Twitter Thread by Guillaume Chaslot



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The YouTube algorithm that I helped build in 2011 still recommends the flat earth theory by the *hundreds of millions*. This investigation by @RawStory shows some of the real-life consequences of this badly designed AI.

> Flat Earth conference attendees explain how they have been brainwashed by YouTube and Infowarshttps://t.co/gqZwGXPOoc
>
> — Raw Story (@RawStory) November 18, 2018

This spring at SxSW, @SusanWojcicki promised "Wikipedia snippets" on debated videos. But they didn't put them on flat earth videos, and instead @YouTube is promoting merchandising such as "NASA lies - Never Trust a Snake". 2/











A few example of flat earth videos that were promoted by YouTube #today:
https://t.co/TumQiX2tlj 3/

https://t.co/uAORIJ5BYX 4/

https://t.co/yOGZ0pLfHG 5/

https://t.co/Tj1zVkoIFG 6/

https://t.co/uUXCFjXxHg 7/

And this one would be hilarious if not recommended so massively to people who are the most vulnerable to conspiracies
https://t.co/EKed0B1XhD
8/

@nasa's @mlthaller nicely shows in 3 minutes why the earth is round and wonders: Why do so many people believe in flat earth? But the conspiracy is promoted by YouTube 100,000,000s of times, so I'm actually surprised that *so few* people fall for it 9/

https://t.co/yZpqdiJgsR

NBA star @KyrieIrving fell for it and explained that he was convinced both by Instagram and YouTube recommendations 10/

https://t.co/cqYz3SbDO8

So basically we have the two best AIs of the world, on Instagram and YouTube, competing to convince people that the earth is flat. Because it yields large amounts of watch time, and watch time yields ads. This is a #raceToTheBottom 11/

Flat Earth is not a "small bug". It reveals that there is a structural problem in Google's and Facebook's AIs: they exploit weaknesses of the most vulnerable people, to make them believe the darnedest things 12/

Another real-life harm of this conspiracy promoted by AI: in Nigeria, Boko Haram used the flat earth theory to motivate the killings of more than 600 geography teachers ■ 13/

https://t.co/M2mVtZRut9
https://t.co/myxPsrhlKa

More info on the link between Boko Haram and flat earth in this detailed @latimes article 14/

dropped out early.

The gunmen headed straight to the office of headmaster Yaya Buba Jam and shot him dead. They killed another teacher, Al Haji Modu, in his classroom.

In Boko Haram's savage campaign to establish an Islamic caliphate in western Africa, education is a primary target. The war on learning has robbed children of years of schooling — a deficit some may never make up — and perpetuated illiteracy and poverty in one of the poorest and least educated corners of Nigeria.

Nigeria's teachers union estimates that since 2009 Boko Haram has assassinated 611 teachers, burned down 910 schools and forced the closure of at least 1,500 others. More than 19,000 teachers and almost 1 million school-age children have fled the violence.

The attack on Sanda's school occurred three years ago, and she recounted the horrors of that day from a displaced persons camp in Maiduguri, where she has resumed teaching.

That Gomna had joined Boko Haram didn't surprise Sanda. The militants mainly recruit poorly educated children of illiterate parents to fight. But Tukur? He could have been someone.

"He was a perfect student," Sanda said. "He was hard-working. He was silent, just concentrating on his work."

Full @latimes article here:
https://t.co/M2mVtZRut9
15/

How do we know if harmful videos get promoted by the AI? To monitor that, I created https://t.co/0RjD2PtTvV, a site that scans YouTube recommendations daily. If harmful videos get recommended by the AI from many channels, they will appear at the top of the list there. 16/

For now, it is available in English for YouTube yet, but with the help of universities and @HumaneTech_, it will soon cover more languages and platforms 17/

The real danger of AI is not that it becomes "self-conscious". It's that we trust it too much and slowly become imbeciles

Flat-earthers are the canaries in the coalmine /18

I've seen some people state that: "canaries are only a small fraction of our users!"

I think they're missing the point. 19/

"Ban all the canaries from the coal mine!" also misses the point.

With AI in charge of our information, we're facing a brand new, existential problem that concerns all of us. We need to develop tools to understand it better. 20/

One more key to understand this: this @KELLYWEILL's article shows that some people spent *days* on YouTube after being converted to flat earth

From the algorithm's point of view, flat earth is a gold mine.

Full article: https://t.co/LPjCKpbwXj

21/

When did they chuck out the globe, renounce outer space as fake, and decide we live on a flat plane covered by a dome?

The answer, for most, is three years ago. That's when some of the movement's biggest names launched YouTube channels with hours-long videos explaining not so much why the Earth is flat (it isn't) but why elements of the "globe model" are suspicious, particularly when they clash with a literal reading of the Bible.

"August 2015," Ginny, a California woman tells me. That's when a friend forwarded her a video series on Flat Earth. "I spent like three nights wide awake and then I was hooked."

This is the real currency in the Flat Earth community. Between speeches, everyone is showing each other YouTube videos on their phones. People reference each other by their YouTube names, and twice when I leave my seat I return to find advertisements for YouTube channels on the chair. A panel on Women in Flat Earth is more of a how-to on running a Flat Earth YouTube channel while female.

Also fascinating in this article is that Logan Paul was a speaker at a Flat-Earth conference, where he said "I'm coming out of the Flat Earth closet". He has 18,610,154 followers on YouTube, mostly pre-teens and teens

https://t.co/LPjCKpbwXj 22/