

BOOK REVIEW:

*THE END OF INFORMATION: MEDIA, KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION IN A POST-TRUTH AGE*¹

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Buckingham, David. *The End of Information: Media, Knowledge and Education in a Post-Truth Age*. Polity Press, 2026.

David Buckingham (b. 1954) is a British scholar whose work has long focused on media, education, and youth culture. *The End of Information: Media, Knowledge and Education in a Post-truth Age* (Polity Press, 2026) is his most recent contribution to the former field. In this timely work, Buckingham offers a wide-ranging analysis of media, knowledge, and education in what is commonly described as the “post-truth” era. Drawing on broad conceptual frameworks that encompass trust, facts, literacy, and knowledge, he addresses ongoing debates around misinformation and its role in shaping political discourse, social dynamics, and, at times, collective political and social actions. Although the book primarily focuses on and gives examples of the United Kingdom—for instance, when he addresses the 2024 Southport murders as an illustrative case study—it also engages with the United States.

This volume can therefore be understood as a continuation of Buckingham’s longstanding engagement with media education and youth studies. By engaging in contemporary debates around “post-truth” and “misinformation,” the book contributes to a broader debate on the so-called “information age,” a discussion that has evolved since the 1990s and continues to expand in response to the growth of artificial intelligence. In the prologue of the book, Buckingham argues that misinformation is indeed frequently associated with social media and algorithmic culture. While acknowledging the influence

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of popular culture characters such as Elon Musk and Donald Trump in shaping online discourse, he also underscores the continued relevance of traditional media, including the traditional British *Daily Mail* and the BBC. In this context, he examines the increasing emphasis placed on critical thinking within UK educational policy, suggesting that algorithmic systems exert more influence across all age groups to the extent that critical thinking is relegated to a secondary role.

A central question guiding the book concerns whether misinformation can indeed be considered the primary issue affecting contemporary British society, and, if so, how it might be effectively addressed. In this way, Buckingham challenges the tendency to treat the promotion of critical thinking as a sufficient solution, arguing that such approaches risk oversimplifying complex issues. He also insists that digital media plays a crucial role in shaping events that polarize societies and encourage collective responses, while emphasizing the ambivalent and multifaceted nature of this influence. Moreover, he contends that recent political developments cannot be reduced to misinformation alone, nor can they be resolved through what he terms a simplistic “information fix” (xiv).

Very importantly, the book engages with the concept of “post-truth,” originally coined by journalist Steve Tesich in 1992, which gained prominence during Donald Trump’s first presidential campaign and the Brexit referendum (1). Its widespread circulation, strengthened by its selection as the Oxford English Dictionary’s 2016 Word of the Year, has facilitated the rise of conspiratorial thinking across diverse domains, including racial politics, public health, climate change, and global conflict.

From a critical point of view, this work offers a valuable contribution to the study of information politics. Buckingham’s engagement with distinctions between “real” and “fake” news—as well as categories such as “misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation” (3)—highlights the existence of a complex continuum rather than a simple binary opposition. One of the book’s most significant contributions lies in its argument that, despite its potential overuse, the notion of post-truth signals a deeper and more enduring transformation in knowledge systems. This shift is closely linked to a growing erosion of trust in traditional authorities, a process that is further intensified by the widespread use of artificial intelligence. Also notes that both popular commentators and academic researchers increasingly view these developments as contributing to a crisis in democratic institutions and civic life.

The book is particularly relevant for emerging interdisciplinary fields such as Conspiracy Studies (Birchall 2011), Critical Transparency Studies (Alloa & Thöma 2018; Martín-Salván & Pöhlmann 2024), and Secrecy Studies (Horn 2011; López & Villar-Argáiz 2021). Readers interested in these areas would benefit from situating Buckingham's work alongside key contributions in these domains. As the author himself acknowledges, addressing these issues “crossing disciplines, bridging together disparate areas of study, and sometimes painting with a broad brush” (16).

Furthermore, Buckingham's claim that we should examine why “information problems” are framed in ways at specific historical moments offers a compelling methodological insight. Rather than assuming the novelty of the current situation, he encourages a more reflexive analysis of the discursive conditions that shape our understanding of misinformation and post-truth. In this sense, it is crucial to highlight that the book is written in a clear and accessible style, as he claims himself, making it suitable for students and for a more general informed readership (16).

In conclusion, David Buckingham's *The End of Information* is a fresh contribution in ongoing debates about media, knowledge, and education in the so-called post-truth era. Rather than subscribing to alarmist narratives that attribute contemporary political and social crises solely to misinformation, the author provides a more complex account that foregrounds structural, social, and historical factors. This is one of the book's main strengths, as it challenges reductive explanations while calling for a more critical engagement with how problems related to (mis)information are framed both in public and academic discourse. All in all, this work represents a valuable contribution to studies on media and information culture as well as to intersecting interdisciplinary fields such as Secrecy Studies. In sum, it offers a critical summary of existing debates and an invitation to rethink the assumptions that lie behind discussions of information, truth, and education in contemporary society.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

PATRICIA GARCÍA SANTOS is a predoctoral researcher at the Department of English and German Philology at the University of Córdoba, where she conducts teaching and research activities as part of her PhD in Contemporary Literatures in English. She holds a competitive FPI grant awarded for the state-funded project entitled “Poetics and Politics of Transparency in Contemporary Literature in English” (PID2023-146346NB-100). Her research focuses on contemporary American and British novels through the lens of Babel-related themes, exploring the tensions between transparency and opacity, the

fragmentation of communities due to the limits of communication, and the narrative strategies that mediate these dynamics.

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