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Jeff Orlowski's *The Social Dilemma*

Upon watching the social dilemma for the umpteenth time, two things struck my attention on the way we perceive and use big data that users generate. More specifically, I reflected on the ways corporations actually use big data and how the extrapolation of those data impact the ways in which we perceive 'truth'.

Something that was mentioned in the documentary was the wildly accepted yet false presumption that the value of big data resides in the data itself. Corporations like *Meta* indeed collect unimaginable amount of personal data from users. However, the algorithms are not only responsible for collecting all sorts of information from them. Most of the calculations are in fact put in place to infer more data, and eventually an accurate model of every user in artificially calculated structures. The inferred information from these calculations can have serious and life-changing consequences, as events like Cambridge Analytica and Pizzagate can prove. However, they also act subliminally and subtly into every single user's life, even the ones who believe they are not being influenced.

One of the main consequences of these inferred models is how much the very concept of 'truth' is affected. The documentary stipulates that fake information travels 6 times faster than true information. This aligns with German professor Byung-Chul Han's theories of information culture and the belief that "everything time consuming is on the way out. Truth is time consuming" (Han & Steuer 6, 2021). Indeed, polarizing and emotion inducing news will gather more attention and engagement as drier information that needs more time to digest, regardless of

its veracity. We are entering a new era where 'truth' becomes a completely arbitrary measure, and the public seems to accept this new reality.

Big data corporations have succeeded at making us believe that convenience and a seeming sense of security can easily balance out the monopoly they have on our intrinsic cultural behaviors and psyche. From inferred artificially calculated models of their users, these companies can go as far as bending the very definition of truth. Very nineteen-eighty-four if you ask me.

Bibliography

Han, Byung-Chul, and Daniel Steuer. 2022. *Non-Things: Upheaval in the Lifeworld*. English edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity.