقيقة والأخبار الكاذبة

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المستخلص

عصر ما بعد الحقيقة هو مصطلح تم استخدامه مؤخرًا في قاموس أكسفورد ولا يتعامل مع الحقائق ذات الأهمية الكبيرة في عالمنا الحالي. لا يبدي الناس أي اهتمام بمعرفة الحقيقة ويؤمنون بما يتناسب مع اهتماماتهم ورغباتهم. المعلومات المضللة والمعلومات الخاطئة والحقائق البديلة والأخبار الزائفة هي ظواهر عصر ما بعد الحقيقة. يصبح ربط المعلومات أكثر تعقيدًا وقابلية للتحدي وتدميرًا بسبب التطور التكنولوجي. لذلك، ما بعد الحقيقة هو نوع من التفوق الأيديولوجي حيث يحاول أنصاره إجبار شخص ما على قبول اعتقاد سواء كان مدعومًا بحقائق صلبة أم لا. والهيمنة السياسية هي نتيجة ذلك. لذلك، فإن قول الحقيقة يتعلق أكثر بإقناع شخص ما به وإشباع عواطفه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما بعد الحقيقة، الحقائق، الأخبار المزيفة، المعلومات، الحقيقة.