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**Book Review Digital Fever:
Taming the Big Business of Disinformation,
by Bernhard Poerksen, Palgrave Macmillan,
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The book titled *Digital Fever: Taming the Big Business of Disinformation*, written by Bernard Poerksen offers a critical analysis of the many crises public discourse faces in the digital age. In addressing the shifting media landscape heavily influenced by the advent of social media, the book reflects on trends like digital disinformation, emotional manipulation, or the erosion of traditional media gatekeepers. Poerksen is a media theorist, who teaches Media studies at the University of Tübingen, and whose works on the new media age have largely been appreciated in Germany. The book in question scrutinizes significant issues in today's emotionally lead social media world by discussing a "decisive change in the global organization of information, the switch from a more strongly audience – and context-specific segmentation to integrative confrontation" (p. 6).

In the opening section of the book, titled *Clash of Codes: or the Age of Indiscreet Media*, Poerksen discusses the way the digital media has transformed communication and society, by centering the debate on the dissolution of boundaries between the private and public life, which leads to a constant state of "digital fever", the guiding metaphor of the book. This "fever" is brought by the advent of an indiscrete media, that has created an environment where information and events can go viral instantly by means of emotional contagion. This leads to a permanent state of excitement. In this new media landscape, traditional gatekeepers, like journalists, are no longer the sole actors who have the control to decide what topic is deemed newsworthy. As the author notably writes, „the fourth power of traditional journalism has been joined by the fifth power of the networked Many" (p. XII).

This leads to a world where information is shared without the traditional editorial oversight, allowing rumors, half-truths, and fake news to spread as factual news. Moreso, the line between information and emotion is often blurred, as well as private and public spheres merge in a general atmosphere of indiscretion and exposure. The fragmented and polarized nature of social media is also scrutinized as the author notes the clash of values, perceptions, and ideologies that happens online and is then translated in offline action. The coexistence of several viewpoints in the online environment facilitates an atmosphere of constant irritation that can lead to a clash of communication codes.

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The book is then structured in five chapters, each addressing a crisis that the modern media landscape is facing: the crisis of truth, the crisis of discourse, the crisis of authority, the crisis of complacency, and the crisis of reputation. The first crisis, labelled the one of truth, implies that digital platforms foster environments of suspicion, misinformation, and confirmation bias. In the author's words, "certainties have increasingly become questionable in a time of falsified images and videos, hired trolls, secret service activities, forged profiles, social bots and perfectly orchestrated propaganda" (p. 9).

The crisis of discourse is generated by the loss of traditional gatekeepers, such as journalists, or media editors. As a result, a more chaotic and polarized public discourse emerges, where the lines between fact and emotion are blurred, and the power to shape narratives has shifted to a networked public, rather than traditional media alone. This shift creates a public space where radical discourse can flourish and hate speech can be spread with ease under the protection of anonymity or with the help of algorithms.

The crisis of authority is described by the loss of control over information in the digital age which makes it difficult for public figures to maintain control over their image. This challenges their authority, as their personal flaws are exposed and publicly scrutinized, thus making them into ordinary individuals. Poerksen notes that the demand for transparency has led to a crisis of authority where traditional leaders and institutions are increasingly questioned and delegitimized.

When discussing the crisis of complacency, Poerksen criticizes the concept of filter bubbles, conceptualized by Pariser (2011), by arguing that this is an oversimplified idea that does not accurately reflect on the diversity of ideas that coexist and sometimes clash online. In fact, the author notes, the digital environment is characterized by a "simultaneity of the disparate" (p. 92.), where people both search for views that confirm their ideas, but also are faced with opposing viewpoints that they cannot avoid. This leads to a "filter clash" (p. 89) where opposing worldviews and opinions collide with greater intensity than ever before. As a result, the digital world disrupts the sense of security and order, making individuals and societies more susceptible to emotional manipulation, disinformation, and constant exposure to global crises.

Lastly, the digital age fostered a crisis of reputation by providing a platform for anyone, no matter how obscure, to raise into the spotlight and be trusted, or having their reputation harmed by others. In discussing each of these five crises, the author makes use of several real-life examples meant to exemplify the extent to which the current digital media landscape has changed, moving from a "media democracy to an outrage democracy" (p. 10).

The book closes with a section that proposes a debate on the concept of the "editorial society" (p. 147), dubbed by the author a utopian concept, in which journalistic ethics and responsibility are adopted by the broader public. In the editorial society, citizens adopt the values traditionally associated with good journalism, such as truth orientation, skepticism, proportionality, and transparency, and they critically assess how they communicate to make sure the public discourse is fact driven, balanced and respects ethical guidelines.

According to Poerksen, education plays an important role in this process as these principles should be taught in schools and universities, to create a framework that applies not only to journalists, but to all citizens engaged in the public sphere with the help of social media. The author anticipates possible objections to this approach – the promotion of an elitist or paternalistic model where journalists or media professionals dictate norms for public communication; or that this vision is too idealistic and impractical given the sensationalist and profit-driven nature of modern media. However, Poerksen insists, discussing and striving for these ideals is necessary for improving public discourse and combating misinformation.

Overall, this book is an essential read for any scholar, student or professional interested in an in depth understanding of the media landscape in today's world. The book brings several elements of novelty to a debate started by media studies scholars such as Sustain (2001), Fuchs (2014), Couldry and Hepp (2016), or Pariser (2011). One element of novelty is the idea of the editorial society, albeit a utopian view, a necessary discussion regarding the need for further education and accountability for everyone who uses social media. Another notable idea is the nuanced view over the debate on filter bubbles, by the addition of the concept of filter clash, that describes how digital media exposes individuals to conflicting viewpoints. Poerksen also offers an insightful analysis of how digital platforms profit from emotional manipulation, as a result of the „emotionalization” of content, thus adding depth to the discussion on the characteristics of digital capitalism.

The book provides a reflection on several largely debated subjects in the scientific literature, such as the impact of technology on human perception and behavior, the way social media influences and transforms the public sphere, or the way media platforms shape how we understand the world, blurring the lines between what is real and what is mediated. In doing so, Poerksen provides a wealth of examples from all over the world to support his claims and illustrate the intricate ways in which the social media environment works. Another strong point of the book is the way it challenges classical concepts and enriches them by looking at current days events. For first time readers this book is a good resource to both understand the intricate way in which the digital media works, but it is also a reach source to master the vocabulary necessary to describe and name what we are currently living.

While the book deepens old discussions and opens the door to new ideas on the topic of media literacy, future debates on the topic of the impact of the digital world should also explore other explanations for today's digital media landscape that surpass the idea of technology being the root cause of societal issues. One should also consider political, cultural, or economic factors into the discussion. Lastly, for the sake of nuance that this books so richly brings to the discussion, future debates need also consider the digital media environment outside Western democracies. Disinformation, digital manipulation, and media crises are global challenges, and we need as many perspectives as possible to make sense of today's media landscape.

In conclusion, Poerksen places the discussion in *Digital fever* within several large societal trends that have emerged in the digital age. These include the collapse of traditional media gatekeeping, the fragmentation of the public sphere, the rise of emotional and sensational content, the erosion of authority, the crisis of truth, the empowerment of individuals, or the commercialization of attention. In the light of current events, such as the role of social media in elections, the COVID-19 pandemic's „infodemic”, the rise of populism, or the impact of AI on communication, this is a necessary and relevant book for readers concerned with democracy, media literacy, and the future of the digital environment.

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