The Knowledge Industry

How You Buy, and or, Sell Your Truth

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ABSTRACT:

Scientific knowledge has throughout of history, been treated as a commodity and increasingly its value has thus during the last 40 years depreciated due to effect of Trickle-down Economics The production and selling of truth, is an on-growing industry where the interested parties, set the agenda by hiring academics and scholars hence turning complex issues into; bite-size, digestible content. Unfortunately, more extensive access to information, does not translate into unbiased knowledge.

KEYWORDS:

KNOWLEDGE – PRODUCTION – MARKET – TRUTH-IDEAS INDUSTRY

In this inquiry, we approach the question of the production of knowledge. We state that a growing available scientific understanding, does not necessarily mean higher informational quality, nor does it mean less biased. Knowledge is treated as a commodity, and as such, it is purchased and sold in the marketplace. Scientific knowledge, oriented exclusively to savvy audiences or scholars, has grown old.

Nowadays, technical productions have become digestible pieces of information, general onlookers can access this information through different media with either of two strategies: producing the truth or selling the truth³. Opportunely, the exact mechanisms by which false information is disseminated, are the same ones which we encounter whenever either deduction or induction is our method.

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³ “Truth” and “Knowledge” are clearly not the same. We assume, for literary reasons, they are truth values in logic superposition.

Whatever allow us to reconstruct these paths of cognitive understanding, from memories of either nature or nurture, of how objective truth is built for us, or by us. Additionally, how information and knowledge become distributed and valued by us or others, encompasses the same mechanisms.

I. Scientists of all natures have extensively approached the analysis of how knowledge is produced and sold in different places and times. Mannheim (2020), Bourdieu (1993), and even Karl Marx (1988) have spoken to clarify the many functions that scientific knowledge has in in Modern and Post-modern Society.

It would be redundant and too extensive to cite all the authors and sociological model approaches to the function of how knowledge arises and moves across space-time⁴. Even though the demand for scientific information has increased exponentially, this is only a mirage⁵⁶; at the same time intensively and extensively, it feeds an on-growing business of scientific communication.

Information emerges as a by-product as humans constantly are creating economic capital value and cultural profit for the usual 'winners' (Giridharadas, 2019; Drezner, 2017).

During the past few years, the phenomenon of producing knowledge by targeting vaster and vaster mass-audiences by algorithmic Deep Learnings application to Big Data, has unveiled a hidden social power structure. A conspiracy which is inviting us to see with our own eyes, exactly how scientific knowledge is consciously; socially constructed and sold on the socioeconomic market.

II. The public domain of scientific information has become a new battle ground, where corporations and governments that respond to world affairs by *producing subjective truth*. Intellectuals and thinkers generate yet more subjective truth value by creating scientific knowledge in different epistemic areas, which will, in their due time, produce a binary chain of value⁷: either by building and or by selling the truth.

⁴ For a brief, interesting, review see Durant, Evans, and Thomas (1989) and Lamert (1997).

⁵ Giridharadas uses the word "charade" (2019).

⁶Our knowledge was produced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since Feb. 2020, the demand for knowledge has increased phenomenally while the quality of information which has reached the public eye has fallen dramatically.

⁷ We are purposefully leaving aside Polanyi's theory on knowledge as a fictitious commodity, as it exceeds the reach of this research inquiry. A good starting point, if the reader requires, is to look at Solwin and Miyamura (2014) and Özil and Yilmas (2013).

Building the truth

The production of truth, as a commodity, has been an ascending feature of the fabric social life since ancient time, yet as a function of social relations it gathered velocity and momentum for real during the philosophical Medieval Era. The first popular product, printed books, were made accessible to our minds by the Gutenberg press invention and the possibility of reproducing and disseminating vast amount of perpetual information rapidly.

Since Jon Miller's early investigations (1983, 1988, 1998) through newer orientations such as Giridharadas' (2019) and Drezer's (2017), the question of whom, and why those people, are interested in scientific knowledge has been throbbing. In 1975 Dorfman and Mattelart stated; that The Readers' Digest magazine made scientific information available to laypeople, while it also said, that there was a careful curation of this data in order to sustain the colonization of the minds of American people.

This form, of information curation, is a way of building and selling what is subjectively true, not what really is and what necessarily must be objectively true.

Hence, in a world where more and more people require objective truths regarding complex social issues. There is no doubt, that science has an affective and pragmatic ideology, and by selecting what is actually going to circulate throughout closed laymen circuits, the market for information also sets the agenda for scholars; and vice-versa through the Law of Supply and Demand.

One of the regular practices of building the truth is hiring celebrated communicators - such as University Professors- and turning them into voluntary agents of divulgation. Through capital incentives, academics have stepped down from living in the ivory towers of scientific inquiry, down to the bottomless pit of ignorance seen on TED conferences paid by one or many multinationals that administer the scientific agenda.⁸ Corporations and high-net-worth individuals, pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to scholars who produce and replace objective scientific inquiry, with what cannot be described as anything else but: ideas that promote their own personal superiority. The un(wanted) consequence of this, is that these scholars have no incentive to produce factual scientific knowledge beyond the agenda of multinational corporations.

⁸ . Of course, any agent, or structure has an agenda and there always have been investors for all specific fields or topics of knowledge.

(the pharmaceutical industry being the main one producing scientific knowledge, but also agrochemicals and public governments should be on the list).

In the words of Giridharadas (2019), we have a vast population of highly educated and intelligent people, with no motivation to criticize the status quo of world affairs.

Selling the truth

Once the topics and stance have been selected, the ideas of this Knowledge Industry, moves forward to its next crucial step: adding value to its content. In the case of knowledge, as with any other value appraisal, value scales invariantly through geometrical progressions; the industry is both payer and payee, its acts as a feedback-loop. As stated before, the same actors and agents, create the truth, the necessity of truth, and they themselves are the same people that will deliver, this false truth to the worldwide uneducated audience for consumption, reproduction of knowledge as a commodity.

Think tanks prospering worldwide, offer social media channels updated subjective content, for people looking to solve world problems to gain access to information that is unhandy or otherwise exclusive only for intellectuals or scholars. In some cases, both scientific arguments and conspiracy theories find their space in social media, newspapers etc.

Thus, by its natural propagation, information as such, by its own force and power, kicking down doors of perception by opening up public spaces of doubt where, a few decades ago, there were only certainties and convictions regarding the definitions of True Justified Belief (*i.e.*, “antivaccine” movements, Flat Earth Society, anti-science movement etc.)

It is therefore not true, that more information, necessarily conclusively means better quality of knowledge attained. Moreover, intellectuals are being used to produce compromised and faulty solutions, to real world problems related to the core of Capitalism, instead of working together and offering the rest of humanity a genuine and whole-hearted effort, one that may actually usher into; a global change for the betterment of all mankind which is now perpetually suffering, in a collective subjective ignorance which is wholly superimposed on their minds, through the Mode of Production of the Knowledge Industry.

CONCLUSION

There is a paradoxical movement in the production of knowledge: on the one hand, this information circulates all over the place, installing false information or the false sensation of being informed by objective truth. On the other hand, this very problem of knowing “too” much, also allows us to post and share “our” truth, how it is produced, saved, and valued.

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