

Is there truth on the internet?

The growing sophistication of our technology platforms, and the related reliance on these tools for our social fabric, is creating an environment where the truth is increasingly difficult to discern. At first blush, it would seem this social web makes truth harder to conceal, as you cannot hide from the cameras that are everywhere, and the instant posting of twitter or other platforms. While this “instant sharing” is true, it is also true for “fake news” or intentional disinformation. I read a recent white paper by Senate Intelligence Vice Chairman Mark Warner (D-VA) and the line of thinking is both alarming and disturbing. Reading the paper, I am taken to a rather famous quote from George Orwell’s 1984:

“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

— GEORGE ORWELL, 1984

We are rapidly approaching this inflection point where government and those with deep enough pockets, combined with access to influence for social media platforms or channels, will be able to control the present through the news channels. This facilitates rewriting events to their narrative. Once this happens, control of opinion begins and the future is shifted. Not to go too far down the Orwellian path, but this whole line of thinking is not wholly without merit. Read the paper from Mr. Warner, and see what your conclusions are. I am firmly against government overreach and control of private data. That being said, there does need to be a way to create a regulatory oversight for the proliferation of false narratives. The question then becomes, who polices the authority, because the ownership of the truth is absolute power in the end.

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