

Why Misinformation Is About Who You Trust, Not What You Think | Nautilus

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April 10, 2019

I can't see them. Therefore they're not real." From which century was this quote drawn? Not a medieval one. The utterance emerged on Sunday from *Fox & Friends* presenter Pete Hegseth, who was referring to ... germs. The former Princeton University undergraduate and Afghanistan counterinsurgency instructor said, to the mirth of his co-hosts, that he hadn't washed his hands in a decade. Naturally this germ of misinformation went viral on social media.

The next day, as serendipity would have it, the authors of *The Misinformation Age: How False Beliefs Spread*—philosophers of science Cailin O'Connor and James Owen Weatherall—sat down with *Nautilus*. In their book, O'Connor and Weatherall, both professors at the University of California, Irvine, illustrate mathematical models of how information spreads—and how consensus on truth or falsity manages or fails to take hold—in society, but particularly in social networks of scientists. The coauthors argue “we cannot understand changes in our political situation by focusing only on individuals. We also need to understand how our networks of social interaction have changed, and why those changes have affected our ability, as a group, to form reliable beliefs.”

[...]

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