Article

Pre-Truth: Fake News, Semiological Guerrilla Warfare, and Some Other Media and Communication "Revolutions"

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Abstract
In this article, I will work on the idea of Pre-Truth (as opposed to post-truth) and Semiological Guerrilla (as opposed to fake news), claiming that these two concepts are better equipped to explain what is happening in our contemporary societies, especially if we take into account the world of media and communication. In the first part of the article, I will frame the problems of fake news and post-truth within the dynamics characterizing the relationships between knowledge and power. Taking into account Foucault and Latour's perspectives, I argue that the problem of fake news can be understood as a new kind of relationship between these two instances, previously stably coupled and in the hands of institutional power. Later, I will deal with three different meanings of "fake news," that are usually blended and confused: (a) serendipity, (b) false belief, and (c) mendacity. Consequently, I will deal with the problem of "Semiological Guerrilla Warfare," arguing that the new shape of the "knowledge-power relationship" rendered alternative and non-institutionally certified interpretations the norm. Eventually, I will identify the deep cause of this effect in the machinic production of documents provided by new technologies, causing a return of the medieval sense of "truth" as "trust," independent from knowledge and strictly related to anecdotes and personal experiences. Finally, I will work on the concept of "truth" connected to technology, trying to reveal its genealogy with the aim of explaining some misleading contemporary beliefs on "post-truth."

Issue
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1. The Age of Fake News: Is it Really the Way We Are Told?

This is the age of fake news (see Baptista & Gradim, 2022; Tandoc et al., 2017). But not in the sense that it is an age in which false news spreads; it has always spread as we all well know (two classical examples are the "Donation of Constantine" or the "Inquisition," when women were burnt alive after being declared—obviously falsely—witches). This is the age of fake news in two different senses: (a) first, in the sense that *fake news is also produced and spread by people who do not have a cultural or political power*; and, second—maybe for this reason—(b) this is the age of fake news in the sense that fake news is seen as a problem that we have to defend ourselves against.

While it is usually framed as a negative phenomenon, the first sense could be also intended as a form of democratization of knowledge and information that is actually positive: Because people who did *not* have power have always tended to endure, and only endure, fake news and have always found themselves on the wrong side of fake news, being usually witches and not inquisitors. As far as the second sense is concerned, it is important to note that since those responsible for spreading information, including fake news, have always been the ones in power, communities were not feeling the need to defend themselves, that is, to recognize the institution's voice among many other ones that speak in the web or inside our social media. Once, those responsible for fake news were always those who also had a form of institutional power. Now, even someone who

does not have that kind of power is able to produce fake news. As a result, in the last 15 years, institutions have felt the need to teach students and many other components of society to defend themselves from potentially unreliable sources of information and fake news (see for instance Digicomp, a framework by the European Commission for educating citizens on digital literacy and competence; cf. Vuorikari et al., 2022). There is no need to make malicious inferences from this: Indeed, democratic institutions are inspired by the will to emancipate people, so that nowadays who holds power also wants to coach people to defend themselves against fake news. This is a completely new phenomenon, which main cause is connected to a point I will develop later: In the past few years, inside the world of information and communication, something has decentralized the power of controlling sources, taking it away from the traditionally delegated actors which have withheld this role for centuries.

Hence, the first important point, if we really want to grasp what is happening in our society: What we generically refer to under the label of the "fake news problem" is more deeply the problem of a relationship between knowledge and power, in which, for the first time, there is a separation between types of power and the power of controlling information. Those who have political and cultural power no longer have control over information, or, at least, have less control over it than in the past, and therefore need to educate others to recognise their voices among the other millions of voices that circulate inside social media, while they did not have this problem before. We could frame these features of the age of fake news in a more academic way starting from the relationship between knowledge and power studied by Foucault. Indeed, Foucault (1976) argued that power is first and foremost to be understood as the "multiplicity of relations of force immanent to the field in which they are exercised and constitutive of their organisation" (Foucault, 1976, p. 82, translation by the author), an impersonal dimension that directs social actors but, at the same time, it is reproduced and propagated through the social actions of the actor themselves. According to Foucault, knowledge is a mode through which power regulates, shapes, and legitimises itself, and has a role in managing the social body.

In the past, power and knowledge were concentrated in state institutions and apparatuses. These institutions leaned on each other through the intertwining of decision-making, punitive and cognitive power, and became the social actors in which it was most possible to see the function of the power-knowledge pair in the management of social relations. Today, with a phenomenon of progressive decentralisation, we are witnessing a fragmentation of the knowledge–power binomial: While on the one hand, the institutions remain the stronghold (albeit often undermined by lobbies, big finance, and internet giants) of decision-making and administrative power, on the other hand, knowledge and its production

are spreading horizontally among different and varied social actors, who are more numerous and less controllable. Power relations within a social system are in fact the result of systemic and dynamic relations between social actors. Radical changes in social actors and their relations can therefore reconfigure the ways in which knowledge and power are articulated. As Latour (2006) has shown, not only human individuals are social actors, but also non-human actors such as animals, bacteria, materials, plants, and not least technologies. What this article will attempt to show is that the explosion of certain kinds of technologies is reconfiguring both the relationship between social actors and the ways in which power and knowledge regulate these relationships.

Summing up: The problem is not the spread of fake news and their increase in quantity, but the relationship between knowledge and power, between what we know and what we want others to know, between who produces knowledge and who has power and controls it. In this direction, I will focus on the ways through which (a) the relationship between knowledge and power produces the concepts of truth and falsehood, and (b) how a radical reassemblation of the network of social actors (Latour, 2006) modifies these relationships.

This looks like a much more interesting and much more difficult problem.

2. The Force of the False and the Three Stages of "Fake News"

Before investigating how this perspective can shed a new light on what I have called the age of fake news, it is crucial to focus on the role of "fake" in our framework and how it relates to the current radical societal changes. Three "stages" can be individuated. First, it is important to stress that a true piece of information is not necessarily good, as well as a false one is not necessarily bad. Of course, this has nothing to do with day-to-day things, like the many small lies we tell, perhaps to a good end, but with information: Giving true information in a situation of calamity or risk, as an evacuation, a fire, or flight from a hazardous substance, may lead to carnage, and, for this reason, fake news has always been given not to unleash panic and to control the situation. Far be it from me to defend false information. However, it is important not to polarize and split the problem between "the good" (truth) and "the bad" (false), since the aim of this article is to break down the problem and show that the point is not the fake or the defence of the truth. After all, my mentor Umberto Eco (2000) wrote a wonderful essay called "The Force of the False," which he used to show how falsities have contributed to crucial scientific discoveries. One of Eco's favourite examples on this topic was Christopher Columbus: Columbus went to the King of Spain to do what today we would call "asking for a grant" to fund a scientific project after the King of Portugal had refused this very same request. For many good reasons, we would say today, because what Columbus had in his

hands was nothing other than a series of fake news: the maps were wrong, the calculation of the dimensions of the Earth was wrong, the credit given to certain theories was wrong, the project to redeem Asian savages was wrong, and even the financial investment was wrong. And yet, from all this collection of false knowledge and full-blown fake news (Columbus had the maps drawn up by his brother and relied on seamen's tales), Columbus made the greatest European discovery of the century (see Bergreen, 2011). The name for this phenomenon is *serendipity* (cf. Ross & Copeland, 2022), namely a discovery that you make, in spite of yourself, when you are looking for something else. Serendipity is at the heart of the vast majority of scientific discoveries, because much true knowledge can be gained starting from what is false (on this topic, see Eco, 2000). Falsity, then, is neither bad nor good; it depends on what use you make of it. The problem, on the contrary, is mendacity, which is a completely different matter.

As far as our "second stage of fake" is concerned, it is indeed important to notice that when Ptolemy used to say that the earth does not move and it is at the centre of the universe, he was not lying, he was wrong. Ptolemy said what is false but believed that what he said was true. He simply had a false belief. And this is exactly the state of mind behind the fake news produced by those who do not have cultural power: They are people that put information into circulation believing that they are right. They are not lying, they are in another state that, as we shall see, we can call "semiotic guerrilla warfare." We will come back to this in the next paragraph. For now, it is very important to distinguish two stages of fake news: *serendipity* and *false beliefs*. A totally different thing, if compared to the previous two, is mendacity, where one says what is false, but they say it knowing that it is false. Mendacity is the third stage of fake news: One believes what is true, but one says what is false.

In order to take into account this third stage, let's consider an example, taking a leap of a few centuries forward: the Paris Climate Change Conference of 2015, when politicians signed an agreement on climate change. Two years later, Donald Trump gets elected as the president of the United States of America and claims, as he was already doing since 2012, that climate change is fake news, invented by China in order to put the American economy on its knees ("the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive," Trump, 2012). Trump knows that what he is saying is false, and he has a huge amount of data that refute what he is saying, but he has the advantage of telling a lie and having people believe that it is other people who are telling lies. Note the staggering subtlety of Trump, who produces a *meta-fake news*. Trump perfectly knew that in those years fake news was a much-discussed issue, and, while he was giving a piece of fake news, he used to accuse others of saying what is false while they are telling the truth. So, truth still matters a lot in the so-called "fake news" problem,

and there is no need to embrace its "post," as I will try to demonstrate later.

It is also important to notice that no institution sent a university lecturer to the White House to explain to Trump how to defend himself against fake news. Indeed, the most dangerous fake news do not come from people on social networks, they come from institutions that have power. All the big examples, like those in healthcare, are like that: The anti-vax movement emerges from a study published by *Lancet*—one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world—written by a well-known English doctor, Andrew Wakefield, who issued false data concerning the children involved in his study, because, at the same time, he had patented a vaccine alternative to the trivalent, which it was in his interest to discredit in order to sell his own (cf. Eggerston, 2010). The Di Bella cancer treatment in Italy came from an oncologist with a good curriculum (see Di Bella, 2019) and was tried out by a part of the Italian scientific community headed by Umberto Veronesi, who falsified it. It was the very same for the Hamer method or that of Gerson, a German doctor who treated tumours with coffee enemas and fruit juice extracts.

And the point is precisely this. When fake news is spread by someone with cultural or political power like Wakefield or Trump, it is usually fake in our last sense, the sense of being lies: Wakefield knew that he had falsified his data and asked for the MMR vaccine to be suspended in order to sell his own. But the great majority of anti-vax supporters does really believe that vaccinations are harmful or that the Di Bella method can treat cancer. Why?

3. The Semiological Guerrilla Warfare

My claim is that they are somehow living in a state of generalised semiological guerrilla warfare. Eco (1973) used to think of the "semiological guerrilla" as a local and multiple form of resistance against the centralised power of media, the one that used to build and spread the dominant "world view" (see Paolucci, 2017, 2021). At that time, the media system was reliant upon the formula "one-to-many": Information originated from a source possessing cultural power and then flowed towards the so-called (at that time) "mass." Eco suggested that it was better to control the outfall than the source of this flow of information, by switching focus to the direction of the message through the implementation of a semiological guerrilla made possible by deviating and non-standardised interpretations:

> Usually politicians, educators, communication theorists, believe that in order to control the power of the media, it is necessary to control two moments of the communication chain: the Source and the Channel. In this way they believe they control the message; and instead, they control the message as an empty form that at the Destination everyone will fill with

the meanings suggested to him by his own anthropological situation, by his own model of culture….For this…it will be necessary…to apply a guerrilla warfare solution. We must occupy, in every place in the world, the first chair in front of every television set….If you want a less paradoxical formulation, I will say: the battle for the survival of man as a responsible being in the Age of Communication is not won where communication starts, but where it arrives…: just as communication systems envisage a single industrialised Source and a single message that will reach an audience dispersed throughout the world, we will have to be able to imagine complementary communication systems that allow us to reach every single human group…to discuss the incoming message in the light of the arrival codes, comparing them with the departure codes. (Eco, 1973, pp. 296–297; translation by the author)

We now live in a world where a deviant version of the semiological guerrilla has won and has become, paradoxically, the default mechanism of many contemporary forms of communication, presenting aberrant decoding, misleading interpretations, and contents aimed at deconstructing knowledge, since everyone now knows that knowledge is always connected to some form of power.

Post-truth (McIntyre, 2018), fake news and "expertise death" are heterogeneous terms seeking to explain the effects of a semiotic phenomenon that is actually of another type, the victory of the semiological guerrilla.

Indeed, this new generalised state of semiological guerrilla warfare is born out of two things:

(a) An unprecedented technological revolution, in which the receivers of the message become themselves a source—if not "broadcasters," at least "narrowcasters"—and, in their turn, produce texts and documents that are recorded a priori, even if they are valueless (this is an epoch-making revolution, since, in the past, recording followed a filtering of what was of value, while, now, it precedes it; on this topic, see Hoog, 2009, and Paolucci, 2013, 2023);

(b) The fear of being manipulated, coming from the knowledge of having been manipulated in the past: now *one knows* (and it is important to insist on the impersonal form of the enunciation) that knowledge is always linked to a form of power and that information circulates because it is spread by those with political, cultural, and economic power. Hence, the triumph of conspiratorial thought and many other things of the same kind (on this topic, see Leone, 2016, 2020).

However, it is worth distinguishing the general idea of the semiological guerrilla from the way it was thought of in the 1960s. As previously stated, according to Eco (1973), the semiological guerrilla was meant as the local construction of deviating forms from the *mainstream* information. If that was the idea, the semiological guerrilla is not just possible nowadays, but is now even more necessary than before. It simply must take a different shape. In a world where democracy has a primacy over competence, where expertise has somehow become an opinion among other opinions (cf. Marrone & Migliore, 2021) and where different, contradictory versions of the world circulate into our encyclopaedia, there is no salvation outside a new form of semiological guerrilla, a semiological guerrilla 2.0, able to emancipate people inside new media environments. Indeed, writing his essay on semiological guerrilla, Umberto Eco strongly felt that the duty of the intellectual was to work in favour of what, at the time, was called "the masses," who were the object of thorough-going manipulation on the part of *élite* culture, which used to build cultural products to control them (Eco, 1973). When he started his column for the *Espresso*, the *Manifesto*, and other mass media, this pedagogical and emancipatory instinct behind his critical articles may have been even more evident, because there were the masses to "educate," teaching them the "game of the media," so that they would not succumb to the power of manipulating information and building consent. Eco thought that the semiological guerrilla solved an emancipatory function for the people belonging to the so-called "mass," as it was able to overturn their position in relation to the cultural *élite*. Actually, something similar has happened. However, the participation in information, the possibility of becoming local broadcasters and content providers, the idea of not believing in the mainstream information carried out an emancipatory function that has not been developing as Umberto Eco might have hoped.

This situation brought us the points highlighted in our argument's beginning: The technological revolution has led to a reformulation of the relationship between knowledge and power. When Eco wrote his ideas on the semiological guerilla warfare, there were a completely different social system and forms of knowledge that have now been altered by the introduction of new actors in the social scenery. The relationship between knowledge and the network of social actors is the basis for the production of the concept of truth in a society: The semiological guerilla proposed by Eco was based on a concept of truth and falsehood which were related to institutional power. Now, this power has been redistributed, but not, as Eco whished, thanks to the conceptual instruments provided by the high culture and cultural institutions, but due to new kinds of actors that have modified the very same idea of truth, as we will now show.

4. The Machinic Production of Documents and the Post-Truth

Within a genealogical perspective (Foucault, 1969), a clear example of the reassembling of the networks crafting the relationships between knowledge and power can

be found during the Middle Ages. Indeed, the destabilising effects generated in the Middle Ages by the passage from truth as "trust in authority" (or in personal and feudal loyalty), to truth as something guaranteed by documents has already been studied (Ferraris, 2021, p. 27).

Green (2002) has shown how the very word "truth" changed meaning at the end of the 14th century. While "trouthe" previously meant something like "integrity" or "reliability" (the word "trust" comes from it), it was only at the end of the 14th century that it began to take on its present meaning of "conformity to the facts." At the same time, the meaning of its antonym, which was "tresoun" (as opposed to the integrity and reliability of "trouthe" as "trust": "tresoun" was the practice of helping the enemy) began to change from "personal betrayal" to "crime against the state." In *A Crisis of Truth*, Green (2002) maintains, therefore, that these changes and alterations in meaning were closely connected with the growing emphasis on the written word, which generated documents, rather than on the spoken word, which generated promises. At the same time, these changes and alterations related to the simultaneous reshaping of thought connected to legal practices that took place in those years. According to Green (2002), the very rapid increase in the quantity of documents created by a bureaucratic, centralised, and authoritarian state like that of Richard II in England at the time contributed to bringing about the fundamental change in the attitude that, still nowadays, we have (or are "said to have" or "should have") to an item of evidence or a proof, which has moved from an idea of truth that resides almost totally in persons to a truth that resides in and rests constitutively on documents, through which certain facts speak.

A second turning point in the conception of truth can be found in the scientific revolution, and in the Boyle versus Hobbes debate particularly. While, in the previous case, the transition from orality to writing—a real technological revolution—made the meaning of truth as an idea of integrity and reliability turn into that of the conformity to facts mediated by documents, now, truth moves from conformity to facts through documents to the production of reality through machines. While, before, people produced documents, now reality is produced, but reality is not produced by us nor by one of our particular sub-groups called "scientists": It is machines that produce reality. Truth—scientific truth—is not based on the production of documents by means of man's aids (writing) but on the production of what is real by means of machines.

In order to understand the world we live in nowadays, Shapin and Shaffer's book (1985) on the debate between Boyle and Hobbes is a must-read (the book had a huge influence on Bruno Latour's thought: see Latour, 2006). Indeed, something momentous happened with Boyle that is fundamental for grasping present-day reality. In fact, to put order in the debate between "fullists" and "emptyists" that followed Torricelli's discovery—

these were the years in which the ether used to be believed—Boyle did not say a word, he did not even write a scientific treatise, but produced a machine that enclosed a Torricelli tube in the inverted glass casing of a pump and made a vacuum with a crank. Later, he suffocated small animals and snuffed out lots of candles in his machine. Then, with this pump, he went to the king, who, we remember, was the one who produced documents. With the king, Boyle found Hobbes, a supporter of the ether and one who had already sent the king a whole range of admonitions in the form of letters and other documents (Hobbes was a producer of documents, while Boyle was a producer of machines). What Hobbes did not like about Boyle was his appeal to *doxa* to get the support of his peers. Boyle did not rely on logic, mathematics, or rhetoric, but on the concept that anyone could use his machine and whoever used it would produce reality, the very same reality as that produced by nature. A kind of Spinoza's *ordo et connexio rerum idem est ac ordo et connexio idearum* is at work behind Boyle's pump.

On the contrary, Hobbes, who believed in the ether, which was contradicted by Boyle's machine that produces vacuum, said that we cannot delegate the production of the accepted version of reality to the people, because people must delegate their power to the king and the institutions, and when the king speaks and produces documents, it will be the people that speak and produce them (see Shapin & Shaffer, 1985) But Boyle replied that his machine produced the vacuum, produced reality without passing through any document, any expertise or any other delegation. The only mediation needed is machinic. Take whoever you want from among the people, give him Boyle's machine, and he will produce the vacuum. And Boyle had a technician with a crank that produces the vacuum using a chicken feather as a sensor. Through Boyle's pump, we assist, by means of mediation through the machine, to the splitting between science and politics (see Latour, 2006). Science produces reality, and therefore knowledge, by means of the machinic production of reality, while politics produces documents, and therefore knowledge, by means of a delegation to experts or sovereigns, to their narrations, and their meanings.

In my view, the only acceptable sense of Bachelard's (1934) by now famous slogan that "*les faits sont faits*" ("facts are made of"), meaning that they are constructed, is that facts are produced through machines. Vaccines are made through machines, like many other things. When, on the other hand, we say that facts are socially constructed, we are, from my point of view, exporting a principle of science to other cultural domains that work in a very different way. It is now almost a common place in the Humanities to claim that facts are socially constructed, but this must not be taken for granted at all, since it looks like an exportation of a principle born to say quite the opposite.

In fact, many of the problems in debates on post-truth and in the concept that facts are built through

narratives and media starting from emotions arise here: Science produces knowledge through the production of reality, which is machinic, while politics produce reality through the production of texts and documents. Science reaches knowledge moving from the production and reproduction of reality, through machines, machinic perceptions, laboratories, and environments. Politics and information produce knowledge moving from the production and reproduction of texts and documents. Those, in the world of information or culture, who say that facts are built through media, in order to explain knowledge in the world of information and communication, are using the science model, which, following my previous remarks, is a mistake, because scientific knowledge comes through the production of reality by means of machines and not by means of texts and documents, meanings, narrations, and points of view.

For these reasons, I suggest that this mistake has become very clear during the last 25 years, in which for the first time, due to the quantitative increase of document production and circulation (and I will come back to this later), even a document is pushed through with the mediation of a machine. Now we have machines that generate documents. Not only, for instance, in deep fakes, where the whole text is produced through machines, but also in our present-day situation, where, even when documents are produced by human beings, the machine produces new documents starting from these very same documents (metadata), that, afterwards, direct human beings to produce and read other documents. "Echo chambers," "bubbles," "algocracies" are heterogeneous names for another kind of phenomenon, which is the new machinic production of documents.

5. Pre-Truth, or the Primacy of Experience Over Knowledge

The web and what Ferraris (2021) is calling our "documediality era" are a great pump that produces Boyle's vacuum. And what effect does this have? The most evident one is that we are returning back to a medieval idea of truth of the type that Green told us about, an idea of truth that resides above all inside the persons, in trust and reliability: a "truth" that is "trust."

This is happening in a twofold sense: On one hand, trust in experts, who mediate our access to documents which, for our medium-level competencies about the machines we use on a daily basis, are broadly inaccessible in the same way as the workings of an engine are broadly inaccessible to a person who drives a car and has a licence; on the other hand—and this second dimension is the most original one—when documents proliferate, a quantitative change becomes qualitative and truth as trust takes on the form of an anecdotal fact.

And so, there are two changes: Now documents are generated not only by the king or his various substitutes (the state, institutions, intellectuals, newspapers, televi-

sion, etc.). Currently, we have semiological guerrilla warfare that generates documents, but it generates them also and especially by means of machines. The other change is that this quantitative change gives rise to a corresponding qualitative change, which consists of the primacy of the anecdotal fact. The proliferation of anecdotal facts is the real novelty in the new places of information grounded on the victory of semiological guerrilla warfare. Anecdotal facts are something of the kind: "Since she became a vegan, Susy has got slimmer and is very well," or "since Marc followed a ketogenic paleo diet and eats beefsteaks at breakfast, he has got slimmer and is very well." Susy and Marc do two opposite things and yet they are both very well because both diets are much better than that of the average European. The problem with anecdotal facts is that instead of asking why two opposite things are both good for one's health, one normally joins the paleo diet or the vegan faction, because they back what in the social world takes on the form of their own experience. Hence, the primacy of the anecdotal fact over knowledge. Indeed, the structure of the anecdotal fact is the following: "I can accept what science says, I can accept pre-existing knowledge on a subject, I can accept mostly everything, but, *as far as I am concerned*, it was good for *me*, and how can anyone but myself claim to know anything about me? I'm certainly not denying anything other people say, they may be absolutely right by all means—I believe them (or perhaps not)—but *my experience* is that it was good for *me* and it was right for *me*. Don't you trust me and believe the simple truth that it was good for me?"

Due to their semiotic structure, anecdotal facts institute the primacy of experience over knowledge. But obviously—and it is important to learn how to import what is really importable from science—knowledge has nothing to do with experience, so much so that a theory is not to be verified but falsified. Indeed, there will always be that anecdote about a mythological grandpa who lived to be 100 years old smoking two packets of cigarettes a day, which verifies the false theory that smoking can make you a centenary. Therefore, instead of speaking about *post-truth*, we should speak of *pre-truth*: You have truth beforehand, it resides in you and in that multiplicity of intermediaries, often machinic, that give you access to documents that are mainly inaccessible. And what you want is to be right, that is to say, you want that others confirm what you already know and that they trust you. In this sense, Ferraris (2021, p. 32) speaks of a "privatisation of the illusion of being right." However, this has nothing to do, as it has often been claimed, with a form of "confirmation bias" amplified by the web and its bubbles. On the contrary, it has to do with the return to a medieval dimension of truth, which precedes its conception of something that "corresponds" to the facts: a *pre-truth* in the sense of a return to its pre-modern dimension.

In this return to the medieval meaning of trust, in an internal, pre-existing truth which is connected to

experience and not to knowledge, online enunciation is the contemporary form of St. Augustine's "doing truth." Indeed, as it is well known, Augustine (2008) confessed to an omniscient God and, above all, wondered *why* he was confessing, as God already knew what he wanted to confess. In the age of pre-truth, we confess to an omniscient machine, which records our confession and adds metadata to it. To paraphrase St Augustine in the *Confessions*, we want to "do truth" in front of you, omnipotent and omniscient, and in front of many witnesses. And what does the machine do? It gives us a score (numbers of likes, followers, etc.). Influencers are the new hard-core gamers good at playing *The Game of Truth* with the machine: They are high in score and they keep on confessing to a machinic God able to transform their information into values and money.

6. Conclusion

Starting from a semiotic approach towards falsehood, we have discovered that the problem of the "fake news age" is neither the falsity of fake news per se nor the so-called "post-truth attitude," but the structural change of the relation between knowledge and power, which has, consequently, produced a radical transformation of the concepts of false and truth. The core of this structural change can be found in the machinic production and diffusion of documents, which has led to a state of generalized semiological guerrilla.

Through the enormous amount of information characterizing the documedial revolution (Ferraris, 2009, 2021), which led to the related redistribution of the relationship between power and knowledge, this quantitative machinic production of texts and documents has been able to produce a qualitative change in the notion of truth and false. Indeed, truth and false are no longer concepts in the hand of institutional powers, able to create a communitarian agreement on facts, but are now located in the relationship between individuals and their confessor, the technology, the new actor that is increasing its power, not imposing its truth, but sustaining everyone's desire to *do* truth.

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Conflict of Interests

None.

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