

Disinformation, dystopia and post-reality in the social media: a semiotic-cognitive perspective

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It became clear from Brexit (UK) and the election of Donald Trump (USA) that political marketing started to make intensive use of Big Data compiled from social networks that are organized in digital environments to determine the outcome of elections, plebiscites and popular consultations. New mechanisms of propaganda and persuasion have been created to parasitize mainly the reliance of traditional channels of information, such as news vehicles known by the general public. The result was the appearance of "fake news" and "alternative facts", which resulted in the emergence of the notion of "post-truth" to define the state of affairs represented in public opinion contaminated by these strategies. From the pragmatic-semiotic concepts of belief, mental habits, controlled action, final opinion, truth and reality, developed by Peirce, we argue that the "global village" created by the internet may be opening a dangerous bifurcation in the scientific method erected from (1) the concatenation of hypotheses, (2) the deductions of its consequences and (3) the design of experiences to test them with their results critically evaluated by communities of researchers. This bifurcation, which evolves rapidly as a dystopia constructed and reaffirmed by disinformation spread in social networks, points to a post-reality that can represent an illusory and brief zone of comfort for those who live in it, but a tragedy perhaps with no turning point for our civilization.