

The price of corporations and movie stars promoting politics must be the loss of their entire profit-pool.

Corporations must only: “make products and not politics”.

“Fake News”: Does it Matter?

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By Greg Drobny

Since the surprising win of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton, any number of news sources have tried to make heads or tails out of why this happened—*how on earth could they vote for this evil man over our chosen candidate?!?!?*

Because they start with the flawed premise that their candidate was clearly better, they often come to some ridiculous conclusions in response to these inquiries. One of my favorites has been the blaming of “fake news” on social media and the propensity of voters to fall for them as being “real,” thereby perpetuating false information into popular consciousness to the point that everyone believes it.

I’d simply like to restate the question posed in the headline: does it matter?

Let’s put this in a working example. I’m pretty solid at debating. Mostly this is because I take the time to understand what the other person is arguing and, just as importantly, *why* they hold the beliefs they do. I’m of the opinion that this is crucial to learning and moving forward in how we think about many things.

However, I also came to the conclusion that debates on social media are nearly pointless and, as a result, mostly retired from them. It was impossible

to convey anything of any value because everyone is so defensive in that setting.

But a couple days ago I came out of my quasi-retirement and purposefully engaged with several people on a number of topics for the purpose of testing something; namely, the reactions to information sources. So, like clockwork, discussions followed this formula: I make a claim, they ask for proof, I provide evidence, and within *seconds*...they dismiss the evidence because of source bias.

“I don’t trust anything from X website because they are biased toward_____.”

I’ve done this hundreds of times and witnessed the same thing over and over: people do not read what you provide because it may conflict with their already-held beliefs. It’s not that they read it, engage with it, and find problems with it—it’s that it is dismissed out of hand as being “biased.” But if it’s dismissed before even being read, isn’t that, uhh, the definition of... bias?

So, this puts the lead question in a more nuanced perspective.

Does it matter if one news source is considered “fake” and another “real” if nobody is actually reading them and engaging with the information? Perhaps more importantly, is a news site actually “real” if the reason they are considered “real” is simply because they are well-established, i.e. have been around a long time and have a lot of followers?

Is the *New York Times* real...just because it’s the *New York Times*?

Furthermore, how does one decide if a source is biased or “fake”? I had someone recently inform me that the website I shared an article from was unreliable because it was funded by a libertarian group. Therefore it was biased toward libertarianism and couldn’t be trusted.

Okay, let’s take that at face value and follow it through. In order for that to be a legitimate reason for dismissing a source, one must understand

libertarianism and not only have established that it is a philosophy based heavily upon the concepts of natural rights and individual liberty, but also that being biased towards those concepts is somehow inherently wrong and has unfairly influenced the information being presented.

Of course no one actually does this. The overwhelming majorities of people do not take the time to understand whether or not a particular bias is changing the information being presented or dig deep enough to discover whether or not the source material is legitimate.

Furthermore, those currently yelling the loudest about “fake news” and how it has ruined our political process are, by and large, of the decidedly progressive persuasion—e.g. those who would proudly cast a vote for a Barrack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, or Elizabeth Warren. But they are doing so from a position of assumed high ground that is entirely unwarranted.

Why are there alternatives to major, established news outlets in the first place? Could it possibly be due to the fact that massive numbers of people got fed up with the deference showed by NBC and *The New York Times* to politicians like the ones just mentioned, as well as the causes they champion? The marketplace is a funny thing—products only succeed if solid numbers of people feel a need for them.

Remember Dan Rather? Award-winning journalist and face of the evening news for decades. He would, by the standards that are currently being laid out by those screaming about fake news, be considered a trusted source and “real.”

He’s also the guy who ran an [almost entirely fabricated story](#) about George W. Bush that resulted in his resignation and the termination of a head producer at CBS. An attempt to defend the story ended up coining the phrase, “fake, but accurate.”

Remember the *Rolling Stone* University of Virginia “Rape on Campus” story? Not only was it false, but they lost a major lawsuit over it. But that

didn't stop them from being praised for their "[great work](#)" by none other than President Barack Obama.

Or how about the memory problems of Brian Williams? The erroneous reporting of anything related to mass shootings? Or repeated attempts to ignore the connection of terrorists to Islam in any terrorist attack?



The point here is not to begin an investigative effort into the stories run by major news outlets, but rather to show that 1) even the biggest names in information trafficking put out some horrendously bad material from time to time; 2) there is bias in nearly every source—the question is how much and whether or not it unfairly affects what is being claimed; and 3) I'm not entirely sure it matters because the overwhelming majority of people don't actually read the material or, if they do, don't critically assess it in any meaningful way.

Journalists play to their audience because, at its core, theirs is a business like any other. They're trying to sell a product (just like I'm doing right now). Information is a product and journalists want you to pick their product over and above that of someone else. As a result, the desire to make the information more palatable or appealing to the masses is always there and can result in a skewing of what is presented.

But in the call for regulating “fake news,” who would make the call regarding whether or not those journalists crossed a line between real and fake in order to gain more customers? Who creates and moderates the demarcation line of legitimate/non-legitimate news?

Again, I’m not at all convinced that it would matter at all even if there were realistically such a thing as an unbiased moderator. Critical people will be critical and uncritical people will either accept what’s presented at face value if they already agree with it or dismiss it prior to engaging because they don’t.

A source is not legitimate/not legitimate simply because they have an agenda you agree with/disagree with. In order to accept or dismiss information, engagement with it is nearly always required, which is admittedly a lot of work.

Put in the work. Don’t be a non-critical thinker who just accepts or dismisses what they see because it’s the easy thing to do. Otherwise, fake news or real news won’t matter—only information that reinforces that you are a precious snowflake will.

And you know how we feel about precious snowflakes.



About [Greg Drobny](#).

Greg Drobny, aka RU Twisted is the Editor-in-Chief of Unapologetically American. A former Airborne Infantryman, PSYOP Team Chief, political tool, welder, bartender, and failed musician (to name a few), Greg has a MS in Psychology, a BA in History, enjoys fighting leprechauns, eating Frosted Flakes off the back of his pet woolly mammoth, and pontificating about the possibility of blending the fields of quantum physics and home economics. Follow him on Twitter: @RU_Twisted

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