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MECHANISMS OF MANIPULATING SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE PROBLEM OF SPIRITUAL SECURITY IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

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Abstract.
The development of the information society has radically changed the ways in which social consciousness is formed, influenced, and controlled. In earlier historical periods, manipulation of public opinion was mainly connected with state propaganda, ideological institutions, traditional mass media, and direct political communication.

This article examines the manipulation of social consciousness in the information society from a socio-philosophical perspective. It focuses on the relationship between media influence, deepfake technologies, post-truth discourse, information warfare, and the problem of spiritual security.

Keywords: information society, social consciousness, manipulation, spiritual security, deepfake, post-truth, information war, media literacy, disinformation, social philosophy.

Introduction. he information society is often described as a stage of social development in which information, communication technologies, digital networks, and knowledge production become central factors of social life. In such a society, information is not simply a neutral resource. It becomes a form of power, a tool of influence, an economic commodity, a political weapon, and a mechanism for shaping human perception. The more people depend on digital communication for news, education, social interaction, entertainment, political judgment, and cultural orientation, the more vulnerable social consciousness becomes to manipulation.

This problem has become especially acute in the age of deepfakes and generative artificial intelligence. Deepfake technologies can create realistic but false videos, images, and voices. They can imitate political leaders, public figures, experts, journalists, or ordinary citizens. Such technologies threaten not only privacy and reputation but also the foundations of public trust. If citizens can no longer believe what they see and hear, then social communication becomes unstable. Even real evidence may be rejected as fake. This produces what scholars call the "liar's dividend": the possibility that guilty actors can deny authentic evidence by claiming that it was artificially generated.

The spread of post-truth culture further intensifies this crisis. Post-truth does not mean that truth disappears completely. Rather, it means that objective facts become less influential in shaping public opinion than emotions, personal beliefs, group identity, ideological loyalty, and media performance. In a post-truth environment, people may choose information not because it is accurate but because it confirms their worldview, protects their identity, or satisfies their emotional needs. Thus, manipulation becomes easier because truth competes with psychological comfort.

Information warfare is another important dimension of the problem. In the twenty-first century, conflicts between states, political groups, corporations, and ideological movements are increasingly

fought through narratives, images, cyber operations, psychological influence, and disinformation campaigns. Information war does not always require physical violence. It can destabilize societies by weakening trust in institutions, spreading panic, provoking social conflict, intensifying polarization, attacking cultural values, and undermining national unity. In this sense, the battlefield is not only territory but also consciousness.

For this reason, the issue of spiritual security becomes especially important. Spiritual security refers to the protection of the moral, cultural, intellectual, and value-based foundations of society. It includes the preservation of human dignity, historical memory, ethical norms, national and cultural identity, intergenerational continuity, social solidarity, and critical thinking. In the information society, spiritual security is threatened not only by direct ideological aggression but also by moral relativism, cultural superficiality, digital addiction, consumerist values, hate speech, extremist narratives, and manipulative media environments.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the mechanisms through which social consciousness is manipulated in the information society and to reveal why this process creates a serious challenge for spiritual security. The study is based on a socio-philosophical approach because the problem cannot be reduced only to technology, politics, or psychology. It concerns the deeper relationship between truth and power, freedom and control, identity and communication, morality and media, human autonomy and algorithmic influence.

Methods. This study uses a qualitative socio-philosophical research methodology. The topic is theoretical and interdisciplinary; therefore, the article combines conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, critical discourse analysis, and synthesis of existing academic literature. The purpose is not to measure manipulation quantitatively but to explain its mechanisms, social consequences, and philosophical meaning.

First, the study applies conceptual analysis to clarify the key terms: information society, social consciousness, manipulation, post-truth, deepfake, information war, and spiritual security. These concepts are often used broadly, but for academic research they must be distinguished carefully. For example, misinformation and disinformation are not the same. Misinformation may be false information shared without harmful intent, while disinformation is deliberately created or distributed to deceive. Malinformation may involve true information used in a harmful, decontextualized, or manipulative way. This distinction is important because contemporary manipulation often combines truth, half-truth, emotional framing, and fabrication.

Second, the article uses socio-philosophical analysis to examine how digital media changes the structure of power in society. Traditional theories of propaganda emphasized centralized control, while the digital age introduces networked, decentralized, and algorithmic forms of influence. This requires a broader theoretical lens. Manipulation today may come from state actors, political movements, corporations, influencers, extremist groups, anonymous online communities, automated bots, or ordinary users who unknowingly spread harmful content.

Third, the article uses critical discourse analysis to examine the logic of post-truth and information war. This approach focuses on how language, symbols, images, emotions, and narratives shape public perception. In modern media, manipulation often works through framing: the same event may be presented as a threat, victory, betrayal, injustice, or moral panic depending on the interests of the communicator. Therefore, the analysis pays attention not only to whether information is true or false but also to how it is organized, emotionalized, repeated, and connected with identity.

Fourth, the study uses comparative analysis to compare older forms of propaganda with contemporary digital manipulation. Classical propaganda relied on newspapers, radio, cinema,

posters, education systems, and official speeches. Digital manipulation, by contrast, operates through social media platforms, artificial intelligence, recommender systems, targeted advertising, bots, trolls, deepfakes, memes, and viral emotional content. This comparison helps reveal what is historically continuous and what is new.

Finally, the article uses normative philosophical reflection to examine spiritual security. This means that the study does not treat society only as an information system but also as a moral and cultural organism. From this perspective, the central question is not only "How can false information be detected?" But also "How can human beings preserve independent judgment, moral responsibility, cultural identity, and social solidarity in a manipulative information environment?"

Results. 1. Manipulation of social consciousness has become algorithmic and personalized. One of the main findings of the study is that manipulation in the information society is increasingly algorithmic and personalized. In the past, propaganda usually addressed large audiences with the same message. Today, digital platforms collect data about users' interests, fears, habits, political preferences, emotional reactions, location, social connections, and consumption patterns. This data allows messages to be targeted with high precision.

Personalized manipulation is more dangerous than general propaganda because it adapts to the psychological profile of the individual. A person who is anxious may receive fear-based content. A person who is angry may receive aggressive political messages. A person who already distrusts institutions may receive conspiracy narratives. A person interested in national identity may receive emotionally charged content about cultural threats. In each case, manipulation does not begin from outside the person's worldview; it enters through existing emotional and cognitive vulnerabilities.

Algorithms do not necessarily create manipulation by themselves, but they can amplify it. Social media platforms are designed to maximize engagement. Content that provokes anger, fear, surprise, outrage, or identity conflict often receives more attention than calm and balanced information. As a result, manipulative content can spread quickly because it is emotionally "sticky." It is not always the most truthful message that wins; often it is the most provocative, simplified, and emotionally satisfying message.

This creates a serious philosophical problem. Human freedom requires the ability to make informed and reflective choices. However, if the information environment is constantly shaped by invisible algorithmic systems, then the autonomy of consciousness becomes limited. People may believe they are freely choosing what to read, watch, and believe, while in reality their attention is being guided by commercial and political interests. The manipulation of attention becomes the first stage in the manipulation of consciousness.

2. Post-truth culture weakens the authority of rational public debate. The second result is that post-truth culture undermines the role of rational debate in society. In a healthy public sphere, citizens should be able to discuss social problems on the basis of facts, arguments, evidence, and shared standards of truth. In a post-truth environment, however, facts lose their binding power. People increasingly evaluate information according to whether it fits their identity, political loyalty, religious feelings, national emotions, or personal frustrations.

Post-truth is dangerous because it transforms truth from a common social value into a tribal possession. Each group may create its own "truth," its own experts, its own media channels, and its own emotional reality. This produces fragmentation of social consciousness. Instead of one public sphere, society becomes divided into separate information bubbles. Each bubble confirms itself and rejects alternative views as hostile, corrupt, or fake.

3. Deepfakes create a crisis of evidence and trust. The third result is that deepfake technologies create a new crisis of evidence. Traditionally, images, videos, and audio recordings

were considered strong forms of evidence. Of course, they could be edited or taken out of context, but the general assumption was that seeing and hearing had high evidentiary value. Deepfakes challenge this assumption.

A deepfake can show a person saying or doing something that never happened. In politics, this can damage reputations, influence elections, provoke diplomatic crises, or generate social unrest. In social life, deepfakes can be used for blackmail, humiliation, harassment, or identity theft. In education and culture, they can distort historical memory by fabricating speeches, events, or testimonies.

However, the danger of deepfakes is not only that people may believe false videos. Another danger is that people may stop believing real videos. When artificial media becomes common, authentic evidence can be denied. A corrupt official, violent actor, or extremist speaker may claim that real evidence is fake. Thus, deepfakes create double damage: they make falsehood more believable and truth more deniable.

Discussion. The results show that manipulation of social consciousness in the information society is multidimensional. It cannot be understood only as lying or spreading fake news. It includes emotional engineering, attention control, algorithmic amplification, identity-based framing, symbolic aggression, historical distortion, artificial media production, and destruction of trust.

One of the most important features of contemporary manipulation is invisibility. Classical propaganda was often visible because it came from official sources. Digital manipulation may appear as entertainment, humor, personal recommendation, viral trend, emotional testimony, anonymous comment, or friendly advice. This makes it more difficult to recognize. A meme can carry ideology. A short video can normalize aggression. A fake expert can influence public health behavior. A bot network can create the illusion of majority opinion. A deepfake can create panic before it is verified. A recommendation algorithm can gradually radicalize users without any single actor directly forcing them.

Another important feature is speed. In digital environments, manipulative content can spread faster than verification. Fact-checkers usually work after false content has already reached large audiences. By the time correction appears, the emotional impression may already be formed. Moreover, corrections often reach fewer people than the original falsehood. This creates an asymmetry between manipulation and truth. Falsehood is cheap, fast, emotional, and viral. Truth is often slow, complex, cautious, and less entertaining. This is not exactly a fair fight; it is more like bringing a library card to a meme war.

The post-truth condition also changes the meaning of education. Traditional education often focused on transferring knowledge. In the information society, education must also teach how to evaluate knowledge. Students and citizens need skills of source verification, argument analysis, emotional self-control, recognition of manipulation techniques, understanding of algorithms, and ethical communication. Media literacy should not be treated as an optional skill. It is now a basic condition of civic maturity.

The problem of spiritual security requires special attention because many discussions about disinformation remain too technical. They focus on platforms, bots, detection models, or regulation. These are necessary but incomplete. A society can have advanced cybersecurity and still be spiritually vulnerable if its citizens lack moral orientation, historical awareness, intellectual discipline, and social responsibility.

Spiritual security does not mean censorship or isolation from global information flows. On the contrary, excessive censorship may create distrust and make manipulation worse. Spiritual security means strengthening the internal capacity of society to distinguish constructive influence from

destructive manipulation. It means developing citizens who can think critically, respect truth, preserve dignity, value cultural heritage, and participate responsibly in public life.

The role of the state is also important. Governments must protect national information space from hostile manipulation, cyber threats, extremist propaganda, and destructive disinformation. However, state policy should be balanced with freedom of expression, rule of law, transparency, and public trust. If anti-disinformation policies become tools for suppressing criticism, they may damage spiritual security instead of protecting it. Trust cannot be ordered by decree; it must be built through justice, competence, openness, and responsibility.

Conclusion. The information society has created unprecedented opportunities for communication, education, cultural exchange, scientific development, and civic participation. However, it has also created new mechanisms for manipulating social consciousness. Media platforms, algorithmic systems, deepfake technologies, post-truth narratives, information warfare, bot networks, and emotional content economies have transformed the public sphere into a contested space where truth, identity, trust, and values are constantly challenged.

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Spiritual security in the information society means the ability of individuals and society to preserve critical thinking, moral values, cultural identity, historical memory, social solidarity, and trust in truthful communication. It cannot be protected by censorship or technology alone. It requires education, ethics, media literacy, responsible journalism, transparent governance, cultural resilience, legal regulation, and philosophical awareness.

The future of society will depend not only on how advanced its technologies are but also on how mature its consciousness is. If technological progress is not accompanied by moral and intellectual development, the information society may become a society of manipulation. But if digital innovation is combined with truth, responsibility, culture, and critical thought, the same information society can become a space of enlightenment, freedom, and human development.

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