



PHILOSOPHY OF FAKE NEWS IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF SAUL'S DEATH (2 KINGS 1-16): AN INTERSECTION OF PHILOSOPHY AND SCRIPTURE

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of philosophy and scripture In the analysis of fake news, using the biblical account of King Saul's death (2 Samuel 1:1-16) as a case study. It beautifully integrates theological exegesis with contemporary philosophical frameworks on misinformation, and reveals striking parallels between ancient and modern manifestations of fake news, demonstrating that while technologies have evolved, the fundamental human tendencies driving the creation and spread of misinformation remain consistent across millennia. The study employed the hermeneutic method of inquiry and Harari's geno-philosophical framework for the understanding of fake news. This interdisciplinary approach provides a novel perspective to addressing contemporary challenges in media literacy and information verification. The research identifies key characteristics of fake news: the blending of truth with fabrication, sensationalism, and exploitation, and contributes to our understanding of fake news as a concept and a phenomenon, offering valuable insights for combating misinformation in the digital age.

Keywords: Fake news, Misinformation, Philosophy, Scripture, Samuel

Introduction

In an era where information travels at the speed of light and reaches global audiences within seconds, the phenomenon of fake news has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of our time²⁵. Its impact reverberates through every facet of society, from politics and economics to public health and social cohesion²⁶. The devastating effects of fake news are manifold: it erodes

²⁵ Kanu, I. A., Kanyip, P. B., Paul, P. M., Kamai, P. H., Onukwuba, M., Omenukwa, P. C. and Vasumu, I. 2024. "Influence of media on religio-cultural development and academic performance of youths in Nigeria." *International Journal of Religion*. 5(10), 2164-2173.

²⁶ Pilani, M. P. 2023. Socio-Political Neophobia: The Bane of Advancement in Nigeria As A Nation. In I. A. Kanu et. al. (eds). *The Economy of Leadership and Social Transformation in Contemporary Africa: Essays in Honour of Professor Ichoku Hyacinth Ementa*. Jos: Augustinian Publications, 227-250.



trust in institutions, polarizes communities, influences electoral outcomes, and can even incite violence or exacerbate public health crises. In the digital age, false information spreads faster and wider than ever before, often outpacing truth and leaving behind a trail of confusion and misinformation²⁷.

The phenomenon of fake news is not merely a modern problem born of digital technologies; it is a timeless human phenomenon, deeply rooted in our cognitive biases and social behaviours. To truly understand and combat fake news, there is need to look beyond its contemporary manifestations and explore its fundamental nature as a human construct. This study takes an innovative approach by turning to an ancient source: the biblical account of King Saul's death (2 Sam 1:1-16), to shed light on the enduring characteristics of fake news²⁸. By employing a philosophico-biblical methodology, the researchers intend to bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and modern philosophical inquiry, revealing striking parallels between fake news in biblical times and its current incarnations.

Through a detailed exegesis of the biblical text, shaped by Yuval Noah Harari's genophilosophical framework and current scholarly discourse on information disorder, the timeless patterns of fake news creation, dissemination, and impact will be uncovered. The story of the Amalekite messenger's false report to David serves as a compelling case study, offering insights into the motivations behind fake news, its potential consequences, and the critical importance of information verification. As society traverses the complexities of the information age, this interdisciplinary approach provides a fresh perspective on addressing the challenges of media literacy and combating misinformation²⁹.

This paper invites readers on a journey through time and across disciplines, demonstrating that while the mediums of communication may have changed, the fundamental human tendencies driving fake news remain remarkably constant. In doing so, it offers valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike in their ongoing efforts to navigate the treacherous waters of our modern information ecosystem. Focusing on the subject matter, the study of fake news has gained significant traction in recent years, with scholars from various disciplines contributing to our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Allcott and Gentzkow provided one of the seminal definitions of fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers"³⁰. This definition has been further refined by researchers like Gelfert, who emphasized the deliberate nature of fake news creation and its misleading design³¹. These

²⁷ Usman, J. H. and Paul, P. M. 2024. "Conflict resolution beyond identity: Insights on peacebuilding from Acts 6:1-7." *Journal of Religion and Society*. 13, 58-73.

²⁸ Richard, G. E., Paul, P. M. and Azuwike, A. 2024. "Religio-political situation in Northern Nigeria: The limits of the law and fault lines in Christian response to Islam." *Journal of Religion and Society*. 13, 1-17.

²⁹ Pilani, M. P. 2023. "Synodality in Numbers 11:24-30: An Archetype for Participation in Community Life". In Bernard Ukwuegbu et al (eds.) *The Bible on Synodality: Walking Together in Communion, Participation and Mission*. Port Harcourt: CABAN, 14. 24-42.

³⁰ Allcott, H and Gentzkow, M. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 31 (2): 211-236.

³¹ Gelfert, A. 2018., Op. Cit.



foundational works have helped shape the conceptual framework within which current research operates.

The multifaceted nature of fake news has led to diverse approaches in its study. Egelhofer and Lecheler distinguish between fake news as a genre of false information and as a label used to delegitimize news media³². This distinction highlights the complexity of the phenomenon and its implications for public discourse. Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral conducted a comprehensive study on the spread of true and false news online, revealing that false news spread more rapidly and broadly than truth, emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue in the digital age³³.

While much of the current literature focus on contemporary manifestations of fake news, there is a growing recognition of its historical roots. Harari's work on the human capacity for fiction and its role in social cooperation provides a broader evolutionary perspective on misinformation³⁴. This aligns with the approach taken by scholars like Rochford, Roozenbeek and van der Linden, who have explored historical instances of misinformation to gain insights into its enduring characteristics³⁵. These studies underscore the value of examining fake news through a historical lens, as our paper does with the biblical narrative. By bridging ancient examples with modern theoretical frameworks, we contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of fake news as a persistent human phenomenon.

Philosophico-Biblical Integrative Approach

The philosophico-biblical approach integrates philosophical methods of thinking and research in a harmonious manner. At the philosophical level, a conceptual approach is used because philosophy primarily focuses on studying concepts to clarify and understand their objects. The analyzing of concepts aids in comprehending the phenomena they represent. At the theological

³² Egelhofer, J. L. and Lecheler, S. 2019. "Fake news as a two-dimensional phenomenon: a framework and research agenda." *Annals of the International Communication Association*. 43(2), 97-116.

³³ Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. and Aral, S. 2018. "The spread of true and false news online." *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151. Kanu, I. A. 2012. "On the Possibility of Miracles". *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. 4. 81-89. Kanu, I. A. 2020. "Igwebuike theology of Ikwa Ogwe and the Inculturation of the Gospel message". *OGIRISI: A Journal of African Studies*. 16(1), 15-28. Kanu, I. A. 2020. "Igwebuike theology of Omenani and the missionary bifurcation of horizons". *OGIRISI: A New Journal of African Studies*. 16(1), 127-144. Kanu, I. A. 2024. "The Inculturation of Consecrated Life in Africa: Towards a Logic for Promoting Indigenous Gifts of Fidelity". *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 21(1), 245-265. Kanu, I. A. 2012. "Inculturation and Christianity in Africa". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2(17), 236-244.

³⁴ Harari, N. Y. 2018. "The Truth about Fake News," *Yediot Ahronot*, December 20; Harari, Y. N. 2018. *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

³⁵ Rochford, J. M. 2004. *What an Amalekite is dying to tell David* (2 Samuel 1:1-27). <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-what-amalekite-dying-tell-david-2-samuel-11-27>; Roozenbeek, J. & van der Linden, S. 2024. "A history of misinformation." In J. Roozenbeek & S. van der Linden (Eds.). *The psychology of misinformation*. Cambridge University Press, 22-34.



level, a biblical-exegetical method is employed to use philosophical concepts to better understand scripture and vice versa, enhancing contemporary philosophical views of reality. This approach is rooted in the intrinsic link between theology and philosophy, recognizing that every theology has an unavoidable philosophical element³⁶.

Unlike the Patristic approach, which used philosophy to serve theology by interpreting Neoplatonic concepts through a Christian lens, blurring the lines between philosophy and theology³⁷, the current approach employs philosophy and scripture to benefit each other, without undermining the identity of each discipline. Thus, scriptural exegesis enhances the understanding of philosophical concepts, while philosophical concepts provide tools for clarifying and developing ideas, leading to a better understanding of scriptural texts. This approach establishes a connection between the scriptural and the philosophical, given that they contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the contemporary.

Philosophy of Fake News

Fake news is also known as information disorder, and there is hardly a consensus as regards what fake news means; for some scholars it is a phenomenon³⁸, while for others it is a concept³⁹. Without making any distinction between fake news as a concept and fake news as a phenomenon, it can be understood in a general sense referring to misinformation or false information presented as news. However, at the philosophical level, the philosophy of fake news bothers on the philosophical analysis of fake news, its nature, implications and impact on society. At the philosophical level, a clear distinction can be made between fake news as a concept and fake news as an experienced

³⁶ Kanu, I. A. 2010. "A Discourse on the Romance between Philosophy and Christian Theology". *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. 2, 185-198; Kanu, I. A. 2011. "Corruption in Africa and its Challenges for the Enterprise of Christian Theology". *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences*. 4, 492-500; Kanu, I. A. 2012. "On the Possibility of Miracles". *International Journal of Theology and Reformed Tradition*. 4, 81-89. Kanu I. A. 2016. "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African hermeneutics of globalisation". *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*. 2(1), 61-66.

³⁷ Gracia, Jorge J. E. and Noone, Timothy B. 2003. *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Blackwell, 150; Davies, Brian. 2004. Aquinas. *Continuum International Publishing Group*. p. 14; Schulman, Jana K. 2002. *The Rise of the Medieval World: 500–1300: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 38; Kretzmann, Norman and Stump, Eleonore. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 44; Hyman, J. and Walsh, J. J. 1967. *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions*. New York: Harper & Row, 70; Catarina Dutilh Novaes and Stephen Read. 2016. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 68.

³⁸ Paśławska, P. and Popielska-Borys, A. 2018. "Phenomenon of Fake News". *Social Communication*. 4(s1), 136-140; Egelhofer, J. L. and Lecheler, S. 2019. Op. Cit.

³⁹ Gelfert, A. 2018., Op. Cit; Molina, M. D., Sundar, S. S., Le, T. and Lee, D. 2021. "Fake News Is Not Simply False Information: A Concept Explication and Taxonomy of Online Content". *American Behavioral Scientist*. 65(2), 180–212.



phenomenon. Allcott and Gentzkow identify several types of fake news, including satire, parody, fabrication, manipulation, and propaganda⁴⁰. Borney and Silverman avers that each type serves different purposes, from humor to malicious intent, and has varying impacts on public perception and behavior⁴¹.

Adopting the philosophical approach, Hagui and Bortos, given that there are different definitions given to fake news, which are not not mutually exclusive or exhaustive⁴², but rather complementary, explained the concept using the philosophical method developed by Collingwood⁴³. In relation to Martin Heidegger's phenomenology, they asserted that the phenomenon of fake news can be understood as representing the way in which fake news manifests itself to the society that perceives it. It is in this sense that Heidegger defines phenomena as "the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light. Sometimes the Greeks simply identified this with *ta onta* (beings)."⁴⁴ From the above, while the concept is an abstraction, the phenomenon is a concrete fact. Thus, fake news can be understood as a concept and as a phenomenon, an understanding that is significant for the combating of fake news, given that it is the phenomenon that can be combated and not the concept. While the conceptual understanding of fake news belongs to the philosophical sphere, the phenomenon of fake news, though also pertaining to the philosophical, partly belongs to the sociological dimension.

This notwithstanding, fake news was defined by Allcott and Gentzkow as: "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers"⁴⁵. bringing out a new understanding, Gelfert defines fake news as "the deliberate presentation of (typically) false or misleading claims as news, where the claims are misleading by design."⁴⁶ It is from these definitions that Mukerji identifies several characteristics which can be used in identifying fake news: truth value, content, source, distribution channels, the way it is presented and intent of the publisher⁴⁷. Although the concept fake news has been used since the 1890s when sensational reports on newspapers became common, the term gained prominence during the 2016 presidential election of the United states of America and has since become a significant concern in media and communication studies⁴⁸, and

⁴⁰ Allcott, H. and Gentzkow, M. 2017., Op. Cit.

⁴¹ Borney, Nathan. 2018. ["5 reasons why 'fake news' likely will get even worse"](#). *USA Today*.

⁴² Hagui, A. and Bortos, S. 2021. "Understanding Fake News: An Interdisciplinary Approach." *Acta Universitatis Danubius*. 15 (2), 12-52.

⁴³ Collingwood, R. G. 2005. *An essay on philosophical method*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 200.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, M. 1996. *Being and Time*. New York: State University of New York Press, 63.

⁴⁵ Allcott, H. and Gentzkow, M. 2017., Op. Cit.

⁴⁶ Gelfert, A. 2018., Op. Cit.

⁴⁷ Mukerji, N. 2018. "What is Fake News?" *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy*. 5. 923-946.

⁴⁸ Hunt, Elle. 2016. ["What is fake news? How to spot it and what you can do to stop it"](#). *The Guardian*; Schlesinger, Robert. 2017. ["Fake news in reality"](#). *U.S. News & World Report*; Soll, Jacob. 2016. ["The long and brutal history of fake news"](#). *Politico Magazine*; Himma-Kadakas, Marju. 2017. ["Alternative facts and fake news entering journalistic content production cycle"](#). *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies*. 9(2): 25–41.



is believed to be characterized by the deliberate creation and dissemination of false or misleading information with the intent to deceive or mislead readers⁴⁹.

The proliferation of fake news is facilitated by social media platforms, where information can be shared rapidly without verification⁵⁰. It is in this regard that Baptista and Gradim define fake news in relation to the digital age as: “a type of online disinformation, with totally or partially false content, created intentionally to deceive and/or manipulate a specific audience, through a format that imitates a news or report (acquiring credibility), through false information that may or may not be associated with real events, with an opportunistic structure (title, image, content) to attract the readers’ attention and to persuade them to believe in falsehood, in order to obtain more clicks and shares, therefore, higher advertising revenue and/or ideological gain”⁵¹. Algorithms designed to maximize user engagement often prioritize sensational or emotionally charged content, which can amplify the reach of fake news. Additionally, the echo chamber effect, where individuals are exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs, exacerbates the problem⁵².

The spread of fake news has significant implications for society. It can undermine trust in legitimate news sources and institutions, distort public discourse, and influence political outcomes⁵³. Fake news can also have real-world consequences, such as inciting violence or causing public health crises, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when misinformation about the virus and vaccines proliferated. Addressing the fake news problem requires a multi-pronged approach. Media literacy education is critical to help individuals discern credible information from falsehoods⁵⁴. Fact-checking organizations play a vital role in verifying information and debunking false claims. Additionally, social media platforms and technology companies must take responsibility for the content shared on their sites and implement measures to limit the spread of fake news⁵⁵.

At the philosophical level, fake news is a complex and multifaceted topic that involves epistemology, ethics, politics, phenomenology, hermeneutics and technology.

⁴⁹ Tufekci, Zeynep. 2018. “It’s the (democracy-poisoning) golden age of free speech”. [Wired](#).

⁵⁰ Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. and Aral, S. 2018. “The spread of true and false news online.” *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151.

⁵¹ Borney, Nathan. 2018., *Op. Cit.*

⁵² Pariser, E. 2011. *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*. United Kingdom: Penguin Press.

⁵³ Lazer, D. M. J., Baum, M. A., Benkler, Y., Berinsky, A. J., Greenhill, K. M., Menczer, F. and Zittrain, J. L. 2018. “The science of fake news.” *Science*. 359(6380), 1094-1096.

⁵⁴ Wineburg, S. and McGrew, S. 2019. “Lateral Reading and the Nature of Expertise: Reading Less and Learning More When Evaluating Digital Information.” *Teachers College Record*. 121(11), 1-40.

⁵⁵ Tandoc, E. C., Lim, Z. W. and Ling, R. 2018. “Defining Fake News: A typology of scholarly definitions.” *Digital Journalism*. 6(2), 137-153.



Table 1: Philosophical Dimensions of Fake News

S/N	Dimensions	Description
1.	Epistemology	Fake news challenges traditional notions of truth and knowledge. It blurs the lines between fact and fiction, making it difficult to discern what is true
2.	Ethics	The spread of fake news raises ethical concerns about responsibility, honesty, and the duty to truth. It highlights the need for ethical standards in journalism and communication
3.	Politics	Fake news is often used as a political tool to shape public opinion, sway votes, and undermine opponents. This raises questions about the manipulation of information and the integrity of democratic processes
4.	Technology	The digital age has enabled the rapid spread of fake news through social media, algorithms, and echo chambers. This highlights the need for critical thinking, media literacy, and technological solutions to combat misinformation
5.	Phenomenology	Fake news can be seen as a manifestation of the post-truth era, where emotions and beliefs trump facts. This raises questions about the nature of truth, reality, and human experience
6.	Hermeneutics	The interpretation of fake news requires a critical approach, considering context, bias, and intention. It highlights the need for nuanced understanding and critical thinking
7.	Social Epistemology	Fake news is often a product of social influence, group-think, and cognitive biases. This raises questions about how we construct knowledge and truth in social contexts
8.	Political Philosophy	Fake news challenges traditional notions of democracy, citizenship, and the public sphere. It raises questions about the role of information in democratic societies and the responsibility of citizens.

Author Created

Harari's Geno-Philosophical Framework

Harari established a framework suggesting that fake news is not a new phenomenon but has always been part of human history. He argues that the state of truth at the beginning of the 21st century is no worse than in previous times. Harari asserts that fake news is inherent to homo sapiens, stemming from the human capacity to create and believe in stories and fabrications. This ability



underpins the human creation of myths, religions, and ideologies, which facilitate cooperation and connections among strangers⁵⁶.

Harari posits that these fabrications arise from humanity's preference for power over truth, with more effort invested in dominating the world than in understanding it. The distinguishing factor in the contemporary approach to fake news is technology, which allows for the tailoring of propaganda to individual biases. These fabricated stories reinforce personal prejudices, deepen societal divides, and undermine the democratic system from within.

Exegesis of 2 Sam 1:1-16: A Biblical Hermeneutics of Fake News

i. Historic-Literary Context

The passage in 2 Sam 1:1-16 presents a complex narrative situated at a pivotal moment in Israelite history⁵⁷. The text describes the aftermath of King Saul's death and the transition of power to David. Critically, it introduces an Amalekite messenger who brings news of Saul's demise to David, claiming personal involvement in the king's death. The events occur after the battle of Mount Gilboa (1 Samuel 31), where Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, were killed by the Philistines. David, having been anointed as the future king but pursued by Saul, was residing in Ziklag in Philistine territory. The narrative employs a dramatic structure, building tension through the messenger's arrival and his subsequent account. The author uses dialogue to reveal the Amalekite's claim, creating a stark contrast with the earlier account of Saul's death in 1 Samuel 31⁵⁸.

ii. Literary Structure of 2 Sam 1:1-16

For the purpose of this paper, the literary structure of 2 Sam 1:1-16 is presented here as a hermeneutic of fake news with four subdivisions (A, B, C and D). In this regard the passage opens with a setting of the scene "A" (vv. 1-4), where the temporary context and opening dialogues take place. In "B" (vv. 5-12) the Amalekite reports a falsified version the death of Saul, while King David and his servants react to the death news, leading to "C" (13-14) where David inquires of the identity of the reporter. Finally, the irony of false news is presented as being have adverse effects other than intended (2 Sam 1:1-16). Based on the foregoing then, typically the literary structure of the passage is presented as follows:

- A. Setting the Scene (vv. 1-4)
- B. The Amalekite's False Report and David's reaction (vv. 5-12)
- C. David's Interrogation of the Messenger (vv. 13-14)

⁵⁶ Harari, Y. N. 2018., Op. Cit

⁵⁷ Youngblood, R. F. 1992. 1, 2 Samuel. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.). *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

⁵⁸ Ippolito, G. 2017. "The Book of 2 Samuel: Resource Friday: Aftermath and the Amalekite 2Samuel 1:1-16." *Life in Christ Ministries*. <https://www.lifeinchristministries.com/teachings/resource-friday-aftermath-and-the-amalekite-2-samuel-11-16>.



D. Judgment and Execution (vv. 15-16)

iii. Content Analysis

a. *Setting the Scene* (vv. 1-4)

The narrative opens with temporal and spatial contexts of the story. It indicates that it happened just after the death of Saul with David at Ziklag since he was on the run from Saul's death threat. Two days after his return from the defeat of the Amalekites, a young messenger arrives with news of a failed battle, displaying a mix of sorrow and opportunism⁵⁹. The Hebrew expression *ûbügädäyw qürû`îm wa`ádämâ`al-rö`šô* (with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head) in v. 2 is an outward sign of mourning. However, it appears that his true intent is to deliver information to Saul's rival, anticipating a reward. Thus, his bow may be an early show of allegiance to the future king, as he presents the royal emblems, which he took from Saul because in his words, *wügam šä`ûl wihônätân Bünô mē`tû* (...and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also).

b. *The Messenger's False Report and David Reaction* (vv. 5-12)

In v. 5 upon further enquiry by David about the veracity of his report concerning Saul's (and Jonathan's) death, the messenger alters the account of the events described in chapter 31, revealing the said ulterior motives⁶⁰. It is worth noting that in 1 Sam 31:4, it is reported that "Saul took his sword and fell on it" and died (*šä`ûl`et-haHe`reb wayyiPPöl`älÊ`hâ*). The emphasis here is the word "*wayyiPPöl*". It is the imperfect active of *npl*, the basic meaning to fall⁶¹. The sense here is that the act of falling upon the sword was a deliberate act by Saul himself. However, in the messenger's report to David in 2 Sam 1:10, he states that *wä`e`émöd`äläyw wa`ámö`tü`tê`hû* (So I stood upon him, and "I" killed him). Thus, unlike the suicide (*wayyiPPöl*) in 1 Sam 31:4, here the key word is *wa`ámö`tü`tê`hû* (and "I" killed him) all the while purporting the act to be Saul's request, which is entirely a lie. By emphasizing his own role in the events, the messenger may have intended to win David's favour and perhaps elicit a reward⁶², especially having presented the crown and bracelet (*hannë`zer wü`ec`ädâ*, the symbols of kingship) to add credibility to his false report. However, as the narrative shows, he unwittingly puts himself in a precarious position.

David's reaction as that of his men shows they have accepted the news of the death of Saul and his son, Jonathan. The act of tearing (*qara`*, to tear, rend, split) is a proper to the mood of sorrow

⁵⁹Guzik, D. 2022. *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary*. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-samuel-1/>

⁶⁰Hagan, H. 2010., Op. Cit.

⁶¹ Brown, F., Driver, S. R. and Briggs, C. A. 1979. *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*. USA: Hendrickson.

⁶²Schultz, J. 2014. *Bible Commentary: 2 Samuel*. https://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_2Sam.pdf



or mourning⁶³. This is one of the author's effort at characterization of David as a nobleman who never celebrated the death of his enemies⁶⁴.

c. David's Interrogation of the Messenger (vv. 13-14)

Thus, David begins to suspect the identity and courage of the reporter and sets to find out. The messenger's identity as an Amalekite trigger's David's repulsion and surprise at the sacrilegious courage of the murderous reporter⁶⁵. In v. 14, David's question, *yäre^otä lišlö^aH yä|dkä lüšaHët 'et-müšî^aH 'ädönäy* (How is it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the LORDS anointed?) is another of the characterization of David, who honours all the things of YHWH (*ädönäy*)⁶⁶.

d. The Irony: Judgment and Execution (vv. 15-16)

In v. 15, once again, the reader is given the notion that rather than the favour and reward which the messenger may have planned to achieve, the Amalekite instead provokes the wrath of David, the just and religious man, the king after God's heart, leading to judgement and death sentence⁶⁷. David indemnifies himself from the guilt of the death of the young man in two scores. First, he did not take out the execution himself, but orders one of his men to do it. Second, he declares that the Amalekite's death is inherent in his declaration, "I have killed the Lord's anointed" (*änökî möta^oTTî 'et-müšî^aH 'ädönäy*). There is an undue emphasis in the expression, *änökî möta^oTTî* which may be translated literally as "I, I have killed or, even, I myself I have killed," as if to emphasize the deliberate nature of the reporter's murder of the kind and therefore his death sentence is well deserved. Finally, one can conclude that indeed, rather than curry the king's favour, the manipulated and false report, earned the Amalekite infamy, ignominy, instant judgement and premature death, he being a young man⁶⁸.

Fake News as Misinformation: Biblical Perspective

The exegesis of 2 Sam 1:1-16 provides a persuasive framework for understanding the characteristics of false news in a biblical context⁶⁹. This passage offers a rich narrative that

⁶³Holladay, W. L. 1988. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans.

⁶⁴Hagan, H. 2010., Op. Cit

⁶⁵Guzik, D. 2022., Op. Cit

⁶⁶Hagan, H. 2010., Op. Cit

⁶⁶Guzik, D. 2022., Op. Cit

⁶⁷Youngblood, R. F. 1992., Op. Cit

⁶⁸Deffinbaugh, B. 2004. *What an Amalekite is dying to tell David (2 Samuel 1:1-27)*. <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-what-amalekite-dying-tell-david-2-samuel-11-27>

⁶⁹Constable, T. L. (2024). "Notes on 2 Samuel." *Plano Bible Chapel*. <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/2samuel.pdf>



illustrates many aspects of misinformation that are still relevant in today's media landscape⁷⁰. The study effectively sets the historical and literary context, highlighting the pivotal moment in Israelite history following King Saul's death. The Amalekite messenger's account serves as a prime example of false news, demonstrating several key characteristics that align with modern understanding of misinformation⁷¹. The truth value of the messenger's report is complex, as it contains a core of truth – Saul's death - but surrounds it with fabricated details. This mixture of fact and fiction is a common feature of fake news, making it more believable and harder to refute⁷². The content of the report is sensationalized, focusing on the messenger's alleged role in the king's death, which aligns with the tendency of false news to emphasize dramatic elements to capture attention.

The messenger's presentation as an eyewitness lends credibility to his account, showcasing how false news often relies on seemingly reliable sources to gain traction. The direct delivery of the news to David, the most influential figure at that time, mirrors the targeted distribution strategies often employed in spreading misinformation. The dramatic and detailed nature of the account enhances its believability, demonstrating how false news can be crafted to seem authentic⁷³. The intent behind the false report appears to be the Amalekite's desire to gain favour with David⁷⁴, illustrating how misinformation is often created and spread for personal gain⁷⁵. However, the consequences of this fake news prove severe and unexpected, resulting in the messenger's execution. This outcome serves as a cautionary tale about the potential repercussions of spreading false information⁷⁶. David's response to the news is particularly noteworthy. While he initially accepts the report, his subsequent actions suggest a level of doubt or later verification. This aligns with contemporary discussions on the importance of fact-checking and critical evaluation of news sources, emphasizing the need for verification even when information comes from seemingly credible sources⁷⁷.

In conclusion, this analysis of 2 Sam 1:1-16 offers a compelling examination of false news characteristics in an ancient text, demonstrating the timeless nature of misinformation and the importance of critical evaluation of news sources. It provides a valuable foundation for

⁷⁰Roozenbeek, J. and van der Linden, S. 2024. "A history of misinformation." J. Roozenbeek & S. van der Linden (Eds.). *The psychology of misinformation*. Cambridge University Press, 22-34.

⁷¹ Roozenbeek, J. and van der Linden, S. 2024., Op. Cit

⁷²Aïmeur, E., Amri, S. and Brassard, G. 2023. "Fake news, disinformation and misinformation in social media: A review." *Social Network Analysis and Mining*. 13, 30.

⁷³Radcliffe, D. 2017. *Understanding Fake News: History, origins, solutions*. <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/understanding-fake-news-history-origins-solutions/76283282>

⁷⁴Schultz, J. 2014., Op. Cit

⁷⁵Machado, N., Griffin, J., Smith, J. and Fielding, M. 2024. *Fake news and what to do about it*. <https://pressbooks.pub/fakenews/chapter/6-what-motivates-people-to-spread-fake-news-on-social-media/>

⁷⁶Bateman, J. and Jackson, D. 2024. "Countering disinformation effectively: An evidence-based policy guide". *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

⁷⁷Luo, M., Hancock, J. T. and Markowitz, D. M. 2020. "Credibility perceptions and detection accuracy of fake news headlines on social media: Effects of truth-bias and endorsement cues." *Communication Research*, 49(2), 25.



understanding the complexities of fake news and its potential consequences, both in biblical times and in our contemporary media environment⁷⁸. The crux of this passage, when viewed through the lens of the philosophy of fake news, lies in the Amalekite's fabricated account of Saul's death. This can be analyzed using the framework provided by Harari and other scholars as discussed below.

Philosophico-biblical Dialogue on Fake News

The examination of the Amalekite messenger's false report in 2 Sam 1:1-16 alongside contemporary philosophical frameworks offer a unique perspective on the enduring nature of fake news. This interdisciplinary approach reveals striking parallels between ancient and modern manifestations of misinformation, demonstrating that while the mediums have evolved, the fundamental human tendencies driving fake news remain consistent across millennia. From a biblical standpoint, the Amalekite's fabricated account of Saul's death exemplifies key characteristics of fake news that persist in today's media landscape. The messenger's report contains a core of truth – Saul's death – surrounded by fabricated details, mirroring the modern phenomenon of blending fact with fiction to enhance credibility. This aligns with the observation of Aïmeur et al that such mixtures make fake news more believable and harder to refute⁷⁹. The sensationalized nature of the report, focusing on the messenger's alleged role in the king's death, reflects the tendency of contemporary fake news to emphasize dramatic elements for attention-grabbing purposes⁸⁰.

Philosophically, this biblical example supports Harari's geno-philosophical framework, which posits that fake news is inherent to human nature, stemming from our capacity to create and believe in stories. The Amalekite's motivation – seeking favor with David – aligns with Harari's assertion that fabrications often arise from a preference for power over truth⁸¹. This biblical case study thus provides historical evidence for the timeless human tendencies that drive the creation and spread of misinformation. The distinction between fake news as a concept and as a phenomenon, as discussed by Hagui and Bortos through Heidegger's phenomenological lens, is particularly relevant when analyzing the biblical narrative⁸². The Amalekite's report represents fake news as a phenomenon – a concrete manifestation in a specific historical context. However, our ability to recognize and analyze it as fake news relies on our conceptual understanding of misinformation, bridging the gap between ancient events and modern philosophical discourse.

David's response to the news, initially accepting it but later questioning and verifying, mirrors contemporary discussions on the importance of critical evaluation and fact-checking⁸³. This biblical example thus provides historical precedent for modern media literacy strategies,

⁷⁸ Kanu I. A., Mike Boni Bazza, Pilani Michael Paul. 2024. "Banditry's Toll On Tomorrow: Exploring the Consequences on Youth in Northwest Nigeria." *International Journal of Religion*. 5(6), 111-117.

⁷⁹ Aïmeur, E., Amri, S. and Brassard, G. 2023., Op. Cit.

⁸⁰ Radcliffe, D. 2017., Op. Cit

⁸¹ Harari, N. Y. 2018., Op. Cit

⁸² Hagui, A. and Bortos, S. 2021. "Understanding Fake News: An Interdisciplinary Approach." *Acta Universitatis Danubius*. 15(N2).

⁸³ Luo, M., Hancock, J. T. and Markowitz, D. M. 2020., Op. Cit



emphasizing the timeless importance of verifying information, even when it comes from seemingly credible sources. The severe consequences faced by the Amalekite – execution for his false report – serve as a cautionary tale that resonates with modern concerns about the potential repercussions of spreading misinformation⁸⁴. While contemporary consequences may not be as extreme, this biblical example underscores the serious ethical and social implications of fake news throughout history. In harmonizing these biblical and philosophical perspectives, we see that fake news is not merely a modern problem born of digital technologies, but a persistent feature of human communication rooted in our cognitive biases and social behaviors. The biblical narrative provides a concrete, historical example that supports contemporary philosophical frameworks on misinformation, from Harari's evolutionary perspective to current scholarly discourse on information disorder.

This interdisciplinary analysis demonstrates the value of bridging ancient wisdom with modern inquiry. It offers a more comprehensive understanding of fake news as both a timeless human phenomenon and a pressing contemporary challenge. By recognizing the deep-seated human tendencies that give rise to misinformation, as illustrated in both biblical and modern contexts, we can develop more effective strategies to combat fake news and foster a more discerning, critically-minded society.

Recommendations

To add practical value to this study, the following recommendations are presented to provide readers with actionable insights:

- a. There is need to integrate media literacy education in communities and even academic curriculum. Develop and implement comprehensive media literacy programs in educational curricula at all levels to equip individuals with critical thinking skills necessary for identifying and evaluating potential fake news.
- b. Promotion of interdisciplinary research should be encouraged especially between scholars in philosophy, theology, media studies, and information science to develop more nuanced understandings of fake news and its impacts across different domains.
- c. Based on the foregoing study, it is important to leverage on historical insights where lessons from historical examples of misinformation, such as the biblical case study presented, could be utilized to inform modern strategies for combating fake news.
- d. Enhance fact-checking mechanisms should be promoted. In order to do that stakeholders should support and expand independent fact-checking organizations, and integrate their findings more seamlessly into social media platforms and news outlets.
- e. There is need to promote ethical journalism, namely that journalistic standards and practices should be strengthened to prioritize accuracy and transparency, through industry-wide initiatives or enhanced regulatory frameworks.
- f. In an era of internet and AI innovations communities should develop AI-assisted verification tools. To do this we must invest in the development of artificial intelligence technologies that can assist in the rapid identification and flagging of potential fake news items.

⁸⁴ Bateman, J. and Jackson, D. 2024., Op. Cit



- g. Open discussions about the nature and impact of fake news across diverse communities ought to be facilitated to increase awareness and collective resilience against misinformation.

Conclusion

This study has explored the phenomenon of fake news through an innovative lens, bridging ancient wisdom with modern philosophical inquiry. Through a scientific study of the biblical account of King Saul's death in 2 Sam 1:1-16 and contextualizing it within contemporary frameworks of misinformation, the researchers have uncovered striking parallels between ancient and modern manifestations of fake news. The present analysis reveals that while the mediums of communication have evolved dramatically, the fundamental human tendencies driving the creation and spread of misinformation remain remarkably consistent across millennia. The Amalekite messenger's false report to David exemplifies key characteristics of fake news that persist today: the blending of truth with fabrication, sensationalism, exploitation of credible sources, and motivation by personal gain.

The philosophico-biblical approach employed in this study has proven fruitful in illuminating the timeless nature of misinformation. By integrating theological exegesis with Harari's genealogical philosophical framework and contemporary scholarly discourses on information disorder, the researchers have gained deeper insights into the cognitive and social roots of fake news. This research contributes to the understanding of fake news as both a concept and a phenomenon, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the two in the efforts to combat misinformation. The study underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach to addressing fake news, including media literacy education, interdisciplinary research, leveraging historical insights, enhancing fact-checking mechanisms, promoting ethical journalism, developing AI-assisted verification tools, and fostering public dialogue.

As humanity wades through the information age, the lessons drawn from this ancient text offer valuable guidance. They remind us that critical evaluation of information sources and the ability to discern truth from falsehood are skills as crucial today as they were in biblical times. By recognizing the deep-seated human tendencies that give rise to fake news, we can develop more effective strategies to mitigate its harmful effects and foster a more informed, discerning society. Finally, this interdisciplinary study not only sheds light on the enduring nature of misinformation but also provides a novel perspective on addressing contemporary challenges in media literacy and information verification. As the world continues to grapple with the pervasive influence of fake news, especially in our digital landscape, the insights gained from this philosophico-biblical analysis offer a foundation for future research and practical interventions in the ongoing battle against misinformation.

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