**INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE ERA OF POST-TRUTH CHALLENGE: BEYOND LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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1. **Introduction**

In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power. In theory, anybody can join the debate on the future of humanity, but it is so hard to maintain a clear vision. Frequently, we don’t even notice that a debate is going on, or what the key questions are. Billions of us can hardly afford the luxury of investigating, because we have more pressing things to do; we have got to work, take care of the kids, or look after elderly parents. Unfortunately, history gives no discounts. If the future of humanity is decided in your absence, because you are too busy feeding and clothing your kids, you and they will not be exempt from the consequences[[3]](#footnote-3).

The quip above demonstrates the feature of the common ancestry of humanity as it concerns human actions and decisions. That human actions and decisions are most of the times not only grounded on emotional reactions, they are irrationally debasing. While such emotions and heuristics were perhaps suitable for dealing with life in the Stone Age, they are woefully inadequate in the Silicon Age. The substitution of traditional news agencies and communication platforms in Nigeria with social media networks has not only increased human capacities, it has aided the common good and further eased communication and increased the human knowledge base. For instance, the Silicon Valley in the state of California in the United State of America has proved the extent to which human ingenuity can be exerted in beneficial ways.

Here in, the top of the multibillion-dollar communication companies like Apple, eBay, Cisco, Lockheed, Hewlett Packard (HP), Google, Netflix, Facebook, Oracle, Tesla, etc. whose yearly budgets far exceed the entire yearly budget of Nigeria, has proved that, ICT remains the building blocks of contemporary communities. The state of California for instance prides herself as the 6th largest economy of the world after France and Brazil. This romantic picture of ICT is but only one chapter of the ICT divide. In today’s world, the scale and speed of the highly partisan news and falsehoods that circulate in the human environment is deafening. In politics and governance for instance, the populist have exploited the ICT effectively and without restraints, to access power and authority. Today, we are in the era of post-truth, an era in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. An era that harbours corruption of intellectual integrity and damage to the whole fabric of democracy. The battle to protect information integrity[[4]](#footnote-4) and expose fake news becomes *sine qua non.* We shall in this paper explore the dark side of the age of information, a side that has been exploited by the media mavens, political hacks, and ideological propagandists who promote lies, illusion, confusion, and other forms of demented or manipulated imagination. In doing this, we shall proceed as follows:

1. Historicize the concept of ‘fake news’ here referred to as post-truth.
2. Interrogate the concept of ‘information’ and its goal in human affairs
3. Evaluate the nexus between ‘truth’ values in ‘information’, ‘Misinformation’ and ‘dis-information’
4. Situate the role of Philosophy in the era of post-truth.
5. **Philosophical Enterprise in ICT**

The essential feature of philosophy is its liberating effect. The emergence and development of philosophy in the ancient Greek society amply illustrate this point. In the then classical Greece, where mythology and religion held sway over people’s minds, and superstitions, together with their accompanying fears, predominated over human actives and ways of life, philosophy emerged as an attempt to know the true nature of things.

Like many Nigerians of today, the Greeks of that period would superstitiously see and attribute the cause of, say the drought in the annoyance of the goddess of rain who is holding back rain until sacrifice is made to appease her. The lack of rains, still after sacrifices had been made, and the cumulating of similar discrepancies spurred the early philosophers into action to determine and establish the authentic causes of phenomena, events and occurrences, etc. Philosophy as Staniland conceives it is the critical examination of the ideas we live by[[5]](#footnote-5) and the quest for the foundations of our existence. Thus, philosophy emerged by questioning the authenticity of popularly held beliefs about the origins, causes and presence of things, events, etc. (for the lack of them) in a bid to establish their true origins or causes. Consequently, philosophy grew out of myth-steeped religious consciousness while raising doubt about the letter, and in a still battle with it, philosophy took shape in the struggle to furnish making with a rational explanation of the world for effective communication. From this perspective, it can be said that the emergence of philosophy coincides, historically, with the need for theoretical inquiry. Philosophy, thus, became the first form of theoretical knowledge while simultaneously fighting myths and religious bigotry.

Mythology is an imagined reflection of a reality which arose in the consciousness of the primitive man, who attributed spiritual life to surrounding nature, e.g. rocks, mountains, etc. In mythology, with its faith in imaginary spirits (good or evil) and gods, great importance is usually attached to questions of the origin and essence of the world.

Objective true knowledge of phenomena, events and occurrences in the surrounding world is impossible without a logically developed thinking. It was philosophy that assumed the task of elaborating logical categories and laws as a way of liberating manning from illusions and the effects of superstitious or mythological interpretation of the world. It was a result of this elaboration that sprang up other concrete forms of human knowledge such as physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, psychology economics sociology, history, etc.

Any philosophical reasoning that lacks this liberating firmament certainly falls short of the stuff and cannot be said to be philosophic in the true sense of the world. It may be a mythology, a king of mysticism or religion, but surely not a philosophy. Crucial to communication practice is a liberating critical philosophy which has the goal of objectively comprehending relativity, the true nature of things, phenomena, events, occurrences, etc. That is to say, a philosophy which has the task of attaining a true knowledge of the universe and while on the way to this true knowledge ensures the liberation of the people, along the line, from all sorts of superstitions belief, mysticisms, mythical world views, common place ignorance and misconceptions – all that make man the slave of his environment.

1. **What is communication/ICT?**

All that have ever been accomplished by humans and all that ever will be accomplished involves communication with others.[[6]](#footnote-6) For Adler and Towne, communication is a process between two people that begins when one person wants to interface with another. “Communication originates as a mental image within a person who desires to convey those images to another”.[[7]](#footnote-7) It presupposes and precludes the transfer of information from one person to another. It is the giving; receiving or exchange of ideas, information, signals, or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups, regardless of distance, to persuade, to seek information, to express emotions.

One of the immediate tasks of philosophy is to wrestle with the question of how communication, thought and language enables us to get a proper grip on the world. In recent years, philosophers and some communicators have become increasingly aware of the possibility that there may be no single answer to this question. This awareness has undoubtedly been promoted by the increasingly one-dimensional character of the Western communication practice with its high degree of misinformation, disinformation and the accompanying tendency for peculiar ways of using communication to predominate in peculiar social-cultural and politico-ideological contexts. One result of such awareness has been the call for a new international information order.

The new information order so desired cannot emerge by mere wishful thinking. It has to be consciously sought, purposefully designed and brought to be via theoretical formulations, philosophical postulations and peculiar, deliberate enlightened communication practice.

The focus of this essay is to raise some of the vital relevant questions concerning this central issue as it relates to our life and the practice of communication in Nigeria. An appropriate question here is, what is communication? For what purpose is it intent to serve? When and how do we inform, misinform and disinform or even propagate lies and deceit?

Communication has attracted the attention of scholars from the time of ancient Greece. Quite often it was subsumed under other disciplines. One of the early efforts of defining communication was made by I.A. Richards, an English literary critic, in 1928. In his view, Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced, and in that another mind, an experience occurs which is like the experience in the first mind, and is caused in part by that experience[[8]](#footnote-8)

An American psychiatrist and scholar, Jürgen Ruesch, ‘identifies 40 varieties of disciplinary approaches to communication – architectural, anthropological, psychological and political, etc. Today there exist at least 50 modes that draw upon a number of discrete intellectual disciplines and analytic approaches. In this wise, communication may be examined in not less than 50 different ways.

Numerous and differently phrased questions have been posed by artists, architects, urban and regional planners, artisans, writers, and others concerning the overall influences of various types of communication. Researchers from the perceptive of their disciplines have sought possible theories to explain the ways in which human dispositions are affected by certain kinds of communication under certain circumstances. Communication process can mar, make or unmake the process of formation and development of national awareness.

It is from this perspective that an enlightened, critical philosophy, liberated communication practice which is in consonance with the self – reliance orientation is a necessary corollary of that process in a rapidly changing environment or one in which development has assumed a chaotic character and progress therefore is retarded. In a society where” anything goes” but “ nothing really works” an enlightened effective communication rooted in self-reliance helps to order the perception and orientation of the people along an optimal trajectory and thus helps to avoid dilly-dally in a situation where a quick perception and appropriate rapid change in orientation or reorientation is needed.

An unenlightened communication practice, albeit unwittingly, promotes superstition, myths, mysticism and fosters ignorance at the expenses of objective true knowledge of the universe, the world about us. Yet there is no gainsaying the fact that only an adequately objective reproduction in language form of the law governed process taking place in nature, society and human thinking can appropriately guide the human activities in the universe.

Thus argued, a print medium that has as its editorial policy to publish what people want to hear or read and further purports to have a means of interviewing the dead and buried long ago from the “world beyond” certainly belongs to the unenlightened, unliberated communication practice whose main objective may be just to make money. This kind of communication practice should not only be denounced by the enlightened segment of our communication enterprise, it should also be out rightly avoided by the public for want of existential value.

1. **Historicizing Fake News**

Humanity is today living in a new and frightening era of post-truth, a world in which lies and fiction are hosted as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. By way of definition, post-truth a condition where “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’[[9]](#footnote-9). In academic and scientific world whose whole purpose is to establish objective facts, the post-truth world is not only an undisguised horror, it is the "corruption of intellectual integrity" and damage to "the whole fabric of democracy"[[10]](#footnote-10). It synonym, *fake news,* is any news or story put forward in the public domain that is inaccurate, dishonest, misleading, intentionally untrue, and even intended to damage the paradigm of factual information. **It** is a form of yellow journalism (news stories with catchy headlines but with little or no factual basis) that consists of deliberate misinformation, hoaxes or fraudulent stories, spread in traditional media or online social media. It is published with the intent to distort or "mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/or gain financially or politically"[[11]](#footnote-11)

More commonly established in politics, fake news has come to describe a type of campaign or any political activity that is fueled by emotive arguments rather than fact-checks, and targeted to capture the gut-instinct, anti-establishment politics. It also goes by the name propaganda. In the recent past, this evil political tool swept Donald Trump and Brexit supporters to victory. In today’s polarized political and media climate, Donald Trump has cannily sought to discredit any negative reporting by deeming it *fake news*. The fake news conundrum is also believed to have aided Buhari’s second term victory in the 2019 presidential election in Nigeria.

A retrospective look at history reveals that the phenomenon of *Fake news*/propaganda, has always been part of the human communication landscape. The sophists, equipped with some basic knowledge, wielded the elements of Aristotelian logic but without principles and care for the truth earned their peddling a world of seeming and clever deception to win a case and turn round and argue the same case to win for the loser. They make truth a matter of clever dressing. They dressed up untruth in the very shinny robes of truth and sell it to the highest bidder. Fake news has seen the denial of entire nations and the creation of fake countries. Many people might be upset if and when we equate religion with fake news, but that’s the truth. Fake (heretical) doctrines dominated the early Christian communities. Nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher defined it as "that which preserved the *appearance* of Christianity, and yet contradicted its *essence*"[[12]](#footnote-12) Thus, heresy is understood today to mean the denial of revealed truth as taught by the Church. The book of Second Peter Chapter two, verse One (2 Peter 2:1) exemplify this when it states, "even as there shall be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring on themselves swift destruction"

For better for worse, fiction is amongst the most effective tools in humanity’s toolkit[[13]](#footnote-13) Used as a propaganda, inclusive of hate speeches, fake news has in the past, isolated individuals or groups of people, destabilized governments, and fomented anarchy. Take the death of a nine year old English boy called Hugh whose body was found in a well in the town of Lincoln on 29 August1255. The rumour that he was ritually murdered by local Jews quickly spread. Arising from this was the trial and execution of nineteen Jews. Eventually, the entire Jewish population of England was expelled in 1920. The story has it further that, the boy, was buried in Lincoln Cathedral and was venerated as a saint, drawing many miracles and pilgrims at his tomb even centuries after the expulsion of all Jews from England[[14]](#footnote-14). We are told that only in 1955- ten years after the Holocaust, did Lincoln Cathedral repudiate the blood libel, placing a plaque near Hugh’s tomb which reads:

Trumped – up stories of ‘ritual murders’ of Christian boys by Jewish communities were common throughout Europe during the Middle Ages and even much later. These fictions cost many innocent Jews their lives. Lincoln had its own legend ant the alleged victim was buried in the Cathedral in the year 1255. Such stories do not redound to the credit of Christendom[[15]](#footnote-15)

This is a clear case of fake news that lasted for 700 year before it came to be shut down by strong and rationally convincing evidence. This is most likely what may have informed the reasoned mind of Grayling when he says, fake news is not the soundbite any more, but the "I-bite". In his words, the whole post-truth phenomenon is about, 'My opinion is worth more than the facts.' It's about how I feel about things. It's terribly narcissistic. It's been empowered by the fact that you can publish your opinion. You used to need a pot of paint and a balaclava to publish your opinion, if you couldn't get a publisher. But all you need now is an iPhone. Everyone can publish their opinion - and if you disagree with me, it's an attack on me and not my ideas. The fact that you can muscle your way on to the front row and be noticed becomes a kind of celebrity.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Today, fake news on social media has become part of the Nigerian pre and post-election debate with the attendant consequence developing an online culture that has made it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. The truth therefore is that, the process of fake news is not only corrosive of our public conversation and our democracy, it has equaled a few claims on Facebook, Telegram, Instagram or Twitter with the same credibility as a library full of research publications. In today’s era of post-truth, everything is relative, stories are made up all the time and there is no distinction between truth and falsehood and more importantly, one doesn’t need facts, s/he needs just lies. One ready example here has to do with the sitting president of Africa's largest democracy who was forced to refute repeated claims that he had died and a clone (Jibrin from Sudan), was now running his office. For the avoidance of any shred of doubt, the Nigerian President Mohammadu Buhari pinned his denial on his [official Twitter handle](https://twitter.com/MBuhari) thus, *This is the real me*, dismissing the allegation as *ignorant rumours*[[17]](#footnote-17).

1. **The Post-Truth Challenge: Beyond Logic and Epistemology**

Logic is the study of the principles of reasoning and the formal validity of arguments. A logical argument is one in which the conclusion is drawn from premises (accepted or assumed propositions), so that to accept the premises but deny the conclusion is inconsistent and without merit. A logical argument however, need not necessarily result in a correct conclusion, merely an internally consistent one. There is a term used in propositional logic called “truth value.” I think this term is important because it points to the root of what’s wrong today in our discourse, whether it’s a “debate” among pundits on a cable show, arguments with online outrage warriors or a spirited conversation with relatives. The case in point here has to do with the bolstering of mere opinion with what one believes to be facts. As it were, these “facts”, mere opinions as they are, are somehow elevated to being correct. Without verifying those facts underpinning our viewpoint, one can find oneself defending a defenseless position. Such is the tragedy that calls to question the role of logic and epistemology in human correctness in politics and social affairs.

When for example the Buhari Campaign Organization (BCO) sought to change the narrative about the Benue massacre to portray Mohammadu Buhari as *Mai-Gaskiya* (man of integrity) to be voted in the 2019 elections, supporting evidence was immaterial to prove their case. For them, the Benue people were to blame for the killings. It did not matter to them that their belief not only lack a true value but carries only the sound of truth for their likes who want to believe it. It has long being confirmed that the killings in Benue as elsewhere have been the handiwork of the Fulani pastoralists who have long being declared the 4th deadliest terror group in the world after ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab[[18]](#footnote-18). Elsewhere, a 27-year-old Washington Post reporter, Miss Cooke fabricated a story about an eight-year-old heroin addict in 1980. The story won a Pulitzer Prize[[19]](#footnote-19) before the fabrication was uncovered. But in the aftermath, it became a general rule among newspapers that not every proffered story will be published. Editors must oversee stories and verify the identity of confidential sources. The resulting editorial practice is, in effect, the opposite of what the marketplace of ideas endorses. Editorial gatekeeping is used to avoid the promulgation of, and false belief in, inaccurate stories.

The trouble with Fake news is that, emotions more than rationality is the rule. As is common with fake news, bad faith is gloried in matters of information and communication. Good practice dictates however that, if, and when two people argue in good faith about their personal opinions they will almost always come to the conclusion to “agree to disagree”. However, an argument in *bad* faith thrives on masking one’s opinion to appear as the whole truth when it is not the whole truth. Here argued, objective facts are replaced by appeals to emotion and personal belief.

A [recent study](http://anthonyadornato.com/study-reveals-social-medias-impact-on-editorial-decisions/) of local TV stations in the US conducted by Adornato revealed that that nearly 40% of their editorial policies did not include any guidelines on how to verify information from social media, yet news managers at the TV stations admitted that at least a third of their news bulletins had reported information from social media that later was revealed to be false or inaccurate[[20]](#footnote-20).

The argued point here is that, there is a distinction between mere opinions (appearances) and reality (form), and that, personal feelings must be truly expressed as they are in themselves as they are, not mere opinion, especially when those opinions have prejudicial roots. If, and when one makes a statement, the specter of truth is still important. The appearance of truth has an impact for those who might otherwise be on the fence on a particular issue. This is where the root of “post-truth” actually exists. Appropriately, we identify post-modernism and relativism as the intellectual roots "lurking in the background" of post-truth. According to [Sean Coughlan](https://www.bbc.com/news/correspondents/seancoughlan) , “everything is relative. Stories are being made up all the time - there is no such thing as the truth. … that has filtered its way indirectly into post-truth."[[21]](#footnote-21) Today, homo- sapiens have always preferred power over truth and have invested more time and effort in ruling the world than in trying to understand it. What still makes the current trend of fake news different, said Harari,[[22]](#footnote-22) is technology, which enables us to tailor propaganda on an individual basis, and match the lies to the individual prejudices. The reality today is that, many people no longer take seriously the truth value of statements we express in support our beliefs, nor do many people realize the disjunction between statements we express and the underlying believes we hold due largely to ignorance, disinformation or misinformation. An illustration of the forms of ignorance, disinformation and misinformation will situate the fake news conundrum in perspective[[23]](#footnote-23)

1. **Ignorance per se**: lacking knowledge or awareness, being uninformed about a specific subject or fact. This state is akin to Plato’s *Allegory of The Cave* in which prisoners are incapable of seeing the difference between reality and his “reality”[[24]](#footnote-24).
2. **Misinformation**: This is an art of offering information that is incorrect or inaccurate intent at deceiving or misleading people[[25]](#footnote-25).
3. **Disinformation**: this entails supplying misinformation with the deliberate aim to mislead. The intent to deceive is important because, in general terms, untruths need not be pronounced by someone whose intention is to deceive[[26]](#footnote-26).
4. **Missing information**: this entails the act of non-inclusion of information that should be known or present in order to understand facts and make decisions. Its absence is due to negligence, incompetence or the desire to mislead. For example, the much trump-up campaign against the Government and people of Benue State that the Benue people, not the Fulani Militia that are responsible for the killings in the State omits the fact that, following the enactment of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law by the State Government, the National Vice Present of Miyetti Allah Yusuf Husseini Bosso threatened after the January, 2018 blood bath in Guma and Logo that there would be more bloodshed in Benue unless the law is reversed! Usman Ngelzerma, the Secretary General of MACBAN is also on record for threatening that Benue will not know peace except the Law is modified. The MACBAN Chairman, Benue State Chapter, Garos Gololo has also admitted that the Benue killings are retaliatory[[27]](#footnote-27). Till date, and after series of secrete investigations, no substantial evidence was unveiled to indicate that the Government or people of the State were/are involved in the ongoing killings in the state. One can conclude nothing from no information or evidence.
5. **Self-deception or bad faith:** Sartre observed presciently that bad faith is believing what you don't believe: holding or living a contradiction at the one and same time. Sartre's notion is central to his philosophy, a mode of living inauthentically, where people may deceive themselves into thinking that they do not have the freedom to make choices for fear of its potential consequences, i.e., that they would have to be responsible for themselves. We might file forms of "willful ignorance" under this category, knowing something to be true but consciously or unconsciously choosing ignorance. This situation has been most rightly described by the American Philosopher Daniel Dennett as loss of respect for truth and facts. Humanity he says, is entering a period of epistemological murk and uncertainty, such that we have not experienced since the Middle Ages. The real danger before us he says, “is that we have lost respect for truth and facts, and have lost the desire to understand the world on the basis of facts”.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The challenge of logic and the value of epistemology calls to question what individuals or information professionals can do to check the source of, and spot fake news. First of all, it would help to acquire some training in identifying logical mistakes in reasoning dressed up as rational arguments[[29]](#footnote-29). One of Trump's favorite weapons is the argumentum ad hominem, typically described as an attack on a person’s character or physical appearance as an alternative to confronting issues. For example, Trump's own ad hominem salvos on Bill Clinton include such phrases as “He doesn't know much,” “Wild Bill”, “There's never been anyone more abusive to women in politics”, and “Highly overrated!”[[30]](#footnote-30). These comments clearly runs against the code of speech hygiene[[31]](#footnote-31) here referred to as communication ethics. Communication and ethics are tacitly or explicitly inherent in all everyday human interactions fraught with intentional and unintentional ethical questions. ICT is designed to ease communication and inform humanity generally from the position of knowledge as a duty, i.e., *an attitude which I engage in my project as my ow*n (acting morally). This presupposes a human quality of being good, being oneself, acting transparently with regard to one’s situation and being responsible for who I am. Unethical communication practice on the other hand instantiates inauthentic living and alienation which makes life an anguish-inducing experience. On the whole, each one of us must act as if the whole world is watching our actions and inactions. As we seek to inform humanity, we must always direct our cognitive mechanisms towards the truth that makes society happier and less miserable. This calls for transcendental knowledge which capacitates humanity to discern beyond the appearances and mere sophistry, to the noumena and reality.

The International Federation of Library Associations[[32]](#footnote-32) offers the following general principles for spotting fake news:

1. consider the source – investigate the site, its mission and contact information;
2. read beyond the given site or source, especially if the content is outrageous or intended to inflame;
3. check the author to see what credentials they have or whether in fact they are real;
4. check the kind of supporting resources that are provided – follow the links and where they lead one to, to assess the credibility of supporting resources;
5. check the date of the story – old news may in fact be old and not currently relevant;
6. determine whether the site is a spoof or satire, such as many stories that appear in The Onion*[[33]](#footnote-33)*
7. check your own biases – no one is unbiased – make sure that you are not prey to ask the experts – consult a librarian or subject expert or check a fact-checking site, like Politifact[[34]](#footnote-34)

This is a call to empower our epistemic prowess to go beyond artificial logic, and to alternative positions in our search for truth. Descartes’ methodic doubt also known as a skeptical approach seems attractive here. This common sense and meaning-making approach enjoins us to be sceptical of the body of knowledge at our disposal. This approach invites us to be skeptical of every information/ideas which uses a violent, aggressive, discriminatory language, and that such kind of message is “fake” by default. It requires us to be skeptical of every information and ideas that treats as criminals or is against whole social groups, even on the basis of real isolated events that promotes instrumental values, because this interpretation is biased by default. Lastly, it further commands us to be skeptical of every information/idea that attacks or targets persons for their characteristics rather than discussing ideas or actions for their intrinsic value.

As epistemic agents in the era of the Information Society, we must complement *meaning* with *sense*. This means that we must not only promote a culture of a collectively shared complex of socially constructed signification, we must also deconstruct meaning to suit the uniqueness of man, and commit ourselves to creating a better life and a more humane world. This grounding logic was long contemplated by Immanuel Kant as the basis of human actions when he enjoined humanity to “act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always as an end”[[35]](#footnote-35). That is, objective facts must influence and shape public opinion more than appeals to emotion and personal belief.

1. **The post-Truth Conundrum: A Recourse to Plato’s Shadow of Enlightenment:**

Our present material world is awash with forms of ignorance where few reliable signs point to truth though, such truth have been sullied with, and by propaganda. To borrow a phrase from Alice in Wonderland, the truth has become "whatever I want it to be." In today’s era of post-truth, reality has been relativized to the extent that human power depends on creating and believing fictions. In Nigeria, we have politicians who have smashed the political orthodoxy, due to ignorance, incompetence, lack of interest and in the process developing three personality disorders, namely, narcissistic personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder[[36]](#footnote-36). In a work entitled The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 Psychiatrists and Mental Health Experts Assess a President, authored by Bandy X. Lee (2017), Donald Trump is reported is said to be unfit to serve as US President. Like Donald Trump, Mohammadu Buhari and many Nigerian leaders are unfit to preside over the affairs of this country. They have turned our fledgling democracy into a kakistocracy, a nicely onomatopoetic word derived from the ancient Greek, kakistos (κάκιστος), meaning the worst. Nigerian government is run by the worst in the society; by those least qualified, competent or principled. In the Nigerian experience, this kakistocracy is aided and abetted by two leading political parties that have presided over our fledgling democracy in the last twenty years namely, the All Progressive Congress- APC which has ruled for four years and People’s Democratic Party- PDP that presided over Nigeria for sixteen years. Evidently, these Parties not only lack every semblance of moral principle, their historical foundation is shaped by a sense of justice that is out of tune with contemporary political realities. The result is a veritable tidal wave of deception, falsehood and untruth which calls for redemption; of matching our way to the world outside the cave.

Plato’s allegory of the cave calls to mind the power of knowledge, truth and redemption. Here, Plato casts his own long shadow to invite us to free ourselves from the chains of slavery and away from mere shadows of reality to make our way to the world outside the cave. It is a shadow that does not promote ignorance but enables us to see the light. The Socratic profession of ignorance enlightens us by challenging our own, individually or professionally, and society's ignorance. It declares that truth matters in a society that hopes to remain democratic and just.

All of us, inclusive of information and communication specialists, have a responsibility to promote the truth(s) in the communities and environment that we serve, both individually and collectively. Individually, this must be done in a Socratic fashion, to challenge the ignorance of information seekers and patrons and to cultivate their own competence; collectively, through programs that promote information literacy, challenge easy answers to complex questions and make available resources that inspire insight in information seekers, ourselves and the world. In their finest hour, information professionals are signs pointing toward truth(s). There are many psychological and personal pitfalls, as we have shown, that demand proactive critical thinking and rational discourse.

Secondly, we all must be enabled to cope with our own ignorance and biases (Socratic stinging) and foster competence in themselves and their colleagues (Socratic midwifery). We have many new challenges in the ICT professions as we become more and more wired and digitized. But to avoid occasions of violating information ethics or practicing the ethics of ignorance, we must remain current, competent, and knowledgeable (including knowing when our skill set has been exceeded) and we must seek programs that promote individual and collective information literacy. Only in this way can we move out of the cave and into the light beyond the systematized logic and ordered epistemology.

The argued point here is that, the best way for society to get the truth is to let everyone express their viewpoints to others. This is an argument in the direction of freedom of expression requiring governments to stay out of the picture, and let everybody expound and defend their views. This will get a wider range of views and evidence that will profit everybody in their efforts at garnering more truth. This is the point long advocated by John Milton when he wrote: “Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter[[37]](#footnote-37) Similarly, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a famous (dissenting) opinion wrote: “[W]hen men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Here argued, the ICT professionals need to get training so that they can quickly spot fakes. He must be a man of knowledge laced with wisdom and capacity to read things critically on and offline, in order to distinguish *the lies of Truth and the Truth of lies.* Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Maestrocautions us here that,“a lie told once remains a lie, but a lie told a thousand times becomes the truth”[[39]](#footnote-39). Likewise, Adolf Hitler adds a voice that, “the most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly - it must continue itself to a few points and repeat them over and over”[[40]](#footnote-40)

Mental development and progress is no doubt at the heart of the advancement from myth-ridden consciousness to a clear, unbiased, objective awareness of the world. An awareness liberated from all forms of superstitious belief. This entails an awareness that enthrones in its carrier a high and ever- increasing capacity to comprehend phenomena of nature, socio-historical processes, human relations and inter-state relations. Such an awareness is possible only when the individual has acquired a scientific knowledge of the world.

Knowledge, in the broad sense of the word, is a subjective image of the objective world; a reproduction in language form of the jaw governed processes in nature, society and human thinking faculty. This means, in the first place, that knowledge does not and cannot exist irrespective of man, the carrier (the knower); in the second place without man’s the relationship with the object he tries to know. Here the subjective and the objective constitute an indissoluble unity. Knowledge may be classified as an everyday, commonplace, scientific, empirical or theoretical. What is common to all these knowledges is that they are all based on practice or are connected, however, indirectly with practical activity of man and his requirements.

The simple truth here is that, truth has never, at any time or in any activity, been high on the agenda of *Homo sapiens.* In religious worship, political practice or economic engagements, falsehood and false stories have an intrinsic advantage over truth when it comes to uniting people, even for selfish, dangerous and retrogressive agenda[[41]](#footnote-41). In this case as in many others, members of the same ethnic, religious group or neighbours are made to believe the outrageous tale, to be counted to stand together in unity or in times of crisis. It is worse when power is involved. “Truth and power travel together so far” says Yuval Noah Harari, “but sooner than later, they go their separate ways”. He adds;

If you want power, at some point you will have to spread fictions. If you want to know the truth about the world, at some point you will have to renounce power. You will have to admit things – for example about sources of your own power- that will anger allies, dishearten followers or undermine social harmony[[42]](#footnote-42).

Three questions require our urgent attention here. Firstly, should we serve power or truth? Secondly, should we aim to unite people by making sure everyone believes in the same story? Thirdly, should we let people know the truth even at the price of disunity? Studies have shown that unity is prioritized over and above the question of truth and trust which have long been at the center of communication ethics inquiry. While “no human groups, organizations, institutions, or states could succeed without the background assumptions of truthfulness”[[43]](#footnote-43), it cannot be ignored that truth and truthfulness are grounded on the individual’s active intention either to deliberately misinform and/or disinform others or to unknowingly uttering a falsehood[[44]](#footnote-44).

Here understood, it is in the character of the human species chose power and authority in order to control the world. In doing this, humanity unfortunately promotes myths and falsehood to the disadvantage of trust and integrity, the core ethos of good journalism and enlightened communication[[45]](#footnote-45). The rise of Post-Truth and deconstruction has thrown open for us the reality that, all truth is not only subjective and perspectival, there is no such thing as *the ultimate truth*. And if there is truth, the germane questions are, of whose truth, to what end, to what purpose? Like the spider’s web, truth is the secretion of the subject, the spider spinning its web, adopting it to its prey. Truth is thus contextual, conditional and always an interpretation, a choice among so many infinite democratic possibilities.

A journey away from fakes, and to an enlightened communication suggests a culture of intellectual hygiene. This requires a new instrumentality for the acquisition of a knowledge that is grounded on *justified true belief,* devoid of Francis Bacon’s famous *Four Idols*[[46]](#footnote-46)*.* Idols in Bacon’s view are characteristic errors, natural tendencies, or defects that beset the mind and prevent it from achieving a full and accurate understanding of nature. Bacon points out that recognizing and counteracting the idols is as important to the study of nature as the recognition and refutation of bad arguments is to logic. Avoiding these idols or potential deceptions or sources of misinformation and disinformation beclouds our knowledge of external reality that empowers us to aim and communicate the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

1. **Conclusion**

The foregoing discourse argues the conclusion that, humanity has seen the advent of *Post-Truth*; the era of Anti-Enlightenment in which knowledge gained systematically and through careful observation of the environment is rejected and replaced with arrogant anti-positivism, propaganda, misinformation, disinformation and the transmission of fakes news (lies and untruth) through ICT. The problem of fake news and its accompanying distortion of religion and politics is complex and can hardly be solved with legal instruments though, this does not mean that fake news is not a serious problem, or that humanity has a free licence to lie through their teeth. Fake news is the new claim for truth. It is an old friend and acquaintance of humanity. It is a human product, an artifice of humanity and we can never get rid of it though, we must always consciously balance our viewpoints, and try to combine the idealism of Plato with the practical method of Aristotle, we must derive from Plato a breadth of vision, and Aristotle’s depth of penetration, Socrates’ utility and be a sworn enemy of sophistry like Diogenes.

While it would be totally wrong to conclude that every communication is just fake news, any attempt to discover truth without a reasoned deconstruction of our sources of knowledge is doomed to failure. A conscious attempt must always be made to differentiate between serious journalism and propaganda, for underneath all the fake news, there are real facts. It is therefore the responsibility of all of us to invest good money, time and efforts in uncovering our biases and verifying our sources of information. Good journalism costs a lot of money. Yet only good journalism can ensure the possibility of a good society, an accountable democracy and a transparent government. What this means is that, we must guide against accepting fake news as the norm, we must recognize it as a far more difficult problem than we tend to assume. It thus behooves us to always interrogate our sources of knowledge to discern good product, for as the Japanese saying goes, *good thinking, good product.*

In politics, Religion, in Science, in our Law courts, in our human structures and institutions, the old guard rails do not anymore offer any certainties. Falsity masquerading as the truth and illusion acting as a guise of truth has assumed the status of a universal virus. This has inhibited the fabric of human rationality and disrupted our capacity for the acquisition of true knowledge. Knowledge is not to be acquired merely for its own sake, which is learning, but for its existential value, which is wisdom. The principal end of philosophy is to improve the state of man; the merit of all learning is to be determined by its measure of usefulness. Humanity must therefore develop the capacity to explore in far greater depth how to avoid brainwashing in our quest for true knowledge that distinguishes reality from fiction. It must be argued didactically that, **human rationality influences our perception and that while o**ur ability to behave rationally depends not just on our ability to use the facts, but our ability to give those facts meaning. To be rational, we need both facts and feelings. We need to be subjective though, subjectivity sometimes makes mistakes compared to what the facts say. We need to learn to recognize the pitfalls of our subjective risk perception.

Information communication thus entails the unveiling of facts/reality as it is, in itself as it is. In a null form, it entails the communication of facts/reality as it is not, the way it is not in itself as it not. In the era of post-truth however, the growth of communication and social media, has not only promoted the growth of information and potential knowledge, but also the growth of ignorance in its various forms and guises namely, misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and attacks on credible news sources[[47]](#footnote-47). Like the cave prisoners, we must be epistemically inspired and able to distinguish fact from fiction that is in full supply by external manipulations of politicians and the media. Socrates’s account of the cave includes powerful and manipulative “puppeteers” who cast the shadows that the prisoners mistake for reality. In Plato’s day, those puppeteers were often “sophists” - skilled and well-compensated mercenary orators who, Plato alleges, constructed arguments for money without regard for their truth or falsehood[[48]](#footnote-48). Today’s puppeteers include dishonest politicians and the purveyors of fake news. Like the sophists, fake-news authors whether they are politicians or professional media practitioners are typically more interested in profiteering than in informing citizens. A strong point must be made though that, communicating truth defies such artificial boundaries. Therefore, a people and a nations that turn inwards to advance selfish chores are anathema in our globalized world. Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook says this much, “We’ve gone from a world of isolated communities to one global community, and we are all better off for it”[[49]](#footnote-49)

In this regard, the legislative focus should be on the seemingly indispensable tie between providing news and commercial interest. A national law attempting to fight fake news and hate speech online and equally with simple restrictive measures, such as being attempted by the Nigerian Government, seems destined to be ineffective and ultimately unlawful. The reason being that, many journalists are driven more by stories that get traffic, attract huge financial reward, social attention, and the incentive towards producing more and checking less. This has promoted a culture in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. What is needed to change the narrative is a true education[[50]](#footnote-50) which places emphasis on the profession of ignorance, interrogation of sources of knowledge and the desire for indubitable knowledge that upholds the whole truth and nothing but the truth.The Socratic irony becomes relevant here[[51]](#footnote-51). It calls for committed engagement with the society, listening and feeling the collective pulse of the people and connecting with the society in the pursuit and dissemination of objective information and true knowledge.

History may teach us a little lesson from Germany. After the Second World War, the authors of what was called Trümmerliteratur, or “rubble literature”[[52]](#footnote-52) felt the need to rebuild their language, poisoned by Nazism, as well as their country, which lay in ruins. As it were, a conscious need for the reconstruction of reality and truth from the ground up, became a priority. Any body of knowledge/information worth the human value must undergo the triple filter test: it not only be ***true***, it must be ***good*** and ***useful***. For different reasons, and in the midst of the rubble of truth, humanity must take upon itself the task of rebuilding its beliefs in reality and respecting the noblest pursuit of truth independent of the truth of lies. Hannah Arendt’s sharp thoughts here may add up as a conclusion thus,

the substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lies will now be accepted as truth, and the truth be defamed as lies, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world –and the category of *truth vs. falsehood* is among the mental means to this end –is being destroyed[[53]](#footnote-53)

In Kafka's magnificent pronouncement: “It is difficult to speak the truth, for although there is only one truth, it is alive and therefore has a live and changing face.”[[54]](#footnote-54) In the face of the enormous challenge of the era of fake news therefore, humanity needs wisdom to bring down Philosophy from the skies to aid truth tellers in the pursuit and dissemination of information and knowledge.

1. Being a Paper read at a Philosophy Colloquium of the Philosophy Students, National Missionary Seminary Abuja. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Alloy S. Ihuah is a Professor of Philosophy, Benue State University, Makurdi [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Taken from Yuval Noah Harari’s *21 Lessons for the 21st Century,* London, Jonathan Cape, 2018, p. ix [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Information integrity relies on the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the information content, processes and systems to maintain a healthy information ecosystem. Reference, https://www.newknowledge.com/articles/what-is-information-integrity/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Staniland, H. S, *“What is Philosophy”, Second Order, An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. VII, Nos 1 & 2, 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Adler, R, and Towne, N. *Looking out/looking in (2nd Ed.)* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), Pg. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Adler, R, and Towne, N. *Looking out/looking in (2nd Ed.)* Pg. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. I.A. Richards, *Context of Language: An Overlooked Contribution to Rhetorico-Communication Theory*; read his *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, (New York, 1936), p. 20; and Michael G . Garko’s and Kenneth N. Cissa’s *An Axiological Interpretation of I.A. Richards’s Theory of Communication and its Application to the study of Compliance-Gaining* for deeper understanding can be found in [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [Sean Coughlan](https://www.bbc.com/news/correspondents/seancoughlan), Education correspondent on, What does post-truth mean for a philosopher? [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Wikipedia, Fake news, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. MacGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology* Blackwell: 2001, p.153 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For many a humanity, Adam and Eve does not exist though, religious institutions are acknowledged as useful and important human organizations that have inspired people to build hospitals, schools and bridges, to bring joy to billions, to be compassionate, courageous and creative [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Jonathan Haidt, The righteous Mind: Why Good People are divided by Politics and Religion (New York: Pantheon, 2012); Joshua Greene, Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them (New York: Penguin Press, 2013) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Frans de Waal, Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 157 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. |  |
    | --- |
    | Stephanie Busari, How Fake News was Weaponized in Nigeria's Elections, CNN, February 15, 2019,  Accessed Monday 18th March, 2019 |

    [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Press Statement by the Tiv Professionals Group titled, *Fulani Militia Herdsmen Have Crossed the Line!* held at the NUJ House in Makurdi, 20th March 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. # Read Jonathan Friendly: *Writer Who Fabricated Story Tells of Pressure 'To Be First*. Jan. 29, 1982 <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/29/us/writer-who-fabricated-story-tells-of-pressure-to-be-first.html>, accessed on April 2, 2019,

    [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. # <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-37846860>, accessed on April 2, 2019.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. see [Sean Coughlan](https://www.bbc.com/news/correspondents/seancoughlan), Education correspondent on, *What does post-truth mean for a philosopher?* [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Yuval Noah Harari, 21 Lessons for the 21stCentury(Kinneret-Zmora-Bitan Dvir, 2018); Yuval Noah Harari, “The Truth about Fake News,” Yediot Ahronot, December 20, 2018,https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5430064,00.html; Yuval Noah Harari, “Yuval Noah Harari Extract: ‘Humans are a Post-Truth Species,’” The Observer, August 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/aug/05/yuval-noah-harari-extract-fake-news-sapiens-homo-deus>. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. # Misinformation Vs Disinformation: What’s the Difference? Don Fallis's article mentioned above distinguishes four major types of misinformation: lies, visual disinformation, true disinformation, and side effect disinformation (2014, p. 137).

    [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Don Fallis correctly observes this in "The Varieties of Disinformation" (2014, p. 136) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ht://bid.ub.edu/en/39/frohlich. Htmtt Nota [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid. Don Fallis (2009) notes in *A Conceptual Analysis of Disinformation* that, while disinforming may not require that the source of the misleading information intend to deceive people, it does at least require that the source of the information foresee that people will be deceived [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Zacharys Anger Gundu, *Tiv Professionals Group (TPG)* Press statement on the Fulani Herdsmen Attacks on Nigeria, Makurdi, 7th July, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Carole Cadwalladr, “Interview with Daniel Dennett,” The Guardian, February 12, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The University of Texas at El Paso has published a *Master List of Logical Fallacies* (Williamson, S. D.) which is available as open courseware. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The New York Times has kept track of Trump's ad hominem tweets, which are mostly examples of name-calling. This tabloid has published these in an ongoing list titled, "The 359 People, Places and Things Donald Trump Has Insulted on Twitter: A Complete List" [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This aspect of political hygiene has been so shamelessly and violently abused by the political class in Nigeria that through lies and blatant falsehood is true while seeking to dominate and assert their power. When President Buhari lies for example, he does so not only to get someone to accept what he’s saying as true, but also to show that he is powerful enough to say it. For the president and his men in power, their high political office comes with the prerogative of creating their own reality. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. International Federation of Library Associations*, 2017* [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. (<http://www.theonion.com/>) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. (<http://www.politifact.com/>) [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Kant Immanuel, Grounding for Metaphysics of Morals. Translated by Ellington, James,W (3rd ed), Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1993 (p. 36.4.429) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Psychology Today Editorial Staff, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. John Milton 1644 cited in “Free Speech, Fake News, and Democracy, Alvin I. Goldman Board of Governors Distinguished Professor, Rutgers University [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See Abrams v. United States 1919: 630. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Cfr. Yuval Noah Harari, 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, (London, Penguin Random House UK, 2008 ), P. 237 [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Hillmar Hoffman, The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism, 1933-1945 (Providence: Berghahn Books,1997), 140 [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Region is very much guilty of this as captured here, “This New Nation called Nigeria, should be an estate of our great grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the North as willing tools, and the South, as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us, and never allow them to have control over their future” - quoted in The Parrot of October 12, 1960, (cited by Oyeyemi, 2015; Awhefeada, 2018; and Anenga, 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Yuval Noah Harari, 21 Lessons for the 21st Century, (London, Penguin Random House UK, 2008 ), p. 241-242 [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Bok, S. (2011). *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. New York: Random House US. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Wilcox, W. (1961). The staged news photograph and professional ethics. *Journalism Quarterly*, *38*, 497–504. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. There are many examples of news outlets doing it right with open, in-depth corrections and explanations of mistakes include: 1. Dateline NBC**'s Faulty GM Crash Test:** The NBC news magazine had wrongly rigged crash tests of GM trucks to falsely claim they were unsafe in 1992. An internal review found producers at fault and led to their firings, as well as an internal policy change to protect the network from future wrongdoing (https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1993-03-23-1993082146-story.html). 2. The New Republic **and Stephen Glass' Fabrications:** The respected news and political magazine revealed numerous false stories from associate editor Stephen Glass in 1998 after Forbes.com investigated a story about computer hackers that could not be verified. Glass was eventually fired, the magazine published an apology, and conducted an internal review revealing Glass had fabricated all or part of 27 of 41 pieces he had written between 1995 and 1998 (<https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/1998/09/bissinger199809>) 3. Los Angeles Times **Staples Center Scandal**: The newspaper was criticized in 1999 for publishing a special Sunday magazine about the new Staples Center arena with an agreement that split ad revenue from the magazine with the arena itself. The debacle later led to the departure of Publisher Kathryn Downing and Editor Michael Parks. Pulitzer Prize-winning L.A. Times media writer David Shaw penned a lengthy series about what happened and how it would be corrected. (https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-dec-20-ss-46240-story.html). 4. The New York Times **Jayson Blair Controversy**: On Mother's Day, May 11, 2003, the Times published a four-page report on how Jayson Blair, a young reporter, had committed a long list of infractions - from plagiarism to outright falsifications - over several years. The scandal led to the firings of Executive Editor Howell Raines and Managing Editor Gerald Boyd, while also prompting the paper to hire its first public editor. In each case, the subject of the mistaken report or other error was open about what went wrong and willing to take the hit for credibility and ethical miscues. In the end, however, that allowed it to regain trust and journalistic integrity (https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/us/correcting-the-record-times-reporter-who-resigned-leaves-long-trail-of-deception.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. 1. Idols of the Tribe are deceptive beliefs inherent in the mind of man, and therefore belonging to the whole of the human race. They are abstractions in error arising from common tendencies to exaggeration, distortion, and disproportion. 2. Idols of the Cave are those which arise within the mind of the individual. This mind is symbolically a cavern. The thoughts of the individual roam about in this dark cave and are variously modified by temperament, education, habit, environment, and accident. 3. Idols of the Marketplace are errors arising from the false significance bestowed upon words, and in this classification Bacon anticipated the modern science of semantics. 4. Idols of the Theater are those which are due to sophistry and false learning. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. # Read Don Fallis, Misinformation Vs Disinformation: What’s the Difference? (2014, p. 137).

    [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. David Lay Williams, Democracy Dies in Darkness, December 13, 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/23/facebook-global-takeover-f8-conference-messenger-chatbots> accessed on 17th June, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. In the Platonic/Socratic view of true education, there are two aspects of the Socratic method of education: (1) Socrates as a stingray, electric eel or gadfly (to which he is referred in various Platonic writings), shocking or benumbing his interlocutors into an awareness of their ignorance as they are temporarily blinded by the light. The purpose of this shock is to clear away what one unidentified commentator referred to as "the conceit of false knowledge." It is a brilliant succinct description of the intent of the first aspect of the Socratic Method. (2) Socrates as a midwife – using questions skillfully to have his interlocutors come to a self-realization of their true condition. This conversion process does not always succeed as many are secure in their state of ignorance; or they lack the wit to follow the logical conclusion of Socrates' questions. The Socratic Method is prefaced, if you recall many of Plato's dialogs, with a profession of ignorance. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. [Rashmee Roshan Lall](https://medium.com/@Rashmee), *Dealing with fake news: Socrates would’ve known how*, Feb 19, 2017 <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/fake+news/KtbxLvGzbpmlGlTwHHJXLfbzDxkbjghkGB>. Accessed on Sunday 28th April, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. The obligation to act in this regard is argued by Salman Rushdie as having to do with new language, from the ground up. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/truth-lies-and-literature>, accessed on the Sunday 5th May, 2019. Further details in his most recent novel, [*The Golden House*](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0399592806/?tag=thneyo0f-20) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” The New Yorker, February 25, 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Franz Kafka in Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times.*( San Diego New York, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company New York),1995 p.27 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)