



Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism

Iasi, Romania

www.csesm.org

TABLE OF CONTENT

Editorial	3
Julian Warter	
Fake News and the Ethical Way: A Transdisciplinary Approach	5
Sergiu Bortoș, Adrian Hagi	
Transhumanism (H+) in Oncology, Between Benefit and Risk	11
Simona Mihașiu, Oana - Diana Mocan and Corina Lupău	
The Transition towards an Independent Life of Private Social Services Beneficiaries	21
Loredana- Florentina Bozariu	
Existential Spaces and Cultural Identity in Esther Freud's I Couldn't Love You More	33
Laura-Corina Roșca	
The Dynamics of Entrepreneurship in the Informal Economy	43
Joseph Omoloba, Christophe Estay and Oluwafemi Philip Adeosun	
Voluntary Simplicity as a Spiritual Remedy for Hypermaterialism and Overconsumption: Perspectives from Two of the Oldest Faiths	55
Hershey Friedman and James Lynch	
Rejoinder to Fegley and Dominiak on Property Rights and Gun Control.....	71
Walter Block	
Letter to the Editor	79
Elena Gologan, Andrei Nicolae Gologan and Oana Timofte	
Book Review	81
Aurelian Virgil Baluță	

FAKE NEWS AND THE ETHICAL WAY: A TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Sergiu Bortoş

Research Assistant, PhD student

Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Institute of Interdisciplinary Research,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, Romania

E-mail: bortos.sergiu@uaic.ro

Adrian Hagiu

PhD student

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, Romania

E-mail: adrianhagiui@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study explores the application of ethics in preventing and combating fake news by proposing a so-called ethical way, which can be understood as a set of standards and principles by which different agents act and make decisions so that they are morally right and just. Thus, starting from a distinction structured on several levels (individual, societal, organisational, technological and normative), we have exposed the situations in which the ethical way could combat the fake news phenomenon. By promoting a set of ethical solutions, we can also discuss the implications of the present study, which can be foreseen among the actions that can contribute to the prevention of the fake news phenomenon and to the creation of a cultural and public climate that encourages truth and accuracy, at any of the levels discussed.

Keywords: Fake news, Ethical approach, Ethics, The ethical way, Responsibility.

I. Introduction

The phenomenon of fake news has become one of the major challenges of recent years, affecting different aspects of social life and society, such as politics, business and social interactions. Thus, fake news can be defined as distorted information spread with the intentional aim of deceiving people or to achieve other political, financial objectives, impersonating a journalistic format (Tandoc et al., 2018; Gelfert, 2019). Therefore, we can discuss the consequences that the phenomenon in question produces in society, whether we are talking about medium or long-term ones, eroding public trust, manipulating election results, promoting an insecure social climate and even social unrest are just a few examples that can be pointed out. So, fake news can be characterised by a low degree of facticity and a clear intention to disinform, based on a well-drawn agenda or goals (Gavriliuță & Bortoş, 2021).

In this context we propose for analysis the importance that ethics can have in relation to fake news, namely the ways in which a set of ethical solutions can be discussed in the prevention of this dysfunctional phenomenon, taking into account several levels of applicability of ethics, such as individual, organisational or social.

The objective of the present study is to illustrate how ethics can contribute to the prevention of fake news. Also, once this objective is achieved, we can outline some practical implications on how the ethical way can contribute to this prevention challenge, by recalling

the need for a culture of truth and accuracy, based on deontology and ethical principles. The research related to fake news, either if it is related to understanding or explaining the complexity of this phenomenon, exceeds the area of communication, philosophy or sociology, and it stresses a transdisciplinary approach – using concepts, theories and methodological apparatus from a wide range of fields.

II. Fake news and the ethical way

Fake news produces negative effects on individuals and society, as mentioned above, which can include distorting public opinion, destabilising social consensus, and even inciting violence. However, the term fake news can be considered a contested one (Brown, 2019), even if there is a consensus on its meaning. These debates start from the idea of the evolution of pre-existing phenomena in society, such as disinformation or propaganda, which are now included under a new concept, starting from the technology that has changed their dynamics and brought to attention the dangerous effects that fake news can produce (Wang, 2020). An important distinction that we can make when addressing the issue of fake news is related to how we approach it: we can discuss the conceptual analysis and knowledge gathered around this topic, but we can also consider, on the other hand, the phenomenon under research, namely the effects produced in society and ways in which it can be prevented and combated (Hagiu & Bortos, 2021). Thus, the vision of the present paper is equally focused on both aspects related to fake news.

Furthermore, the field of ethics can be considered a factor that can encourage the promotion of honesty, transparency and accountability in society (Boylan, 2020). Ethical approaches can therefore be seen as essential in combating the negative consequences of fake news. Thus, ethics can be understood as a framework that provides the safety of disseminating information that adheres to moral and professional standards, depending on the situation and the actors involved (Stroud, 2019). In this sense, we propose to designate them as the ethical way to be applied in the prevention of the fake news phenomenon, being a solution that can be framed among the already existing ones such as critical thinking, media literacy or fact checking.

Hence, “the ethical way” can be defined as a set of standards and principles by which both individuals and organisations act and make decisions so that they are morally right and just. These principles may include, but are not limited to: integrity, honesty, respect for others and society, fairness and accountability. Thus, behaviour guided by the ethical way requires balancing competing interests, taking into account the possible consequences of one's own actions (individual or organisational). In addition, in some situations this may mean appealing to professional codes of conduct, ethical and legal rigours. For example, in the media field the ethical way can mean adhering to professionally specific ethical guidelines, such as accuracy, objectivity, fairness in presenting and reporting facts in the news, as well as respecting rights such as privacy.

Summarising what has been presented up to this point, we frame the present approach among those that emphasise the role of responsibility, in the sense that Hans Jonas (2014) discusses the ethics of technology.

III. How ethics can be a solution in preventing fake news?

Ethics can be seen as an important aspect of everyday life, with a significant role in decision-making as well as in the way we act in relation to situations and in our relationships with others. Since it is based on the use of values and principles to guide individual and group behaviour, we can highlight several levels at which the ethical way can be applied in relation to the fake news phenomenon. Thus, we distinguish between: individual, societal,

organisational, technological and normative levels. We will present each of these aspects below.

III.1. Individual level

At the individual level, ethics in relation to the fake news phenomenon can address personal behaviour, i.e. awareness of how one's own actions can produce consequences and fuel the phenomenon. Promoting the ethical way at the individual level would coincide with promoting responsibility for one's own actions, in a commitment to society and those around us. While it may seem that this level is insignificant, the sum of individual actions could be seen as an important source of why the fake news phenomenon has gained so much visibility in recent years (Horner et al., 2021). Awareness of the impact of one's own actions, such as sharing fake news on one's personal page or verbally spreading false information, can contribute to the proliferation of the phenomenon.

III.2. Societal level

At the societal level, ethics can primarily contribute to raising awareness of the negative effects of fake news and defining it as a problem of social scale, affecting its proper functioning. Thus, this first step would emerge towards establishing the importance of prevention of the phenomenon, before it produces effects and intervention through counter actions (e.g., fact checking, debunking) becomes necessary. Secondly, societal solutions that can be contained in the ethical way could be the promotion of media literacy and critical thinking (Puig et al., 2021), so that any information that raises suspicions about accuracy or fairness is not spread before it has been verified. Also, at this level, the need to diversify information sources should be realised, starting from the idea that taking information only from social media about news is problematic in making ethical decisions (Chauhan et al., 2021). As Landon-Murray et al. (2019) suggest, in this chaotic informational context "strong democracy and civic engagement are premised on the ability to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources and information" (Landon-Murray et al., 2019, p. 519). So, we can see that the effects of fake news can most often be seen as having an impact on a social level, and the ethical way can be seen as a chance to find the solutions precisely within it.

III.3. Organisational level

At the organisational level, an ethical approach would mean ensuring that the way media organisations, advertising companies and social media platforms operate is guided by basic ethical principles and, depending on the activity, may also be guided by field-specific deontology. For example, media outlets and journalists have an ethical obligation to verify sources and to be sure that the information they disseminate is factual. Violations of these ethical standards damage the image and reputation of the sector and its professionals, but also have social consequences, which can range from minor conflicts to widespread and long-lasting social unrest, consequently, "journalists can align their performances with the moral commitments that define them and thus inhabit their role with integrity" (Borden & Tew, 2007, p. 313). Equally, social platforms and websites hosting user-generated content share responsibility with users for its accuracy and veracity, and must minimise any attempts to spread misinformation. In any of the situations presented, organisations play a significant role in the evolution of the fake news phenomenon, through the actions or non-actions they carry out. The choice and decision to intervene in the fight against fake news is an ethical one and in this way one can see the involvement and responsibility towards the members of society.

III.4. Technological level

At the technological level, the ethical way can be approached from at least two positions: firstly, through the technologies that can be used in generating fake news and in spreading it, and secondly through the technologies that are used in combat, since they, too, can be problematized from an ethical point of view (Lacity, 2022; Allein et al., 2023). In the first of the situations presented, the responsibility is clear for the acts of producing evil, and we can also discuss the imputation of moral responsibility for the creators of these technologies. When discussing the technological solutions used to combat the phenomenon, we consider the ethical way necessary in respecting basic rights and principles towards members of society, given that these actions can affect fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression or the right to privacy.

III.5. Normative level

At the normative level, we can argue about how public authorities with legislative powers are formulating and imposing rules to prevent and combat disinformation in the online environment. Thus, these institutions must bear in mind, when proposing and imposing such rules, that they are consistent with citizens' rights and do not infringe them. On the other hand, the responsibility of regulatory authorities can also be found in the adoption of effective and problem-oriented solutions. Responsibility at this level also lies with private entities such as social platforms or those hosting user content, as they set their own operating rules and community standards, and through the way they are formulated (but especially enforced), user interactions and their actions can stimulate or prevent the spread of fake news.

Thus, following what has been presented so far, by applying the ethical way at any level we can achieve a clean information ecosystem, based on fair principles, in which fake news could be prevented by the collaboration of each of the actors involved. In addition, we can reiterate the usefulness of an ethical imperative to guide their actions and decisions: "Reflect critically so that you act responsibly!" (Hagiu & Bortoş, 2022, p. 67). By applying this imperative, we could see the commitment of everyone in relation to other members of society, and this could be a first step in preventing the emergence of misinformation and other dysfunctional information phenomena that can be akin to fake news.

Implications and conclusions

In conclusion, the study on the ethical way used in fake news emphasises the need for individuals, organisations, and society as a whole to take responsibility for preventing and combating the spread of misinformation. By promoting and ensuring the ethical behaviour of media outlets, journalists, social platforms, and encouraging individual responsibility, we can work towards a more informed and truthful society.

The implications of the present study, i.e. the promotion of the ethical way, can be found separately at each level, ethics can be seen as an important filter to prevent the dissemination of counterfeit information and all this can be seen as a way of making the information disseminated transparent and accurate, based on the responsibility towards those around. While this may seem like wishful thinking, it could be understood as a culture of truth and accuracy, which is arguably more necessary than ever.

The limitations of the present work are given by the strictly theoretical approach, without data-based substantiation to confirm or invalidate what is presented. From this we can also deduce future directions which would mean verifying all that presented in this paper, in order to check the practicality and effectiveness of the proposed ethical solutions. Further research could also propose to extend the ethical way to other areas that are affected by the fake news phenomenon, beyond those identified by us.

References

- Allein, L., Moens, M. F., & Perrotta, D. (2023). Preventing profiling for ethical fake news detection. *Information Processing & Management*, 60(2), 103206.
- Borden, S. L., & Tew, C. (2007). The role of journalist and the performance of journalism: Ethical lessons from “fake” news (seriously). *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22(4), 300-314.
- Boylan, M. (2020). *Basic ethics*. Routledge.
- Brown, É. (2019). Fake news and conceptual ethics. *J. Ethics & Soc. Phil.*, 16, 144-154.
- Chauhan, R. S., Connelly, S., Howe, D. C., Soderberg, A. T., & Crisostomo, M. (2022). The danger of “fake news”: How using social media for information dissemination can inhibit the ethical decision making process. *Ethics & Behavior*, 32(4), 287-306.
- Gavriliuță, C., & Bortos, S. (2021). The Relationship Between Trust in Media and Fake News: A Sociological Approach. *Scientific Annals of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi. (New Series) Sociology and Social Work Section*, 14(1), 133-141.
- Gelfert, A. (2019). Fake news: A definition. *Informal logic*, 38(1), 84-117.
- Hagiu, A., & Bortos, S. (2021). Understanding Fake News: An Interdisciplinary Approach. *Acta Universitatis Danubius Communication*, 15(2), 58-71.
- Hagiu, A., & Bortos, S. (2022). The Imperative of Responsibility in the Era of Fake News. *Agathos*, 13(1), 61-69.
- Jonas, H. (2014). Technology and Responsibility: Reflections on the New Tasks of Ethics. In *Ethics and Emerging Technologies* (pp. 37–47). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Lacity, M. C. (2022). Fake news, technology and ethics: Can AI and blockchains restore integrity?. *Journal of Information Technology Teaching Cases*, 12(2), 121-134.
- Landon-Murray, M., Mujkic, E., Nussbaum, B. (2019). Disinformation in contemporary US foreign policy: Impacts and ethics in an era of fake news, social media, and artificial intelligence. *Public Integrity*, 21(5), 512-522.
- Puig, B., Blanco-Anaya, P., & Pérez-Maceira, J. J. (2021). “Fake News” or Real Science? Critical Thinking to Assess Information on COVID-19. *Front. Educ.* 6:646909.
- Stroud, S. R. (2019). Pragmatist media ethics and the challenges of fake news. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 34(4), 178-192.
- Tandoc Jr, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining “fake news” A typology of scholarly definitions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137-153.
- Wang, C. C. (2020). Fake news and related concepts: Definitions and recent research development. *Contemporary Management Research*, 16(3), 145-174.