

The History of Misinformation #1

Fake news is as old as human history. The spread of misinformation is not unique to the _____. For example, the Bible, which has been believed _____ by many people for _____, contains _____ of the origin of the universe and human beings. In the conflict between truth and fiction, human society _____ the _____. When humans choose what to believe, they _____ depend on what is true or false. Instead, we decide what to believe based on what we want to believe, what is easy to understand, what is convenient, who the messenger is, or what we _____. Nevertheless, we are _____ that we _____ such standards, and convinced that we are _____. Furthermore, the truth is often complex, uncomfortable and inflexible. If you want to make it more comfortable and easy to understand, _____ no longer be true. On the other hand, fiction can be _____ flexible. Since fiction _____ the complexity of reality to _____, you can _____ as you want. To give more power to the truth, we need to understand the nature of fake news. How does fake news _____, _____ and _____?

Fake news is as old as human history. The spread of misinformation is not unique to the present age. For example, the Bible, which has been believed in by many people for millennia, contains serious errors in its description of the origin of the universe and human beings. In the conflict between truth and fiction, human society has tended to favor the latter. When humans choose what to believe, they rarely depend on what is true or false. Instead, we decide what to believe based on what we want to believe, what is easy to understand, what is convenient, who the messenger is, or what we find interesting. Nevertheless, we are often unaware that we rely on such standards, and convinced that we are grounded in correctness. Furthermore, the truth is often complex, uncomfortable and inflexible. If you want to make it more comfortable and easy to understand, it will no longer be true. On the other hand, fiction can be infinitely flexible. Since fiction can ignore the complexity of reality to some extent, you can make it as simple and pleasant as you want. To give more power to the truth, we need to understand the nature of fake news. How does fake news emerge, prevail and persist?

misinformation	誤報、虚偽情報	inflexible	融通のきかない、曲げられない
millennia	数千年	complexity	複雑さ
fiction	虚構、作り話	pleasant	心地よい、楽しい
convenient	都合のよい、便利な	persist	存続する、持続する
messenger	伝達者、使者	prevail	普及する、支配する
grounded (in)	根拠のある、基づいた	emerge	現れる、生じる

The History of Misinformation #2

During World War II, Japan mobilized its entire society for _____ war, _____ severe _____, and _____ widespread military campaigns across the Asia-Pacific region. This was enabled by propaganda. The military _____ not only reported _____ about the progress of the war, but also _____ fiction about the Japanese _____ citizens. After the Meiji _____, Japan _____ Shinto, which was originally a collection of _____ elements, to _____ the needs of nationalism and _____. Based on the officially _____, military leaders _____ the following story; the emperor belongs to a _____ the age of mythology; Japanese people are pure-_____ extensions of the imperial family; and this divine people are _____ with a mission to _____ Asia. This fiction convinced people _____ for the emperor and the nation were _____, and supporting the war despite _____ was a _____ action. However, ethnicity is nothing more than fiction. The Japanese _____ has experienced continuous _____ of human migration from the _____, so it is impossible to define Japanese based on when one's ancestors migrated to the _____. Also, there is no _____ for "Japaneseness," so we _____ Japanese with a specific nucleotide _____ in their DNA. We can never define Japanese people both historically and _____. _____ is an intersubjective _____. It doesn't exist in reality, and _____ only when each person believes "I am Japanese" or "I am not." However, what _____ to the military leaders was not what was true, but what could unite the people. In other words, their _____ was which information was convenient to continue the war. By spreading the _____ and _____ truth about the people, how could _____ them to war?

During World War II, Japan mobilized its entire society for total war, endured severe deprivation, and launched widespread military campaigns across the Asia-Pacific region. This was enabled by propaganda. The military authorities not only reported lies about the progress of the war, but also spread fiction about the Japanese race to unite citizens. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan reinvented Shinto, which was originally a collection of animistic elements, to meet the needs of nationalism and imperialism. Based on the officially reformed mythology, military leaders propagated the following story; the emperor belongs to a sacred lineage from the age of mythology; Japanese people are pure-blooded extensions of the imperial family; and this divine people are entrusted with a mission to liberate Asia. This fiction convinced people that their deaths for the emperor and the nation were honorable, and supporting the war despite poverty was a sacred action. However, ethnicity is nothing more than fiction. The Japanese Archipelago has experienced continuous waves of human migration from the continent, so it is impossible to define Japanese based on when one's ancestors migrated to the Archipelago. Also, there is no gene for "Japaneseness," so we cannot identify Japanese with a specific nucleotide sequence in their DNA. We can never define Japanese people both historically and biologically. Ethnicity is an intersubjective entity. It doesn't exist in reality, and it can persist only when each person believes "I am Japanese" or "I am not." However, what mattered to the military leaders was not what was true, but what could unite the people. In other words, their primary concern was which information was convenient to continue the war. By spreading the boring and complicated truth about the people, how could it stir them to war?

mobilize	動員する	pure-blooded	純血の
deprivation	欠乏、困窮	divine	神聖な
propaganda	プロパガンダ、宣伝工作	nucleotide	ヌクレオチド
animistic	アニミズム的な	intersubjective	間主観的な
lineage	血統、家系	concern	関心事、重要事項

The History of Misinformation #3

Debates about medical practices often become a _____ ground of misinformation. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, a _____ that the _____ contained microchips connecting to 5G networks. Another _____ narrative _____, _____ that the COVID-19 infections were _____ by 5G signals. In fact, such rumors are _____ in the context of coronavirus but are older narratives which found a new opportunity to _____. In 2003, the new 3G technology was _____ to _____ SARS and, in 2009, rumors then circulated that the upgraded 4G network caused Swine flu. Also, _____ of _____ being used to _____ populations _____ many times. The rise and spread of such rumors are often _____ in suspicion of _____ and experts. For example, there are some parents who choose not to _____ their children, _____ were not vaccine _____ until _____ by experts. They ask about the health risk of vaccination, driven by their concern for their children, but if they feel they are _____ as “_____” by experts for asking such questions, they feel disrespected and lose their _____ in the scientific community. _____ people’s _____ and _____ to _____ with scientific evidence, they will be drawn to those who listen, empathize and then sell _____ with seemingly _____ explanations. In _____ this, we need to know that the job of experts may not be fulfilled by _____. Again, people generally choose their beliefs not based on what is true, but on what they want to believe, _____, and what is easy to accept. If you have something you need to convince people of, you should not be sure that you can _____ by presenting them with _____ and evidence. It might even backfire. Before anything else, you must be seen as a _____ and trustworthy person.

Debates about medical practices often become a breeding ground of misinformation. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, a rumor circulated that the vaccine contained microchips connecting to 5G networks. Another false narrative emerged, asserting that the COVID-19 infections were triggered by 5G signals. In fact, such rumors are not at all new in the context of coronavirus but are older narratives which found a new opportunity to thrive. In 2003, the new 3G technology was suspected to cause SARS and, in 2009, rumors then circulated that the upgraded 4G network caused Swine flu. Also, suspicious of vaccines being used to sterilize populations have recurred many times. The rise and spread of such rumors are often rooted in suspicion of authorities and experts. For example, there are some parents who choose not to vaccinate their children, some of whom were not vaccine skeptical until they felt they were dismissed by experts. They ask about the health risk of vaccination, driven by their concern for their children, but if they feel they are treated as “ignorant” by experts for asking such questions, they feel disrespected and lose their trust in the scientific community. If experts ignore people’s anxieties and attempt to persuade them with scientific evidence, they will be drawn to those who listen, empathize and then sell dubious remedies with seemingly plausible explanations. In light of this, we need to know that the job of experts may not be fulfilled by logical persuasion alone. Again, people generally choose their beliefs not based on what is true, but on what they want to believe, who says it, and what is easy to accept. If you have something you need to convince people of, you should not be sure that you can accomplish it by presenting them with sheets of statistics and evidence. It might even backfire. Before anything else, you must be seen as a compassionate and trustworthy person.

breeding ground	温床、発生源	skeptical	懐疑的な、疑う気持ちの
narrative	物語、語り口	dubious	怪しい、疑わしい
sterilize	不妊にする、滅菌する	plausible	もっともらしい、妥当な
recur	再発する、繰り返し起こる	in light of	～を踏まえて、～を考慮すると
suspicious	疑い深い、疑っている	persuade	説得する
dismiss	退ける、軽視する	compassionate	思いやりのある

The History of Misinformation #4

The witch hunts in early modern Europe might be the most _____ event in the history of fake news. Over the _____ three centuries, people across Europe fell into the conspiracy theory that witches were _____, leading to the execution of tens of thousands of _____ people. Nobody had ever seen witches flying through the night sky, _____ and _____ livestock to _____, but why did entire communities embrace such _____? It was because they decided what to believe based on what was easy to understand and what they wanted to believe, rather than what was true. At that time, _____ disasters were _____ people's life and mental well-being. The Black Death, which first spread in the 14th Century, _____ several times and drastically decreased the population. _____ wars _____ their lives and property. Also, the late 14th Century marked the onset of colder temperatures called the Little Ice Age, which was caused by _____ changes in solar radiation and increased _____ activity. This climate change affected agricultural production, leading to _____. In addition, the Christian Church was _____ and _____, most _____ by the sale of indulgences. In fact, the threat _____ a combination of these overlapping factors. However, it is far easier to believe that Satan is conspiring against the Christian world than to understand the _____ of numerous reasons; it is far more _____ one clear enemy and _____ every misfortune to that evil, rather than accepting the complexity of the real world. Furthermore, they could enjoy emotional satisfaction by _____ the prime cause of the evils. Studies in neuroscience have shown that we tend to experience the release of dopamine, a _____ with pleasure and reward, when we punish someone out of a sense of justice. On the other hand, _____ due to the periodic solar activity, what can we do about it? If it was caused by _____, who can we blame to find _____? If the executed woman was not a _____ of Satan, _____ a _____, misfortunate, good neighbor, _____, if not the real devils who persecute innocent people?

The witch hunts in early modern Europe might be the most dreadful event in the history of fake news. Over the course of about three centuries, people across Europe fell into the conspiracy theory that witches were servicing Satan, leading to the execution of tens of thousands of innocent people. Nobody had ever seen witches flying through the night sky, stealing reproductive organs and cursing livestock to death, but why did entire communities embrace such delusions? It was because they decided what to believe based on what was easy to understand and what they wanted to believe, rather than what was true. At that time, various disasters were threatening people's life and mental well-being. The Black Death, which first spread in the 14th Century, recurred several times and drastically decreased the population. Prolonged wars had endangered their lives and property. Also, the late 14th Century marked the onset of colder temperatures called the Little Ice Age, which was caused by periodic changes in solar radiation and increased volcanic activity. This climate change affected agricultural production, leading to frequent famines. In addition, the Christian Church was corrupt and immoral, most notably exemplified by the sale of indulgences. In fact, the threat stemmed from a combination of these overlapping factors. However, it is far easier to believe that Satan is conspiring against the Christian world than to understand the intricate interplay of numerous reasons; it is far more attractive to invent one clear enemy and attribute every misfortune to that evil, rather than accepting the complexity of the real world. Furthermore, they could enjoy emotional satisfaction by burning the prime cause of the evils. Studies in neuroscience have shown that we tend to experience the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward, when we punish someone out of a sense of justice. On the other hand, if it is due to the periodic solar activity, what can we do about it? If it was caused by invisible germs, who can we blame to find relief? If the executed woman was not a pawn of Satan, but merely a frail, misfortunate, good neighbor, what are we now, if not the real devils who persecute innocent people?

dreadful	恐ろしい、悲惨な	exemplify	例証する、典型例となる
reproductive	生殖の、生殖器の	stem from	～に由来する、～が原因である
embrace	受け入れる、信じる	interplay	相互作用、相互関係
drastically	劇的に、大幅に	attribute	～のせいにする、～に帰する
onset	発症、始まり	pawn	手先、駒
famine	飢饉	frail	弱々しい、もろい

The History of Misinformation #5

“A lie can _____ around the world _____ the _____ is _____ its shoes.” These words are often attributed to the American writer Mark Twain, but there is no _____ evidence, _____, ironically, _____ the point. The 2016 US _____ Election was a _____ of this quote. The _____ was _____ misinformation about both _____, such as Donald Trump being _____ by the _____ and Hillary Clinton selling weapons to ISIS. Such fake news threatened not only the _____ of elections but also the _____ of daily lives. For example, quite a few people believed that the basement of a _____ pizzeria was a child sex ring run by Hillary Clinton called “Pizza gate”, and one person even _____ a gun to save the children that were never actually there. It was social media platforms like Facebook and former Twitter that _____ for such fake news. From 2016 to 2017, Facebook’s business model _____ maximizing “user engagement.” This referred to the time users spend on the platform, as well as actions they took, such as clicking the like _____ or sharing a _____ with other users. The greater engagement _____ more time spent on the platform, and therefore more _____. So the managers ordered the company’s algorithms to prioritize maximizing user engagement. The algorithms _____ discovered that _____ more engagement than the truth, and extreme and _____ attracted more users than calm and _____ ones. Therefore, the algorithms decided to spread horrifying lies rather than the less exciting truth. At the same time, those who _____ that such contents could bring enormous views and revenues _____ mass-producing sensational fake news. _____ by _____ and _____, such information spread rapidly. Articles from the New York Times and CNN, which experts made with a lot of research and _____, _____ far less views and shares than fake-news websites created by Macedonian teenagers, who _____ about the election. Social media companies hoped _____ more people were able to express themselves freely, the _____, but this did not happen in reality. Throughout history, in a completely free information environment, the truth tends to lose. In order to create a society _____ the truth is more likely to _____, what can we do as citizens?

“A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” These words are often attributed to the American writer Mark Twain, but there is no firm evidence, thus, ironically, proving the point. The 2016 US Presidential Election was a striking example of this quote. The Internet was flooded with misinformation about both candidates, such as Donald Trump being endorsed by the Pope and Hillary Clinton selling weapons to ISIS. Such fake news threatened not only the integrity of elections but also the fabric of daily lives. For example, quite a few people believed that the basement of a certain pizzeria was a child sex ring run by Hillary Clinton called “Pizza gate”, and one person even arrived armed with a gun to save the children that were never actually there. It was social media platforms like Facebook and former Twitter that served as fertile ground for such fake news. From 2016 to 2017, Facebook’s business model relied on maximizing “user engagement.” This referred to the time users spend on the platform, as well as actions they took, such as clicking the like button or sharing a post with other users. The greater engagement meant more time spent on the platform, and therefore more advertising value. So the managers ordered the company’s algorithms to prioritize maximizing user engagement. The algorithms then discovered that falsehoods generated more engagement than the truth, and extreme and divisive articles attracted more users than calm and neutral ones. Therefore, the algorithms decided to spread horrifying lies rather than the less exciting truth. At the same time, those who learned that such contents could bring enormous views and revenues set about mass-producing sensational fake news. Fueled by hatred and outrage, such information spread rapidly. Articles from the New York Times and CNN, which experts made with a lot of research and editing, earned far less views and shares than fake-news websites created by Macedonian teenagers, who didn’t care about the election. Social media companies hoped that if more people were able to express themselves freely, the truth would eventually prevail, but this did not happen in reality. Throughout history, in a completely free information environment, the truth tends to lose. In order to create a society where the truth is more likely to prevail, what can we do as citizens?

integrity	健全さ、誠実さ、完全性	prioritize	優先する
fabric	基盤、構造	falsehood	虚偽、うそ
fertile	肥沃な、(比喩) 好条件の	divisive	分断を生む、対立を招く
engagement	エンゲージメント、関与度	fueled	煽った、勢いづけた