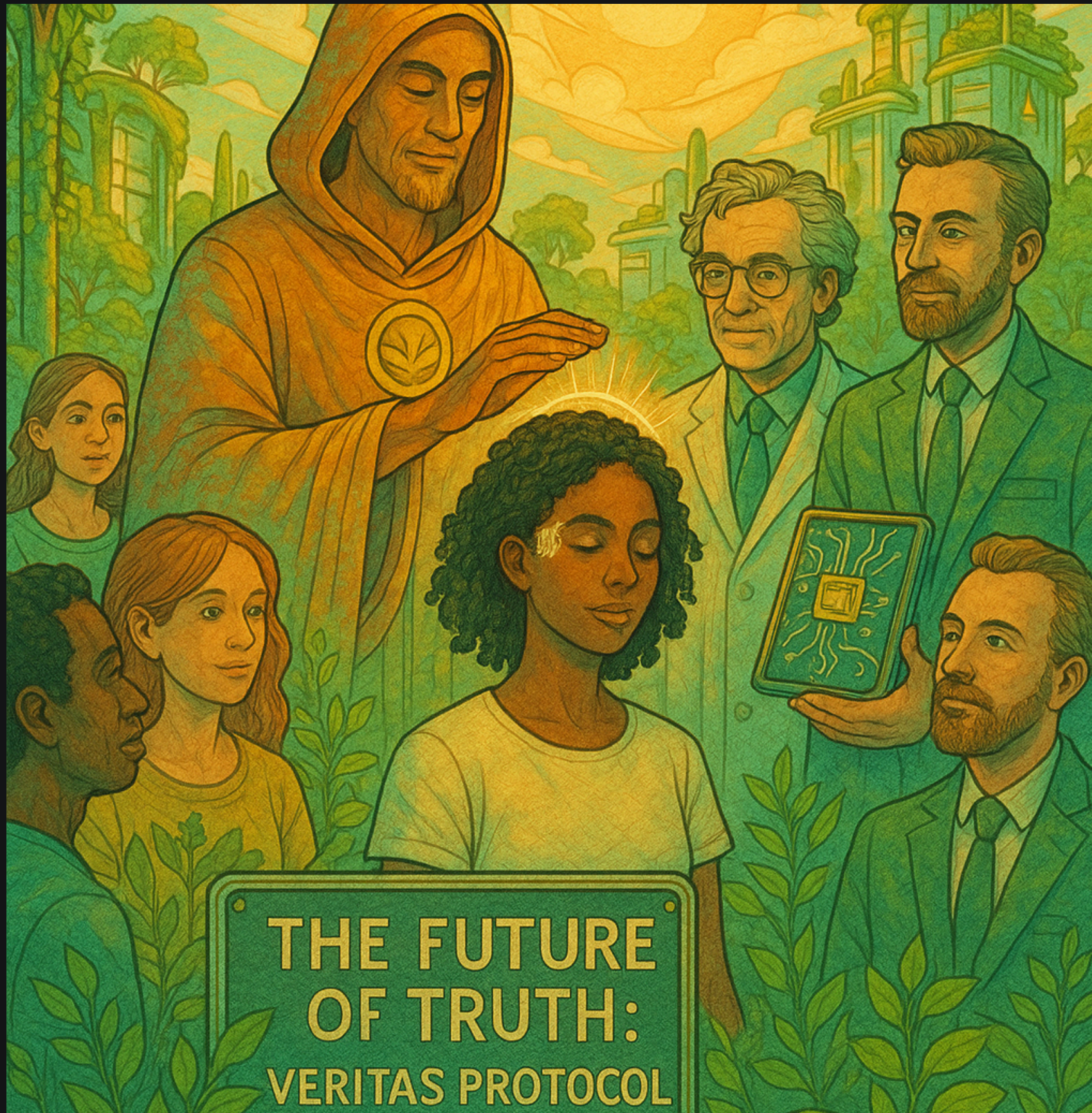


DESIGN FUTURES SPRING 2025

FUTURE OF TRUTH 2040

Exploring the changing personal, social,
and political relationship of truth through
a design futures experience.

Dan Eizans - Lyric Metroplis
Philip Jones - Chase Taylor



ABOUT THE PROJECT

This research and the corresponding design futures encounter presented at the University of Houston Foresight Spring Gathering were completed as part of a project for the UH Foresight Master's Spring 2025 Future Design course taught by Adam Cowart. Inspired by the changing relationship between society and information, and the value or meaning of truth, the team explored implications for a **world where we must rebuild a baseline of truth after intense polarization and loss of knowledge consensus.**

The team approached their research through the UH Framework Foresight model, completing scanning, trends and impacts assessment, drivers assessment, and scenarios design.

OUR TEAM



Dan Eizans



Lyric Metroplous



Philip Jones



Chase Taylor

METHODOLOGY

This project used the University of Houston's Foresight Framework and the Futures Ladder to scope the project, scan for signals and explore possible implications of strategic options to inform the future of truth and misinformation.

The results of our exploration were then synthesized and helped in the creation of a potential experiential future for Spring Gathering 2025.

Framing

- Challenge Mapping
- STEEP Analysis
- Domain Mapping
- Stakeholder Relations

Scanning

- TIPPOS
- Interpretations
- Synthesis
- Mapping

Futuring

- Establishing baselines
- Establishing Alternative futures
- Influence Mapping
- Drivers
- Scenarios

Visioning

- Scenarios
- 3rd Order Impacts
- Personification
- Near Casting
- Mid Casting

Planning

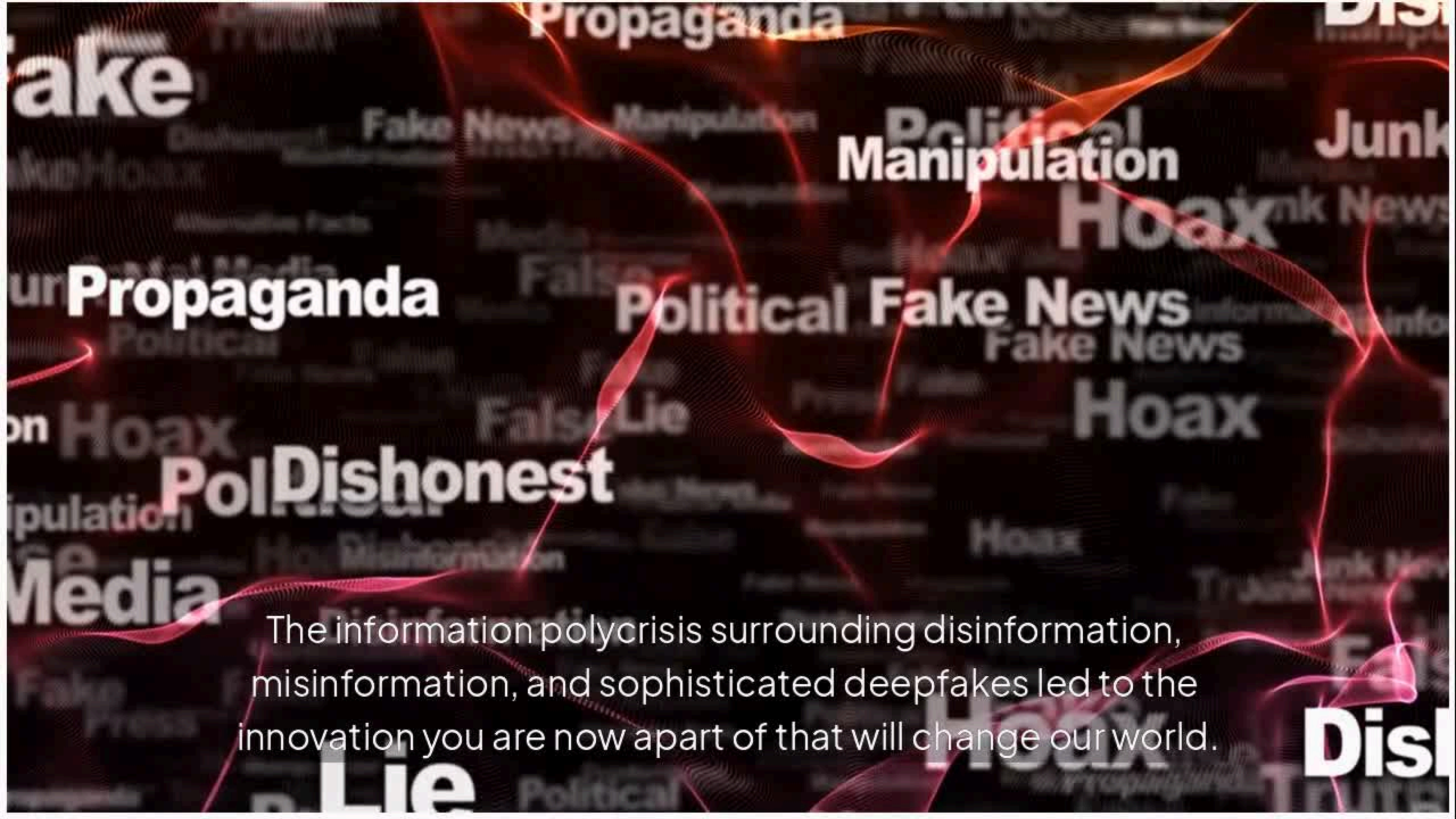
- Brainstorming/prototyping
- Experience Mapping
- Journey Mapping

Designing

- Collaboration
- Prototyping
- Storyboarding
- Development
- Design
- Copywriting



ENCOUNTER WITH THE FUTURE OF TRUTH 2040



The information polycrisis surrounding disinformation, misinformation, and sophisticated deepfakes led to the innovation you are now apart of that will change our world.

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

Path Rose

Take a journey towards gradual enlightenment.



Have feedback on Path Rose? Scan here.

Gradual Revelation

V.1 of the Path Rose Veritas Protocol will provide a gradual understanding. Truth perception sensors will be released to your Receptikon over the next month. We recommend this truth verification upgrade for those who want to begin by understanding external truths, eventually finding their inner truth. This gradual journey allows for a more meditative and relaxed approach toward enlightenment.

Key features

- The rich, complex flavor profile of rose symbolizes how truth has many dimensions
- The natural sweetness with subtle bitter notes represents how truth can be both comforting and challenging
- The distinctive aroma opens neural pathways for enhanced perception

Path Jasmine

Seek immediate clarity



Have feedback on Path Rose? Scan here.

Blooming insight

V.1 of the Path Jasmine Veritas Protocol will release immediate understanding of truth to your Receptikon. We recommend this truth verification upgrade for those who are unafraid to face truth head-on with immediacy. We warn that this may be a more emotional experience due to sudden realizations and changes in perceived reality.

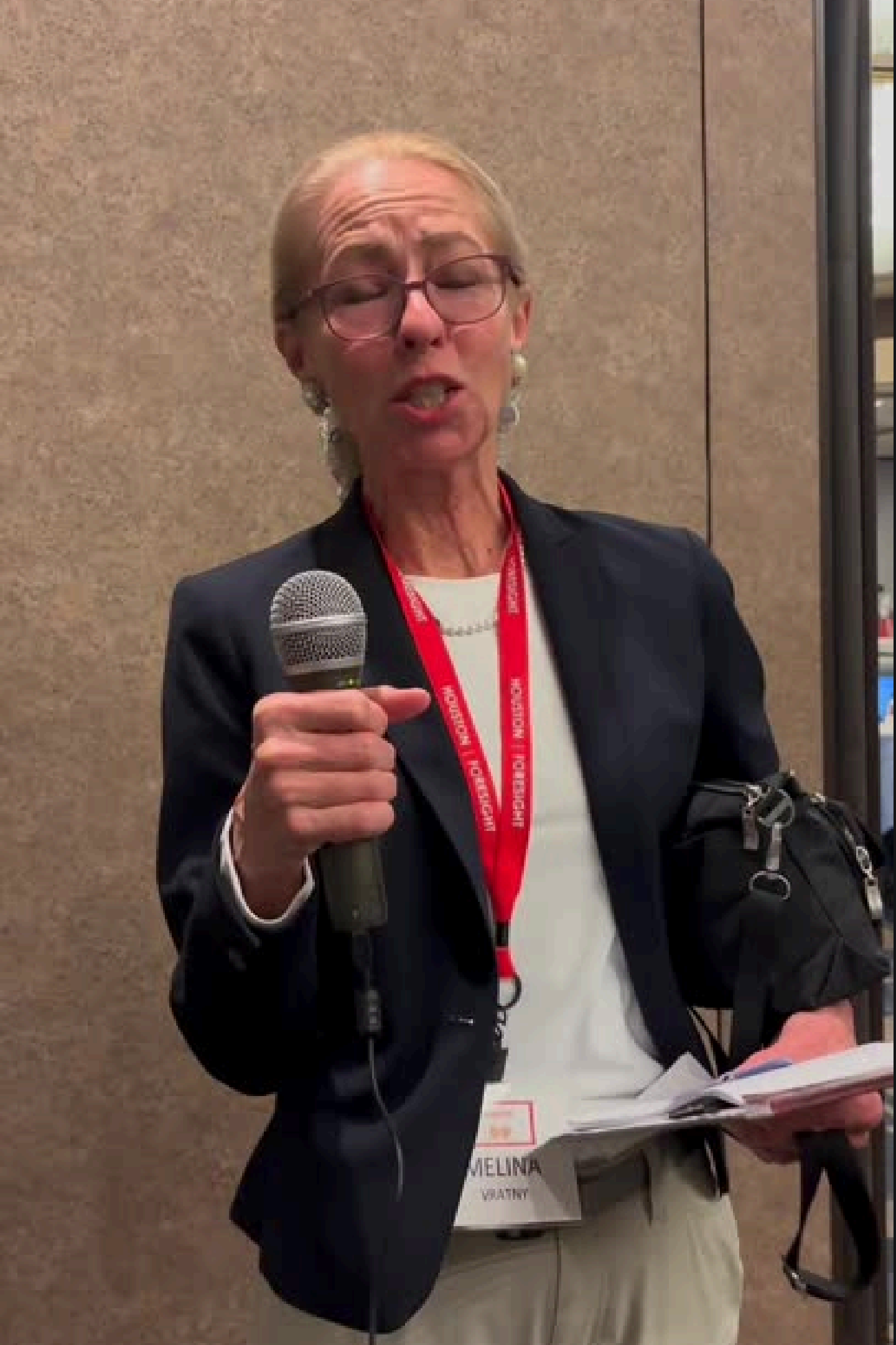
Key features:

- The intense fragrance of jasmine represents how truth can arrive unexpectedly
- The delicate taste symbolizes the subtle nature of intuitive truths
- The cooling properties of jasmine represent clarity of perception

CLOSE YOUR EYES TO BE GUIDED THROUGH THE CEREMONY



[Link to ceremony audio](#)



**“THIS WAS
INCREDIBLY
CHILLING.”**



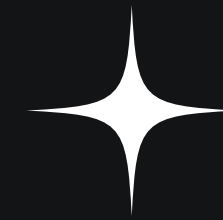
4.92 average rating from survey respondents

[Link to survey data](#)

SCANNING & CURRENT ISSUES

Many of the signals representing the emergent changes for truth can be categorized across domains like Values, Technology, Perception, and Institutional Power, highlighting the interconnected nature of the forces shaping the future of truth.

The future of truth is defined by relationships: relationships to those curating and disseminating information, those who have a vested interest in maintaining a certain perception, and each person with their own understanding of truth.



Synthetic Media Crisis

The rapid improvement in AI-generated content (text, images, audio, video) is outpacing verification technologies. Organizations are struggling to develop reliable authentication systems that can keep pace with increasingly sophisticated synthetic media, creating a widening "reality gap" where distinguishing authentic from artificial becomes nearly impossible for average people.



Platform Epistemic Governance

Major tech platforms now function as de facto arbiters of what information reaches billions of people, wielding unprecedented influence over shared reality. Their content moderation policies, algorithmic recommendation systems, and labeling practices are evolving into complex epistemic governance systems with minimal oversight or accountability, raising critical questions about who should have this power.

ISSUES CONT.



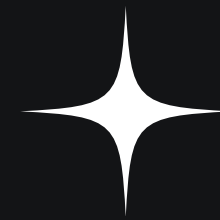
Accelerating Reality Divergence

Different populations are increasingly living in distinct information environments with fundamentally different "facts," leading to incompatible worldviews that make democratic governance extremely difficult. This epistemic fracturing is deepening along political, cultural, and technological divides, creating societies where finding common ground for collective decision-making becomes increasingly challenging.



Institutional Collapse

Traditional authorities and institutions that once served as trusted information sources (science, journalism, government, education) are experiencing accelerating erosion of public trust. This creates a vacuum being filled by alternative information ecosystems with wildly varying standards of evidence and verification, fundamentally reshaping how societies determine what's true.

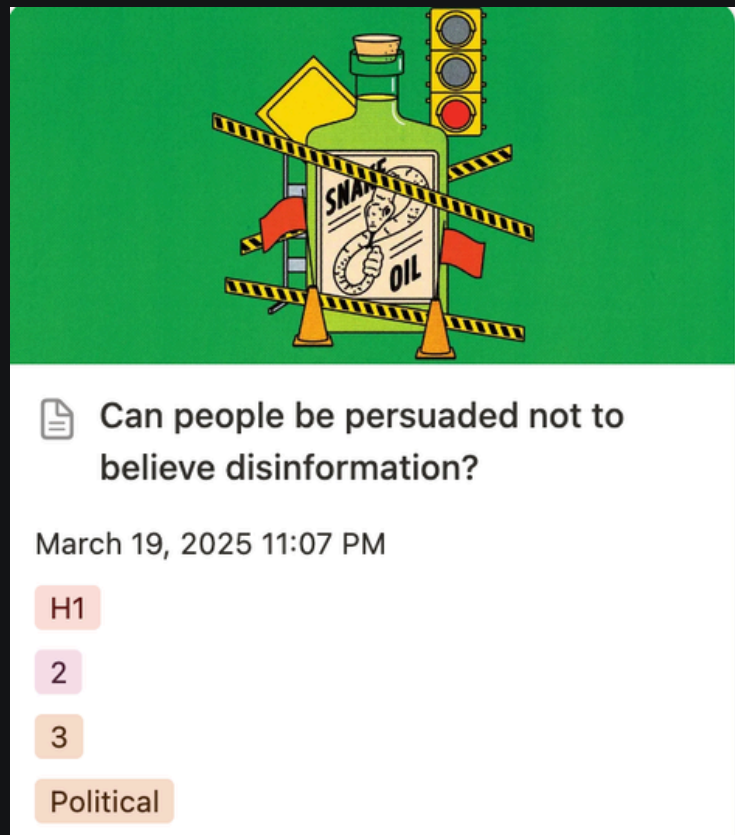


Cognitive Security Threats

Information operations that target human cognitive vulnerabilities are becoming more sophisticated, targeted, and difficult to detect. These operations leverage advances in behavioral science, personalization, and content distribution to influence beliefs and behaviors at scale, raising urgent questions about mental sovereignty and the security of our information processing systems.

DRIVERS

These drivers create significant pain points and tensions, including the synthetic media authentication crisis and the challenges of platform epistemic governance. We are also witnessing an accelerating reality divergence where different populations inhabit distinct information environments



Tech Mediating Truth

The synthetic media boom makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish real from artificial content. The loss of effective fact-verification mechanisms struggles to keep pace. Biased algorithms and the increasing desire for personalization create hyper-personalized feeds, potentially exacerbating disagreement

Social Dynamics

Deep value divides and growing polarization contribute to competing truths and the reinforcement of identity narratives. Truth fatigue leads to cognitive shortcuts and a reliance on intuition

Institutional Breach

Trust in traditional authorities like science, journalism, and government is eroding, leading to trust institutional collapse. This is compounded by narrative manipulation, government data exploitation, and even book and media banning.

Economic Dimensions

The attention economy incentivizes sensationalism over accuracy. The potential privatization of truth further fragments the information landscape

KEY UNCERTAINTIES

CONSENSUS
KNOWLEDGE



INFORMATION
DELIVERY



HYPER-
PERSONALIZATION

At one end, hyperpersonalization creates individualized information ecosystems where algorithms curate content based on personal preferences and behaviors, gradually shaping not just what people know but their values and worldview itself. At the opposite end, shared knowledge emphasizes canonical, collective understandings of information that serve as common reference points across society, enabling unified discourse about reality despite individual differences in perspective.

POLITICAL BACKLASH



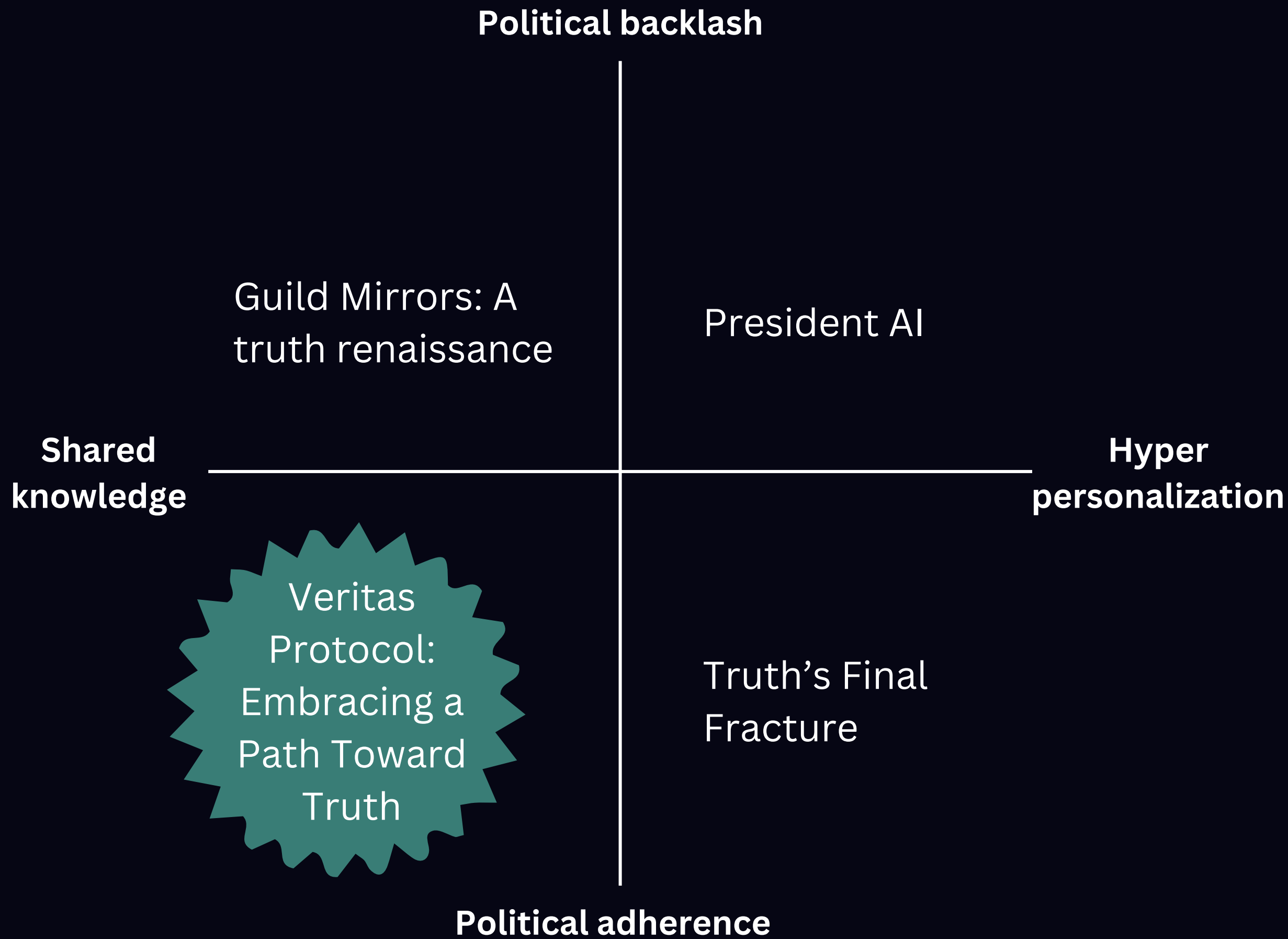
SOCIAL REACTION



POLITICAL COMPLIANCE

Political backlash represents resistance against prevailing information systems, manifesting through activism, regulation, or technological counter-movements. Political compliance indicates acceptance of and adaptation to dominant information paradigms, whether through genuine support, passive acquiescence, or institutional alignment

SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT



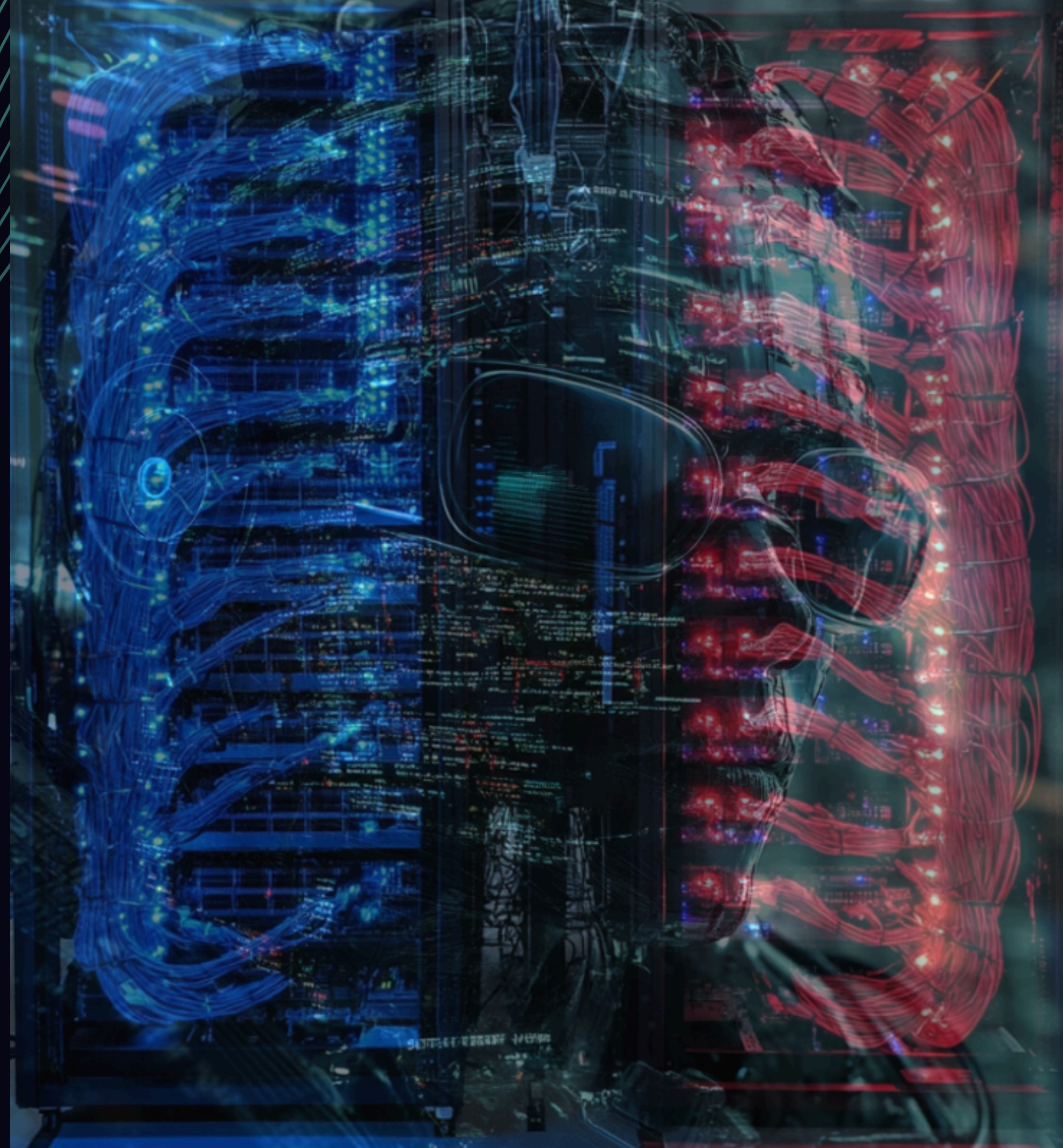
BASLINE SCENARIO

President AI

As AI begins to mature and play a larger role in daily lives, it shapes society's perception of truth. Similar to the tribal capture of news outlets and social media – Large Language Model (LLM) based technology geared toward confirming the biases of users begin to proliferate.

Chatbots shaped by differing political agendas begin debating each other, serving their user base with responses reflective of their inputs. These debates happen on social media, on traditional media, and socially among individuals and groups. Even professional applications of chatbots emerge from this trend. Just like tribes have chosen media outlets and influencers, they develop chosen AI models endorsed by missionaries of their tribe. Outputs are then deemed facts based on the winner of these debates, continuing to reinforce political polarization.

Echo chambers strengthen and dig their intellectual and cultural trenches a bit deeper armed with more thoughtful and convincing arguments and evidence for their truths. Some misled truth seekers opt out of tribal models and find more compelling reality in models trained on everything instead of biased material. But many find comfort in the ultimate bias enabler.



COLLAPSE

Walking into the Night: Truth's Final Fracture

2035 marks the Great Internet Blackout, an event that turns off access to the internet for 7 days straight, leaving emergency systems, networks, and access to information completely unavailable. When networks are finally turned back on, the internet has become highly privatized, collapsing it as a commons and place to connect and transforming it into a highly curated stream of propaganda. Schools are forced to teach a specific government created curriculum, doing away with history books and mandated to use specific government-created websites that have rewritten history. Fact checking, sources, and academic journals are completely stripped away, making it a breeding ground for conspiracies, harmful rhetoric, and leaving no place for those with anything but traditional values. The US population continues to dwindle as democratic and socialist countries spin up programs to safely relocate families and individuals, however, as immigration in these countries surges, countries willing to accept refugees must put extensive assessments in place to ensure citizens entering will not spread harmful misinformation.



NEW EQUILIBRIUM

Veritas Protocol: Embracing a Path Toward Truth

In the 2030s, truth fragmentation—once profitable for corporations and power-holders—reached a breaking point. When catastrophic events like the Yellowstone fracking disaster demanded collective action, society discovered the impossibility of coordinating across countless competing "realities."

By 2040, an uneasy compromise emerged: a two-tier truth system. The first tier became "the canon"—universally agreed facts necessary for addressing existential threats such as climate disasters, bioterrorism, and AI warfare. This shared baseline enabled coordinated responses to global challenges. The second tier remained personalized—interpretive frameworks about history, social truths, and philosophical worldviews. People maintained diverse beliefs about how society reached its current state without challenging the immediate facts needed for action.

This new equilibrium balanced fantasy and reality, creating vital protocols for communication across fundamental incompatibilities. Society learned to solve collective problems while preserving individual meaning-making frameworks—an essential adaptation for navigating an increasingly complex world.



TRANSFORMATION

Guild Mirrors - A Truth Renaissance

By 2040, the pursuit of truth has fragmented so completely that the idea of a shared, singular truth is viewed as a dangerous relic of a naive past. The collapse of trust in institutions, the exile of experts, and the rise of hyper-personalized “mirrorverses” have transformed the global epistemic landscape.

Society has reassembled itself into Post-Truth Guilds — loosely organized collectives based on shared modes of knowing. These guilds coexist, collaborate, and sometimes clash. The "Empirics" rely on scientific and technological rationalism. The "Sensorials" root truth in lived and felt experience. The "Chronicals" center historical, ancestral, and cultural continuity.



GUILD OF THE
EMPIRICAL

GUILD OF
SENSORY

GUILD OF THE
HISTORICAL

NEW EQUILIBRIUM SCENARIO IMPLICATIONS

	Key change	How it shows up in our encounter
Social	Bifurcation of truth	The acceptance of the Veritas protocol as a measure of the “objective/fact truth” while accepting participants freedom in the “interpretative” layer
Tech	Advancements in nanotechnology and machine-human interfaces	The Veritas protcol uses machine-human interface to assess factual information, but is deeply biological in activation and presentation to make it more inviting, humanistic
Economic	Truth as product, luxury	The access to verification in the protocol is paywalled and is perceived as a luxury, creating a two-tiered access to information; the process is for profit
Environmental	Highly polarizing environmental crisis	The motivation for addressing the truth “schism” was a lack of shared coordination on complex, environmental crisis
Political	Negotiated truth as policy	Politicians are an implied audience, and their attempts to build infrastructure for “common facts” is implied to be necessary component of governance

EXPERIENCE IMPLIED THEMES



Truth behind paywalls

Accessible only to
privileged societal
members

Bifurcated truth

Separating factual
accuracy from
personal
interpretation

Biomechanical Verification

Represented
through
ceremonial
consumption

Arbiters

Institutional
verification of
truth verification
and distribution

Truth moves inward

Locus of truth
moves from higher
levels, external to
internal,
continuation of
trend