

THE PERCEPTUAL MULTIVERSE: A NEW LENS ON REALITY IN THE INFOVERSE

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the traditional understanding that there is one objective Universe and proposes that it actually has the potential to exist in the context of the subjective, as it is shaped by the perceptions of the individual's consciousness. Within the context of the post-truth world of disjointed truths and belief systems, there arises the new idea of the concept of the "Perceptual Multiverse," in which the belief that everybody has the capacity to construct their own Universe based on the experiences that exist within the context of the Personal Info-Bubble from the Info Verse. This paper illustrates, from the perspective of multi-disciplinary studies, the impact that the world of Social Media has upon the concept of the Perceptual Multiverse. This particular article utilizes philosophical concepts including solipsism and phenomenology to support the argument about the nature of reality being pluralistic and constantly changing. At the end of the article, the argument is made that even when the various realities are lost after the point of death, the impact is yet to be felt because of the collective knowledge. This particular discussion about realities is emphasized by the premise of empathy and understanding being essential to navigate the ever-divided society which is being characterized by subjective realities.

Keywords: Perceptual Multiverse, Subjective Reality, Post-Truth Era, Infoverse, Filter Bubbles, Individual Universes

What about the idea that the universe is more of an internal experience and starts or ends with you or for you? This article goes against the traditional concept of the universe being an object that is shared in common by suggesting that the universe is purely an internal experience of an individual. Rather than being a fixed reality, the universe is a fluid, personal construct that evolves with an individual's consciousness and ceases or transitions when they do. What remains, however, is not the singular, universal reality but the unique, subjective 'universes' of others. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from media studies, sociology, psychology, and philosophy, this research explores how these individualized universes are formed through perception, shaped

by cultural and social contexts, and mediated by media and technology. Yet it deepens further, this paper asks whether a singular collective reality is possible or even desirable in a world of fragmented, individual universes.

Reality has long been considered as something shared, stable, and objective in the world, independent of the views of each individual. Shared reality refers to the alignment of individuals' internal experiences regarding a specific referent, which is driven by a motivation for connection, and shows how people socially construct and share their perceptions and beliefs (Echterhoff, Higgins, & Levine, 2009). This, however, is no longer an

assumption in the age of truth fragmentation and subjective ascendancy. The post-truth era, defined by personal beliefs over objective facts, does not have room for a single reality. The concept of truth, therefore, becomes pliable; it is now subject to perception, emotion, and social-cultural filtering. When referring to the post-truth era, it denotes a paradigmatic shift from the importance of objective truth to that of unverified statements, emotional truths, and belief-driven narratives, which develop due to certain psychological, social, and technological factors that bring on a transition from an "Information Age Society" to that of "Experience Age Society" (Kalpokas, 2019).

From Shared Reality to Subjective Constructs

This has significant implications for how we perceive the universe. If truth can be personalized, why not reality itself? Human knowledge is always influenced by language, discourse, and societal context, making truly neutral truth unattainable (Nicolson, 2013). In the same way that media algorithms and echo chambers create isolated bubbles of 'truth' for individuals, the universe itself can be seen as a subjective construct that exists only as each person perceives it. Algorithmic filter bubbles and echo chambers on social networking sites amplify exposure to fake news through the reinforcement of congruent information. A survey experiment conducted by Rhodes (2021) found that participants were more likely to believe in fake news that fit their political leanings but reduced that effect when exposed to a mix of perspectives, though among Democrats more than Republicans. That highlights how personalized realities, sculpted out of individual biases and media algorithms, feed into the subjective 'universes' where truth gets fragmented. It supports my thesis that it is through the existence of personal experiences and perceptions of each that the universe is constructed, guided heavily by what information an individual consumes (Rhodes, 2021). This view calls upon us to think of the universe in a different way, not simply as the outside world but as a very personal one, one which is shaped through and centered upon the individual him-or-herself and which begins and ends with his or her consciousness.

"Nonlocal realism proposes that the universe is fundamentally interconnected in the sense that the events and phenomena affect each other across space, as opposed to the idea of local realism, where events and phenomena are regarded as separate and independent." It highlights the need to incorporate consciousness, meaning, and universal interconnectedness as part of reality, going beyond the limitations of the older paradigms of science (Lohrey & Boreham, 2020). This is what can be considered to be compatible with the notion that "the universe is not an experience one shares with all of oneself, but is instead fashioned by one's own experiences and subjective universe, which the brain constructs for the individual as an entity. This "universe" travels with individuals, even after death and entering the afterlife, implying the universe and reality itself are fragmented yet interwoven, assuming particular manifestations about each individual. Indeed, the universe may be considered to be "a virtual reality created by information processing," such that the physical properties of space, time, energy, and matter are merely information manifestations. It correlates the concepts of modern physics to this notion by hypothesizing "that if the universe is the simulation of information, then even such things as the Big Bang can be seen as the 'booting up' of the virtual universe." This can potentially fill the gaps between the way relativity defines the universe as the combination of space and time and the way the energy and matter of quantum mechanics are defined (Whitworth, 2008).

It is like looking into a kaleidoscope: the same pieces are inside, but each twist creates a new pattern. So, too, does the universe reveal itself differently to each individual as his or her perspective and experiences mold it. It isn't some fixed, unchanging thing-yet dynamic, ever-shifting mosaic, remodeling itself second by second to reflect the inner workings of a being. Just as no two individuals see exactly the same pattern in a kaleidoscope, no two people experience the universe in exactly the same way. This serves as a metaphor to point out that the universe may not be one fixed thing but a collection of individual universes, molded by personal perceptions. Just as one kaleidoscope can present several, all equally

valid patterns, so each person creates his or her subjective universe and reinforces the idea that reality is not universally objective but inherently subjective and personal.

The evolution of the universe can be compared to that of a butterfly, which develops from its nascent stages, including eggs, caterpillars, pupae, and butterflies, to a full-grown reproductive phase. Dynik's paradigm is a combination of various scientific theories as well as biblical perspectives that highlight a theoretical explanation regarding the evolution of the universe, especially during the economic crisis of the COVID era (Aziz, 2022). So, again, try to think of the universe as a kind of caterpillar going through metamorphosis. In the same way as the caterpillar turns into a butterfly, each person's idea about the universe is constantly changing and morphing with experience and perception. The universe, like the caterpillar, doesn't remain fixed in one form. Instead, it undergoes a personal transformation-something that becomes an individual reality for every person. Much as no butterflies are alike, no two individuals see the same universe. Their experiences, their inner worlds, and ways of seeing all weave a reality that evolves with them. This metaphor helps to describe, from a subjective perspective, that reality is fluid and always changing; just as a caterpillar morphs into a butterfly, so too does the universe itself-continually in flux and rebuilding itself in response to the mind perceiving it. Therefore, this is intimate and changeable.

Philosophical Perspectives on Subjective Reality

The view of reality as being known by the individual has been well explored in the realm of philosophy, starting with solipsism, through to phenomenology. Solipsism, as an area of conceptual discussion, stems simply from the fact that nothing in the realms of conscious awareness, physical matter, or sensation can be had without the other. Essentially, solipsism states that only one's own conscious awareness can be known, which flies in the face of physical reality. Other philosophers, such as Leibniz, Descartes, had placed great store by the awareness of one's own conscious awareness as the prime imperative. The

deficiency, however, within both philosophies was failing to satisfactorily bridge the differences between solipsism and physical reality. Conscious awareness again becomes the fulcrum by which to resolve the particular philosophical conundrum. The argument of solipsism establishes itself simply through an admittance of physical matter through sensations/conscious awareness, which essentially, within the realms of empiricism, means it's impossible to definitively state the independent existence of physical matter without it being linked somehow to the 'self.' Indeed, without definitive proof of an independent reality existing beyond the 'self,' the only resulting conclusion, however seemingly illogical, becomes solipsism itself (Ural, 2019). Phenomenology is particular philosophical method focuses on understanding the way we actually know something, with techniques such as interviews and observation being utilized with an emphasis on the expertise the researcher has as it pertains to gaining valuable insight. In Regards to the framework developed by Husserl, Phenomenology concentrates on accurately describing the experiences as they're perceived by consciousness within their original form (Qutoshi, 2018).

In support of my thesis-which has stated the universe is not singular and that every being experiences their own universe-are phenomenology and solipsism. While phenomenology focuses on subjective-lived experiences, setting as a backdrop how consciousness interfaces with phenomena to create individual realities, it therefore aligns with what I am saying in this paper. This is so because phenomenology tries to capture how reality manifests uniquely to each consciousness. On the other hand, solipsism posits that the physical world is dependent on the self. It talks about individual consciousness as central in the construction of reality. What it means is that each single being acts within his subjective universe. Though solipsism is very often criticized for refusing any independent shared reality, it reinforces the thesis by indicating the deeply personal and self-centric nature of perceived existence. More importantly, the philosophy of phenomenology and solipsism complements the

idea that the universe is a mosaic of interconnected yet individually constructed realities. Indeed, these two seemingly very different philosophies find common cause in underpinning an understanding of how consciousness shapes the experience of a pluralistic, dynamic universe rather than a singular, static one.

Post-truth philosophy emphasizes subjective belief and emotions over objective truth. In the world of post-truth, where subjective experiences prevail, one's personal 'universe' determines their definitions of their own truths, judgments, and engagement with other people. This world of diverse realities based on personal consciousness and experiences of humanity is also indicative of the world being split, diverse, pluralistic, where reaching consensus is less important than personal interpretation. However, because of the diversity in human experiences and in perception, there would have been no overall 'truth' encompassing all humanity. However, some set of values, ethics, or human traits can also be bridges for reaching understanding and cooperation beyond cultures and geography. The true source of strength and progress is in 'ethical conduct and adherence to truth, not in the pride of power or the delusion of being the superior ones.' Each person needs to realize its accountability towards themselves, given the fact that most of today's problems arise through inherent weakness or biases of oneself. Therefore, with these weaknesses of every human being made up, the course of social change will begin to manifest, and for this, humanism, as an area of relevance, has to be remembered. Humanism, understanding the values of empathy, reason, and the inherent dignity of every human being, presents itself as the force which might facilitate the existence of a framework for the understanding of the realities of the post-truth world. The post-truth world has information and reality being swapped by the reality of the person who decides what reality he or she embraces (Modreanu, 2017).

Filter Bubbles and Social Media's Role in Reality Construction

Social media networking also represents one of the methods through which information is retrieved and exchanged, but it imposes restrictions on the diversity of information viewed, as there are social and algorithmic filters applied. A study on the click information retrieved from the web indicated that people retrieve information from fewer sources through social media networking and email communication as opposed to those retrieved from search engines. The restricted diversity in the information viewed by people does have a strong link to the personal information viewed, as indicated by the study on Twitter and search engine information. This refers to a "social bubble or filter bubble" (Nikolov, Oliveira, Flammini, & Menczer, 2015).

The post-truth era is characterized by the preference of feelings, beliefs, and personal opinions to facts. Social media, which stands for mass media, helps to disseminate fake news that cultivates individual beliefs about reality, which people have already longed to have. The aforementioned example shows how the media can distort the truth about reality to produce other realities, which are easily adopted by individuals since it aligns with their wishes about reality.

This is an aspect Ralph Keyes examines in his book, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (2004), when he proposes that the chances of being lied to are high when the statements are in line with what one wishes to believe (Keyes, 2004). Similarly Sunstein (2017) discusses how social media aggravates misinformation, further crumbling shared truths (Sunstein, 2017). Pariser (2011) further explains that how algorithmic personalization on digital platforms limits exposure to diverse perspectives, creating filter bubbles that reinforce existing beliefs (Pariser, 2011). These theories validate the idea that the media has a pivotal role to play in shaping the individual and collective reality with regard to the fragmented view of the universe. This is because, with individuals increasingly trapped inside their own social bubbles, the ability to recognize the pluralistic view of the universe becomes clouded, implying the difficulties of the

post-truth world getting the overall perspective of the world and human existence under the truth. The use of the "Social Bubbles" idea in both traditional and social media could help to clarify the idea of people getting their own view of the universe based upon the knowledge they get through the media they consume. Inside the social bubble, the algorithms used design the messages to fit the already existing views of the individual based upon his/her beliefs and interests and preferences, meaning that the person's own view of the world becomes informed and refracted through his/her own views and biases, meaning that the universe that every individual person perceives becomes visibly affected by the knowledge they receive and becomes limited to the knowledge that resonates with his/her already existing knowledge and knowledge biases. Take, for example, that someone in the social bubble for and about a certain political belief will view material that substantiates that belief, rejecting and expelling other material that would otherwise prove the opposite. This would mean that there is an individually supported universe created for the limited view of the world that the person has. Infinitely more worlds and ideas exist in other people's bubbles, knowledge and ideas in other universes'. The difference in thought, culture, and experiences that exist in other than the limited universe can be viewed as other universes altogether. What is happening outside of one's own 'bubble' seems far-off, irrelevant, and even untrue since it does not support the view, and that's what the belief relates to: that the universe is plural, that all beings establish their own universe from the world they have access to and process. These personal universes can intersect or branch off, but they are distinct as they are viewed individually by each person. Indeed, social media platforms and algorithms play an important part in creating personal universes as they open up less to other realities and make way for a more personal perspective of reality. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, to name a few social media platforms, use algorithms to serve personalized content to consumers of their platforms. This makes it more interesting but less informative to the audience. At least, in this instance, media creates a more split-

off universe that exists as isolated bubbles where individuals live in their own information vacuum that restricts their knowledge of reality.

The Infoverse and the Perceptual Multiverse

This article leads towards the concept of an "Infoverse," and this emphasizes the fact that the universe that we reside in is actually built through the information we consume. It postulates that, for every individual, their world is uniquely shaped from all the data that they operate on-be it through some form of media, networks, personal experiences, or cultural effects. This universe is, therefore, fluid and adaptive because the stream of information is constantly shaping our concept of the world and ourselves. The Infoverse is, by and large, the base information structure upon which our individual reality is built.

This paper unfolds the discussions on these individual universes and leads to the idea of a "Perceptual Multiverse" that can be drawn on the concept of the multiverse, which suggests the existence of multiple, parallel universes that coexist alongside our own. In this scenario, every universe in the multiverse might boast different physical laws, realities, and even times. Now, applying this to its analogous "Perceptual Multiverse," we modify this into the field of human perception and cognition. In the Perceptual Multiverse, each individual creates his or her reality based on subjective experience, information processed, and beliefs. Just as the multiverse in physics suggests a bunch of universes that are separate yet interconnected (Kaku, 1995), the Perceptual Multiverse" also suggests that there is an "universe" for each person that is unique and individualized based upon the data they experience. Although these "universes" do not interact with each other physically, they can interact through communication and the exchange of information. This, of course, like "The Multiverse" theory, is based upon the idea that subjective realities exist independently and can have no observable effect upon other subjective "ways of reality." According to "The Perceptual Multiverse Theory": "It seems our own "universe" appears to exist as the data we see and experience with our eyes when watching TV, the

people we interact with, and our thoughts.” This “universe” is also dynamic and changes with various interactions with new data, new thoughts, and new “beliefs.” There appears to be infinite subjective “universes” through these “Theories of the Multiverse” and “The Perceptual Multiverse Theory” that exist and exist simultaneously with their own set of “truth and experience.” This theory also justifies the reality of the fragmentary nature of information and the presence of bubbles on the social media platforms, where the people are trapped in their perceptual space and hardly ever step out of their universe, only engaging with information that supports or fits into their worldview. Therefore, the universes of two people may never be the same but may be their own reality and, once again, prove the fact that human perception is subjective in nature. The Perceptual Multiverse theory, therefore, presents a whole new paradigm with which the reality of reality itself has to be defined in this post-truth reality where subjective realities and facts create and construct the reality of human existence.

Joining Infoverse and Perceptual Multiverse NOW In regard to joining Infoverse and the Perceptual Multiverse NOW, we realize that information movement within Infoverse impacts directly upon Perceptual Multiverse-the many subjective universes that each person experiences for themselves. Infoverse puts in place the basic informational material for each person’s subjective universe. Information moves through our personal filters of cognition, creating our own perception of the world and our beliefs about interactions between ourselves and those who perceive differently. In this respect, Infoverse impacts Perceptual Multiverse in which each person’s subjective universe is born from the unique information that is theirs alone for access and process. Perceptual Multiverse also impacts Infoverse. When an individual is seated within their own perceptual universe, their own interpretation and bias inform them the type of information that they wish for personally. Their own idiosyncrasy towards exposure of information, founded upon their own personal biases, further solidifies the strength of Infoverse

for themselves, which further impacts and solidifies their own perceptual universe.

There is the Infoverse and then there is the Perceptual Multiverse. In a way, they're the same side of the coin. The universe of experience is created by the flow of information; that universe is then filtered through the individual's perception, creating an ongoing cycle. Information molds perception and perception molds the kind of information we absorb, resulting in the creation of evermore personalized, unique universes of experience for each of us. The Infoverse is a private, fluid construction, as it depends on the engagement of the person's mind and emotions with the world. Upon death, the personal Infoverse of an individual ceases to exist as it was but its influence may continue in the legacy they leave behind, whether it be through tangible work, ideas, or cultural impact. Even if the personal Infoverse is dissolved at death, what they have contributed in information, ideas, or perspective could be diffused into the collective knowledge and, as such, be retained within the social and intellectual ecosystem to influence other Infoverses. These personal Infoverses in turn continue to evolve as part of the larger collective Infoverse, so no information or perception really ever goes away but rather is fed into the greater flow of knowledge and influence in society. Just as tradition, language, and culture are passed down from one generation to another, parts of an individual's Infoverse may be passed along from generation to generation to help form the collective body of knowledge that influences the Infoverses of successive generations. Hence, though an individual's Infoverse may not last for eternity in exactly the same form, aspects of it do become part of ideas, contributions, and influences that shape the perceptions of others with regard to the world.

Conclusion

This paper disputes the conventional notion of the existence of the universe as a singular and objective reality and introduces the notion of each person having their own universe, which is shaped by their perceptions and the information that flows. The advent of the shattered truth and the

emerging reality of subjective reality compels an understanding of how each of our universes evolves and shifts with the dynamic interactions of information, cultures, and the defined society. The dynamics of the Infoverse, which underlines the information basis of our reality, and the Perceptual Multiverse, which creates the subjective reality, unearths the subtle linkage between reality and our perceptions. Through our sojourn in the space, we build our reality, which exists mostly in the societal and algorithmic bubbles, with the least possibility of coalescing with other realities. This is the greatest indication of the post-truth phenomenon, "where subjective experience is given primacy over objective fact." In the final analysis, "reality is not this fixed thing but the ever-changing multifold of individual realities." For each of us, this universe would be the mind-bending manifestation of our own being, fluxing and swirling as we flux and swirl. Personal realities disappear with the passing of each individual. Their forces persist, however, and are the means by which total knowledge is contributed to the mix. This shapes the collective minds of the next generation. Multiple realities are the key to the development of empathy and cooperation and the development of the empathy and cooperation needed to find our way in this fragmented world of truths and half-truths. This is only the beginning of the exploration of our individual universes and how they meet and intersect, and how we can gain an even greater understanding of humanity's place inside this mess of intertwined universes: the infoverse and the perceptual multiverse.

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