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Book review of *The Psychology of Fake News. Accepting, Sharing, and Correcting Misinformation* edited by Rainer Greifeneder, Mariela E. Jaffé, Eryn J. Newman & Norbert Schwarz, Routledge, 2021, 253 pages

The major technological progresses, such as the increased power of the electronic components, the development of a very large storage capacities, the informational transfer at high speed or the digitization of the images, the sounds and the data have led to the emergence of new media and communication services. These innovations coincided with the trend towards democratization in different parts of the world and the liberalization of communication legislation. The Internet is a worldwide network and has become so integrated into people's lives that it is hard for many to imagine how they would function without its benefits. An important aspect of our daily lives, where the Internet has brought major changes, is our social life. Two decades ago, tools such as forums or news sites were the only forms of social life on the Internet. In the meantime, many additional components have been developed, from blogs to social networks sites (SNS). Thus, the digital world has become an increasingly important reality due to the emergence and expansion of social platforms. SNS play a vital role in the modern version of the *global village*, enormous amounts of material being constantly created and shared by ordinary people

The proliferation of social media in recent years has been driven by Internet users' appetite for socialization and interactivity, allowing for virtual communities organised around themes of common interest to be built. We are currently witnessing a growing interest in using social media as the main new outlets at the expense of traditional media. Basically, if the news agencies were in the past the only ones mandated with the selection and the transmission of socially relevant information, after the emergence and the proliferation of social media, each of their users became a creator and a distributor of content. However, policies governing news accuracy for established media have not been converted into similar practices in social media. After the geopolitical milestones of 2016 (the Brexit referendum in June and the United States presidential election in November), fake news has become a keyword used to describe the term misinformation, especially in the digital environment. By escaping critical thinking, while being taken ad litteram and unverified, the consumption of these false narratives often creates feelings of anxiety, panic, or revolt. At a time when the line between facts and fake news has become increasingly difficult to identify, there is a need for a proper conceptual-

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ization of both the phenomenon and its implications so that policy makers can articulate effective strategies to reduce the effects of misinformation. In this unstable and turbulent context, the collective volume *The Psychology of Fake News. Accepting, Sharing, and Correcting Misinformation,* coordinated by Rainer Greifeneder, Mariela E. Jaffé, Eryn J. Newman and Norbert Schwarz, and published last year by the prestigious Routledge Taylor & Francis Group publisher, makes a valuable contribution to a better understanding of this social phenomenon and its functional mechanisms. Suggestively, the main title of the book proposes a psychological approach to the phenomenon and offers a key to interpreting its effects at the individual level. Its subtitle extends the main theme of the forthcoming discussion to defining the concept of fake news and its complex mechanisms, while outlining and proposing strategies to counter it. As the editors suggest from the beginning, the power of information in the hands of ordinary people is no guarantee of their abilities to interpret and share facts. In this regard, the volume argues why people accept and share (mis-) information. In these difficult circumstances, therefore, the paper provides valuable insights on effective countermeasures available to both media communicators and the public to combat fake news.

This book brings together three main sections. The first one, titled "The journey and aftermath of (false) information in networks" focuses on the origins and the aftermath of fake news affiliated concepts covering both social media networks and scientifical research. Providing an overview of previous research on the prevalence of fake news during memorable events in 2016, the authors in this section emphasize on investigating the statistical basis for the effects of perceived consumption and concern about the spread of fake news content. In addition, the section consists of an analysis of the ethical implications and societal effects of scientific misconduct practices, often referred to as fabrication and falsification of data that relate to the medical sciences.

The second section of the volume, suggestively titled "Cognitive processes in accepting, sharing, and correcting misinformation" highlights the role of education, psychology, and the behavioral sciences in combating fake news. Analytic and intuitive cognitive mechanisms involved in personal truth evaluation are presented, along with core concepts of personal misinformation acceptance and correction. Discussing alternative facts in a post-truth era, scholars highlight the malleability of individuals' truth judgements which leads to a negativity bias that can alter the credibility of both the source and the message. Furthermore, supported by a growing body of research, the discussion aims to examine the influence of non-probative photos on beliefs' shaping.

Motivational processes are at the heart of the volume's third part, "Motivational processes in accepting, sharing, and correcting misinformation", providing substantial arguments on how identity-based motivation frames individuals' reactions to a more subjective construction of reality than to their objective environment. The tendency to follow untrue conspiracy narratives often resides in how the individuals perceive themselves and their personal ego-defensive motivations. Additionally, this section investigates how individuals perceive the media and participate in the democratic process after exposure to fake news. The consumption of false narratives is proven to alter social variables such as media trust and political trust. Finally, the term *intentionally deceiving media* is linked to the propaganda value of the fake news. People's appetence for following fake news sources and propaganda messages is moderated by the value of their need to structure the world.

To summarize, the volume proposes an integrative compendium on various theoretical approaches with taxonomic and explanatory value for the concepts associated with the fake

news phenomenon. In this respect, an interdisciplinary view, echoed by the specific interpretation of the many social sciences from which the authors come, provides a realistic and well-grounded perspective on the dynamics of fake news topics. All these multiple contributions serve as a support for social experts and researchers together with students and PhD candidates to overcome the problem of dispersed information available from a multitude of sources.