

TRUTH(FULNESS) AND PHYSIS

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is the explication of Hannah Arendt's understanding of the connection between truth and politics. More precisely, the article focuses on connection between *physis* and truth. Consequently, Arendt's explication was done in critical dialogue with Martin Heidegger. I argue that not only truth belongs in political space, alongside traditionally more familiar notions of freedom and equality, but most importantly, that truthfulness is at the core of Arendt's understanding of truth in political sphere. Similar to Foucault's *parabessia*, political truthfulness is a necessary condition of freedom, which is *raison d'être* of politics. With that, I will also explore how is this possibility today threatened by post-truth phenomenon.

Keywords: truth, physis, Being, politics, Arendt, Heidegger, facts, post-truth

Introduction

Hannah Arendt never directly addressed the question of *physis*. In some respect, someone whose primary concern was politics did not need to. However, that does not mean Arendt was a political philosopher.¹ It would be more appropriate to describe Arendt as someone who was interested in political theory rather than political philosophy since philosophy always had a traditionally prejudicial view on what politics should be. From Plato on, the philosopher could not be objective or neutral regarding politics.

On the other hand, the author did address the notion of truth in her writings. More importantly, Arendt was interested if the truth has any place within the political realm. For Arendt, the question of truth, along with notions of Being, time, nature, eternity, etc., evolved out of philosophical experiences.² In other words, it first evolved within a sphere beyond the realm of speech and action. Even the notion of freedom was first conceptualised outside of political action, namely in the writings of Paul and Augustine.³ However, if truth has any place in politics, what kind of truth is at stake? It can be assumed that the philosophical truth cannot have any part in the field of politics since it only opens up in an individual's solitary. From a traditional point of view, the philosopher does not need others to see or gaze at the eternal truth of being *qua* being. In contrast, the distinction between necessary and contingent truths is indeed urgent for politics. This distinction assures that a man is incapable of seeing the future in its whole contingency and, at the same time, that a man is capable of spontaneous acts since everything is not done by necessity. As Leibniz states: "But does it not seem that in this

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way the difference between contingent and necessary truths will be destroyed, that there will be no place for human liberty ...? ”.⁴ As much as contingency presupposes necessity, error presupposes truth. There would be no freedom or contingency left in future events if everything was done by necessity. The contingency lies in the heart of human affairs. In other words, if something is, it is necessarily so, but it does not mean that it has come about by necessity.

This is the hallmark of political affairs. Whatever and however we experience something in the political arena, we both, as actors and witnesses, can never fully be certain why events unfold and come to completion the way they do, in one way or another. We can only be certain that they did happen. However, political action is boundless in its consequences, no matter how small or big.⁵ These consequences are boundless since action moves in the sphere where every reaction is not a passive response but rather an active one. It strikes on its own and can influence the state of affairs unexpectedly. Hence, political understanding needs judgements not only because of the frailty of political action and the interrelatedness of human affairs but also since political appearances do not possess the space of appearing independent of spectators.⁶ Consequently, judgements are formed based on opinions that vary and are unstable. They vary because while we can agree or disagree with others on specific political events or topics, the individuals are the ones who first have an opinion; it is not the political community that first instils them. On the contrary, opinions are always present. They are not searched.⁷ Political community can reshape anew our already existing opinions. Thus, they vary because every individual starts with his or her own opinion. On the other hand, political opinions are unstable since the same opinion can be at different times true or false. In other words, contingent affairs influence whether an opinion is true or false at different times.

However, since opinions, our *doxai*, of actors and spectators alike shape particular political landscapes, views are attached to what they inform; opinions are by very nature discursive and co-shared because they are derived from things which are meant to be heard and seen. From a political perspective, these things are factual, historical events witnessed and documented by others who, in their accounts, namely opinions, can differ. Unlike truths of reason, e.g. 2+2 is 4, which are necessary, contingent truths are not always self-evident since they offer starting or orientation points for views. This means that facts are closely tied to opinions, and sometimes, we cannot differentiate one from another. Without these referential points, opinions are just prejudices.⁸ Hence, political facts are not isolated, placed in a vacuum, or simply found. Instead, they are established. Facts in politics are *appearances*.⁹ The murky waters of politics where everything is not what it seems is firmly rooted in seeming, though not by default of supposedly endless, ontic, Machiavellian motives of man's thirst for power or so-called man's "nature", but rather by ontological limitations inherent in a world ruled by semblance.¹⁰ It is a world where Being and Appearing coincide.¹¹

With this, I will argue that the conceptual background that offers Arendt's understanding of politics is derived from Heidegger's notion of *physis*. Geared toward appearances, the notion of *physis* represents non-metaphysical, unstable presencing and absencing of the truth. However, as stated, I will argue that Arendt, contrary to Heidegger, not only sees the truth from a plural dimension but, consequently, that it leads

to truthfulness, which requires an individual's courage and sound political judgement, all of which is absent from Heidegger's account. Hence, the first chapter deals with Heidegger's reinterpretation of *physis* done in dialogue with Aristotle, whose philosophy, its greatness, also denotes the end of Greek philosophy.¹² The second chapter will address Arendt's critical assessment of that reinterpretation. Finally, in the conclusion of the article, I will centre observations on what today seems persisting topic in political debates, namely post-truth phenomenon.

Physis as being *qua* being

From a purely etymological standpoint, *physis* means the natural constitution of a person or thing as the consequence of growth.¹³ Besides physical appearances, it can also mean man's character, temperament or disposition.¹⁴ Hence, *physis* in this sense primarily denotes the growth of beings according to nature as their principle. But from a philosophical view, it denotes the growth as *ousia* or substance of beings since *physis* as a principle is responsible for their "whatness" in terms of appearance, form or *eidōs*.¹⁵ The beingness of beings, namely *ousia*, is responsible for the placement of beings into appearance, into *what* and *how* they are. Hence, the growth now cannot be simply thought of as quantitative or qualitative one but rather as becoming (*genesis*) of beings into their "look", *eidōs*.

Thus *physis* in a narrow meaning as a particular region of being was not just contrasted to *technē*, art or *nomos*, law, but in a broader, pre-Socratic sense represented beings as a whole in their Being, being *qua* being. This is what Heidegger had fundamentally argued in critical dialogue with Aristotle. "What Heidegger is discovering in Aristotle's ontology is the remains of a pre-metaphysical, primordially Greek, phenomenological sense of Being".¹⁶ Aristotle was a pinnacle of Greek philosophy that ended in greatness. It is no surprise Heidegger talks about Aristotle's *Physics* as never adequately studied, fundamental book of Western philosophy.¹⁷ With that, as a pinnacle of Greek philosophy, Aristotle's *Physics* was also, according to Heidegger, the last echo of the original and supreme sense of the essence of *physis* found in pre-Socratic thinkers Parmenides, Heraclitus and Anaximander.¹⁸ Indeed, the last echo of an original sense of Being was characterised by the fact that Aristotle's primordial sense of Being was influenced by those beings, which were *produced*.¹⁹

This was an "original sin" of Greek philosophy, one that Heidegger tried to deconstruct. From this, the sense of Being was in Aristotelian philosophy understood in temporal terms as an everlasting presence, *parousia*, quite differently from the interplay between finite presencing and absencing in the original sense of Being. *Physis* as a Being is never fully disclosed, namely present, since it likes to hide (Heraclitus). Nevertheless, *physis* in Aristotle as *ousia* is still Being; the essence of not just natural beings but the nature of every and each being.²⁰ Hence, in this sense, meta-physics is "physics". It is not in the natural processes that the Greeks experienced *physis*, but the other way around; based on the fundamental experience of Being in poetry and thinking, *physis* disclosed itself to them.²¹ The term *ousia* is ambiguous. In one aspect, it denotes simple beings always present, not only stars and planets, but also things ready for usage; things already here, household, estate, goods, and so forth.²² This characterises the implicit sense of Being. In short, *physis* is precisely *hypokeimenon* since such beings are here "in advance".²³ Therefore,

it does not matter how we understand the dichotomy between nature and history; *physis* underlines them both because it “is” Being. On the other hand, *ousia* has a conceptual meaning, namely *to ti en einai*, a definition of beings. In natural experience, beings are always prior to the Being of beings that lie hidden; Being is not available in natural experience, and yet is always understood, even prior to every experience of beings.²⁴ Heidegger states that *ousia* always had its terminological meaning alongside the customary one.²⁵ *Physis* encompasses a double meaning of *ousia*; beings themselves and their essence as such. “Thus for Aristotle οὐσία, the essence of beings, is still called φύσις”.²⁶

This raises the question. Does Being needs a definition? The answer is no; it does not since Being is different from beings. For example, I have a Being, but I am not a Being. Being is indefinable because Being cannot be derived from “higher concepts by way of definition and cannot be represented by lower ones”.²⁷ All of this denotes that Being is *not* something like a being. The self-evident nature of Being forces the explication of knowing from traditional logic to the meaning of that which we already have the implicit understanding, namely Being. Since language speaks silently or explicitly, man uses the verb “to be” in everyday life. Man uses “is” without needing to reflect on it. Thus, according to Heidegger, the self-evident understanding of Being gives an appearance that further explication is not necessary. However, this average self-evident understanding only echoes the incomprehensibility.²⁸ And this incomprehensibility cannot be resolved by searching for the “proof” of *physis*’ existence. In this regard, Aristotle’s *Physics* clarifies that such adventure is ridiculous.²⁹ Why do we need to prove something that clearly “is”? The hunt for such “proofs” stems from an inability to see what one has already seen.³⁰ No proof is needed, less alone the explicit understanding of what man already see. In other words, the self-evident Being of beings is hidden in plain sight. The difficulty of conceptually understanding Being lies in that Being is the nearest to man than all beings. Yet the near remains farthest from a man.³¹ It is quite ridiculous, says Heraclitus, that many men do not understand what they claim to know, even after experiencing it.³² One must stand above what is taken for granted in its self-evident manner. What is required is *krinein*, the ability to separate what is true from what is not.³³

We can expand the understanding of the subject matter and summarise the following; *physis*, as the principle of change and motion, is responsible for “growth”, namely the appearance of beings in their Being. In other words, *Physis* as a Being is “guilty” for beings appearances into presencing. The fundamental character of presencing what is present is *ousia*.³⁴ The presencing sets the appearance of beings, their *eidōs*. The *eidōs* is not a Platonic idea where the latter is separated from the being, and the real being is placed into non-being, but *eidōs* is precisely *ousia*; its immanence is in being itself.³⁵ Consequently, Heidegger states that we cannot understand *eidōs* as ontic property of being, as a worn-out form of beings, but as an appearance of beings in the sense of the aspect, a view.³⁶ Thus, what lies present is *hypokeimenon*, *subjectum*, however, not to be understood as objects in the modern sense. Heidegger makes clear that presencing into the unhidden was decisive for the Greeks, even more than the duration of it, namely whether the presencing was dispatched into true disclosure of beings in their Being or whether beings’ presence was distorted and placed into a mere semblance.³⁷

Insofar as phenomenology deals with phenomena, which show themselves in many ways, this does not mean that they are showing themselves as themselves but rather

that in this (historical) self-showing, they are passing off as precisely *not* themselves. According to Heidegger, this is why this self-manifestation is thought more originally by Aristotle as *aletheia*, truth, as the unconcealedness of what is present, what is self-showing.³⁸ However, what came after Aristotle was total confusion on how to classify *prima philosophia*. What happened with this unity or duality of questioning beings as a whole and in their Being in Hellenistic and later on in Scholastic times was that this unity was broken into disciplines, namely logic, ethics, and physics. This shift was something that Heidegger called an embarrassment.³⁹ It came from the inability to classify *prima philosophia* in the realm of physics, but only to place it alongside or *behind* physics. Metaphysics becomes or turns over to a specific, suprasensuous being. In short, metaphysics transforms its meaning and becomes ontotheology.

Nevertheless, the difference between *physis* and *techne* could mislead one into thinking that *physis*, in Aristotle's thought, is mere research of beings that have the cause of their existence in themselves rather than the research into being *qua* being. But both ways of presencing are modes of *aletheuein*, ways of revealing beings, with the difference that in beings of *physis*, the origin and cause of movement lie in them. That is not to say that man-made things do not possess movement; they do; however, the origin of their movement lies outside them. It is important to note that we are not distinguishing between different beings. On the contrary, beings as a whole are different according to different *aletheuein*. In other words, there is no plurality of truths regarding beings but various ways in which the truth itself is revealed. "Thus, we are not discussing here different kinds of beings, but beings that reveal themselves or are disclosed in different ways".⁴⁰ Indeed, it was in *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VI., that early Heidegger found different ways how to interpret factual existence based on its movement.⁴¹

The indication of the difference between presencing and presence itself does not just denote the question of the temporality of what is present but also indicates the fundamental character of the truth of Being of beings, namely that it must be uncovered.⁴² With that, the struggle for unconcealment ensues. It ensues since the full unconcealment of beings indeed occurs on the ontic level as understood by essentialism and its conception of the truth, however, not on the ontological level because of the double movement of (un)concealment by man's existence. Heidegger concluded in analysing Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Delta book, chapter 29, in a lecture of winter semester 1923/24 *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, that precisely speaking hides the subject matter.⁴³ We can talk about many things in different ways without, however, disclosing the truth of Being of beings. Hence, what can appear can disclose itself as something that is not. It hides because the world is elusive. Deception and illusion are not something that human beings can overcome. "In this way, an abundant interweaving of possibilities of deception becomes evident as a possibility of being, interwoven with the existence of speaking and the existence of the world".⁴⁴ The truth is a character of beings insofar as they are encountered. Since a man is a being, the truth's unconcealment belongs to man's comportment. Truth is no "value" or quality which adds to beings. On the contrary, truth is a condition of man's existence. It must be uncovered since man's existence is intertwined with falsity and deception, wilfully or not. Moreover, the analysis of different ways how the truth of beings is disclosed and uncovered led Heidegger to conclude in his deconstruction of Aristotle's ontology that despite Aristotle's striving with his notion of

sophia to go beyond *logos*, Aristotle was still unable to achieve that precisely because *sophia* was geared toward fundamental Greek character of Being, *ousia* as a constant presence.

What is spoken and addressed about “is there in advance, prior to all speech and on behalf of all speech”.⁴⁵ In other words, it led Heidegger in *Being and Time* away from the speech as an authentic barrier to disclosing beings in their Being since what is uncovered and shown in assertions can be false. Hence, I argue later on that the difference between *truth* and *truthfulness* stems from these ontological implications done by Heidegger in his critical confrontation with Aristotle, namely that now “purged” *sophia* in *Being and Time* has no connection with *logos* anymore, while the notion of truthfulness requires not only *logos* but also the presence of others.

To conclude this chapter; the presencing of *physis*, first “crudley” explained by the growth of natural beings, is not a natural process as one would have imagined today. The “growth” of beings, as another word for their emergence out of darkness into the light, occurs in the world as the mode of Being, based on their *eidōs* that let them be addressed and understood in many ways. The full scope of Heidegger’s understanding of *physis*, at least in connection to this plural notion of self-showing (*doxa*), was presented in a 1935 lecture, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, where the philosopher, in dialogue with pre-Socratic thinkers, dwelled on non-essentialist, more “poetic” version of the truth. The version unburdened with the metaphysical *parousia* as a constant presence where time became present just like any other thing.⁴⁶ However, since Appearing and Being coincide, Being of beings plural manifestation is caught up not only in becoming but also in seeming and semblances. In other words, what can be grasped and looked at in non-metaphysical, plural presencing of the truth, can also be addressed as something. And because it can, it can also lead to semblance and falsity. For example, in its becoming, a being appears to be so and so. A being appears to us deceptively. We address it falsely.

Once again, for Heidegger now, the remedy for the possibility of falsity and safekeeping of the truth of Being of beings in their tragic faculty of appearing becomes not reformulated *bios theoretikos* as found in *Being and Time* but reformulated *techne* in *Introduction to Metaphysics*. *Techne* is a mode of knowing, however, not as “know-how” used in daily dealings with tools (*Being and Time*) where it is at man’s disposal, but as the highest knowledge which puts Being to work in beings.⁴⁷ *Techne* primarily has nothing to do with the technical aspects of the work because of man’s tendency toward crafty, manipulative action. Hence, *polis* now is not truly political because of its political affairs that rest upon man’s plans and actions. Far from it, the state is the work of art, the historical site where the truth of Being happens.

Truth and Physis in Politics

Arendt’s attempt to come to terms with the faculty of Appearing was not just done in her probably most known book, *The Human Condition*, in which the author described the faculty of political action as tragic and yet not absurd⁴⁸ but it came even more so, at least from the phenomenological or philosophical aspect, in author’s last book, *The Life of the Mind*. In it, Arendt, from the start, began asserting the world’s phenomenal nature. Any kind of being the world contains, natural, artificial, transient or everlasting, what every being has in common with others is the fact that they appear or have appeared.⁴⁹

In this sense, appearances would not be meaningful if creatures capable of recognising them did not exist. Since beings appear, they are meant to be seen, heard, touched, addressed, and so forth. Because they appear, beings presuppose a spectator. Therefore, beings, namely men and animals alike, are, at the same time, actors and spectators. Creatures with sensual apparatus see, understand, and yet they are seen and understood in many ways in which they appear. In other words, men are subjects as well as objects; they are doers and sufferers because the plurality is the law of the Earth.⁵⁰ Thus, the miracle of appearance rests in the world where Being and Appearing coincide. “Nothing perhaps is more surprising in this world of ours than the almost infinite diversity of its appearances, the sheer entertainment value of its views ...”.⁵¹

The miracle of Appearing, namely the existence of organic and non-organic life on the Earth, indicates not only the inherent possibility of semblance and illusion on the part of the spectators but also the actor’s appearing on the world stage that spurs in(finite) quest for the answer to the question, “Who am I?”. The answer to that question can only be partial and incomplete, left to the power of narrative, which happens within the network of human relations, within political *inter-esse* that integrates itself into action and becomes action “by manifesting itself and acting as ‘drama’, as ‘theatre’, by ‘playing’ itself”.⁵²

The miracle of Appearing is based on a tragedy; it is not the actor alone that constitutes heroic action. On the contrary, the *opinions* of spectators are the ones that formulate the infinite possibilities of narration and give a partial answer to the question, “Who am I?”. Through *thought* and evoked memory, the narrative on behalf of the spectators partially “completes” the *act* so that for Arendt, political action cannot be mute. Arendt states: “No other human performance requires speech to the same extent as action. In all other performances speech plays a subordinate role, as a means of communication or a mere accompaniment to something that could also be achieved in silence”.⁵³

The disclosure of this *Who* is inevitably present in everything he or she implicitly says and does. The disclosure is never achieved as an intentional purpose, unlike the qualities someone possesses as gifts or talents. By choice, we can hide or reveal talents or shortcomings. But this is not the case in political action. The miracle of Appearing draws with it the need for self-display that is first indeed under the actor’s control. For example, we know all too well that political actors willfully try to appear as capable, trustworthy men in the political arena. Consequently, as with every appearance, they reveal something but also conceal it. The strong need for such self-showing ensures that no “objective” disclosure is possible or even safe from self-pretence and semblance. A politician can have truly good intentions. However, he or she is seen in the eyes of its spectators as completely untrustworthy and *vice versa*. He or she cannot convince its voters. Conversely, a politician with bad intentions can easily convince voters since his or her true intentions are well hidden. What one hears and sees is the same what other can hear or see since the political “theatre” is common to us all. However, one’s position of judgment of what appears in front of him or her is different because the world appears to spectators in the mode of seeming, which varies and its determined by spectators’ views. Therefore, political speech cannot be just a means of communication, but it must be able to convince the judging spectators. In this regard, I agree with Dana Villa, who stated that Arendt’s

primary political obligation is not to ourselves, even if action partially reveals *Who*, or the community, but to the world of mortal men.⁵⁴ Men are not merely in the world, we are of the world. The care for the world ensures future generations their home of appearances. Therefore, the “theatre” of political action is the world itself.

Looking from the ontological scope, even if full disclosure, epiphany of Being of beings is possible, is possible only for a short time since “each individual life, its growth and decline, is a developmental process in which an entity unfolds itself in an upward movement until ...its bloom or epiphany, as it were-which in turn is ...terminated by complete disappearance”.⁵⁵ Appearances are transient; always emerging and disappearing in front of our eyes. Men are too appearances among appearances; our existence denotes the fragility of the “growth” and unavoidable “decline”. However, not every appearance is a mere semblance. But semblances are possible only among appearances so that self-presentation and possible lying for gaining political aims can never be rectified by communities appeal for “higher aims” such as everlasting freedom and justice for everyone. In fact, such appeals, given the transient condition of appearances, refer back to *techne* where one moves within endless reversibility of means and ends in order to escape the fragility and frustrations of human relations.⁵⁶

If politics echoes and strives for such goals, it condemns all appearances to mere semblances. Political strivings for peace and freedom can never be considered as “creations” or “products” of acting men. Furthermore, such attempts denote the old metaphysical supremacy of Being and truth over appearances. That being said, what kind of initial conclusions can we draw so far?

First, Heideggerian influence and theoretical framework in connection to *physis* cannot be overlooked. The unstable and finite presencing of *physis* is echoed along political lines as the breach of the traditional hierarchy of Being over Appearing. Whatever may appear is meant to appear to men capable of understanding it in its Being. That is the reason Arendt states that Being as the ground of Appearing is true to the phenomenon of Life, but it cannot be true regarding the hierarchy of Being over Appearing since it stems from not so ordinary life’s experiences, namely as the result of thinking Ego that stays hidden.⁵⁷ The speculative ground of Appearing does not appear at all. However, not only this supposedly higher ground or cause of an appearances stays hidden, but no thing, event, or living being shows without actively hiding other parts of itself. As we said, *physis* of beings likes to hide. Not only intrinsically but as genuine semblance and falsity. Hence, the truth of Being must be un-concealed, wrested from darkness into the Open. But do we have to reckon with any kind of notion of truth in Arendt’s conception of politics? To answer this, a few other hints have to be clarified.

What becomes clear in the author’s notion of politics is that political presencing is not automatically equated with bare life. For Arendt, the power or *dynamis* of public space is what keeps “the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence”.⁵⁸ Power can only exist in actualisation, and power exists as long as words and deeds reveal the *Who* of acting men. It cannot be stored and kept in reserve as instruments of violence can. We can say that is why power is more a potentiality, *dynamis*, than actuality since the political power does not need to be actualised in communities of people being simply together. Therefore, the presencing *physis* of politics is unstable in its appearing because it is not ruled by metaphysical necessity. Consequently, political space is

finite. Political *entelecheia*, a self-contained reality, can only be actualised, but not materialised, if action and speech have not yet parted way in such a manner that they together disclose and establish new realities.⁵⁹ Political greatness is thus limited and does not encompass all of man's existence because its limitation comes from those things a man cannot change at will.⁶⁰

Of course, through history, a man all too well knew of futility and frustrations that arise and happen amidst human affairs in the political realm. Since an individual, this mysterious *Who* of political action, could always initiate something new by doing a spontaneous act or by convincing others to join him or her, but could never be a sovereign, a master of its actions, the traditional remedy for the tragic greatness of "heroic" self-presentation consisted of eliminating the unpredictability of actions. In Arendt's term speaking, the faculty of natality. The condition of natality, that is acting anew, is a potential of all newcomers in the world, and it is a far cry from a "stable" political entity in which "each person does one thing for which he is naturally suited, does it at the right time, and is released from having to do any of the others".⁶¹ The substitute, the need to overcome the man's "gift" to initiate something completely new, led to traditional designs of *creating* a political entity that would rest on the division between *knowing* and *acting*.⁶² Thought and action became separated. In other words, it led to the notion of *techne* since the isolated mastership of the sovereign does not need to act in concert with others. It does not need potential co-actors, much less spectators. As in art, the artisan in political affairs, namely the ruler, is led only by his or her *eidos*, which echoes pre-political experiences of fabrication so that thought precedes acting, namely creating. In this way, the elimination of the *Who* becomes even more apparent because at the fore is not the person of action but the impersonal object of creation.

However, could we not say the same about Arendt's understanding of politics? The answer is yes and no. Yes, since Arendt indeed compared the life of politics with the analogy of *techne*.⁶³ And no, because the political *entelecheia* is not conducive to *techne* in which politics could be used as a means to an end. Politics is then degraded to serve "higher" aims, such as creating the state as some collective masterpiece. In this sense, we can also place the Heideggerian *techne* as a "higher knowledge" for "higher" aims, namely for the truth of Being of beings. Through *techne*, violent, silent "gathering" of being *qua* being is triggered by lonesome, few creators and doers in which the truth of beings is protected by virtue of their Appearing. In contrast, Arendt compares the virtuosity of politics with performing *techne*.⁶⁴ The difference between the performing art and reified one lies in the fact that the former is never materialised but is instead exhausted in the performance itself. "Greatness, therefore, or the specific meaning of each deed, can lie only in the performance itself and neither in its motivation nor its achievement".⁶⁵

Best described by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, the motion of this activity is such that "when I am seeing, I also, and at the same time, have seen".⁶⁶ Hence, whatever belongs to materialised *techne* process is discarded and has no place in politics. Everything before and after the activity itself is not important in Arendt's notion of politics because the artisan's work and aim in materialised art is never the activity itself. In contrast, the performing art, unlike materialised one, needs spectators, those who judge and co-shape the narrative of performing actors. "Judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass".⁶⁷ Without the commonness of the world,

men would not be able to come to an agreement about anything. They would not even have the need or faculty to speak with one another. Agreeing on a particular phenomenon in relative disinterestedness is the work of the faculty of judgment that re-shapes our opinions anew.⁶⁸ From the fragile political presencing, which consists in appearing activity that is an end in itself, now the question begs what must be wrested out of darkness into the Open? For Arendt, the answer is clear; not the truth that is the quest and aim of philosophical activity, but freedom as the non-materialised “aim” of the political, plural activity.⁶⁹ However, this does not mean that there is no place for the truth in Arendt’s understanding of politics. Quite the contrary, as we shall see, I argue that the truth, or better yet, truthfulness is a necessary condition for the self-contained political activity that discloses new realities.

So far, we have found that the tragic epiphany of the Being of beings, namely the presencing of *physis*, is protected by *techne* in Heidegger’s case and by speech and tangible deeds among actors and spectators alike in Arendt’s. In both cases, the authors accepted the tragic faculty of Appearing, namely that phenomena never reveal if they first do not conceal. There can never be disclosedness of beings without their concealment. Nevertheless, regarding the reinterpretation of the pre-Socratic notion of *physis*, Heidegger did not fully accept what intrinsically belonged to Being, namely seeming. “Just as becoming is the seeming of Being, seeming as appearing is the becoming of Being”.⁷⁰ The plural elucidation of seeming, what appears to us in the form of different opinions, was never seriously thought of by Heidegger. From Heidegger’s understanding, *doxa*, namely the view beings offer and man’s views of them, belongs to Being. But since it is ambiguous, *doxa* is a part of *logos* and as such, the dominant views can obscure beings even further.

Heidegger’s equation of disclosure or unconcealment with truth (*aletheia*) leads him to identify the illuminative activity of the Greeks not with doxastic political action, but rather with the poetic or creative activity that “wrests” the truth of Being concealed by the “dimmed down” appearances of the public realm.⁷¹

On the other hand, In the text, *Socrates*, Arendt analysed the power and the importance of *doxa* in public space in opposition to the philosopher’s truth that only he or she can see. The philosopher’s initial truth cannot and does not appear to others. However, what gives one an “impulse” to start philosophising, namely *thaumazein* as a *pathos* of wondering, is a fundamental condition of men, not only of “professional thinkers”.⁷² The only difference is that most people are unable to endure the *pathos* of wondering as much as the philosopher can. In turn, this led to a formation of stable opinions on the part of the majority of people that put them at odds with the philosopher. In other words, this informs us of the irreconcilable differences that arose between the *polis* and the philosopher.

However, analysing the character of Socrates, Arendt re-examined man’s supposed contradictory faculties that were at odds between the *polis* and the philosopher, namely faculties of thinking and acting. And with that, the supposed difference between *doxa* and truth. In the character of Socrates, Arendt found that these seemingly contradictory faculties were prejudicially constructed by Plato. “The opposition of truth and opinion was certainly the most anti-Socratic conclusion that Plato drew from Socrates’ trial”.⁷³

Independent, absolute truth, binding all men the same, cannot exist for mortals.⁷⁴ Only truth accessible for mortals can be found in what appears in front of me in my concrete existence. Thus, the explication of truth consists in examining our opinions; I cannot examine my opinion nor learn other opinions of fellow men unless I engage with them in dialogue. For Arendt, the connection between the truth and *physis* as Appearing lies firmly in *doxa* because *doxa* can be true or false, not good or bad.⁷⁵

With this, I argue it is not the truth as an epistemological question that Arendt is worried about, which traditionally was a philosophical problem, but rather about the *truthfulness* of our opinions. The method of examining, not manipulating, opinions lies in dialogue with others. However, not by arriving at some absolute truth; on the contrary, but by revealing *doxa* in its truthfulness. Doing so, ensures that political space is open, boundless, and not “completed” as with *techne*. Uncovering political space, clearing it from the intentional falsity, is beyond any Platonic division of *doxa* and *episteme*. Even if some scholars⁷⁶ argue more “eyes” involved in the uncovering of “objective” truth are more than welcome to participate in the endeavour, this is not the case with Arendt because what narrative at the disappearance of action deals is not the factual truth, but rather meaning.⁷⁷ The meaning and action are boundless; they are speculative in nature and give no “objective” answers in the form of truth assertions.⁷⁸ The meaning gives a partial answer to the question “How and why something happened?”, and not if it happened. The answer is always partial because any politically relevant event must count on the arrival of the newcomers in the world who can potentially judge past events anew. The power of storytelling, in which spectators and doers are included, ensures that actions will not fade in all too-powerful time continuum.

Therefore, the meaning revealed in narratives of particular events helps actors and spectators to reconcile with the world. On the other side, however, as mentioned, plural attempts of finding an “objective truth” in politics refer back to *techne* thinking since, regardless of their plural approach, the aim is the objective truth. Once found, it is beyond any further discussion since it rejects intersubjective truth. Wight states: “Absolute objectivity may not be attainable in practice, but academics should aspire to it”.⁷⁹ I think Wight confuses objectivity with impartiality and seemingly forgets that we are dealing with contingent truths in politics. In other words, when dealing with such attempts, we take politics as the means to the end. No absolute truth can be given or imposed amidst human affairs.⁸⁰ Absolute truths are not among men but above them.

Arendt in *Socrates* concluded that the role of the philosopher, in contrast to Plato and also to Heidegger, one might say, is not to rule the city but to be its “gadfly” and not to tell philosophical truths but to make citizens more truthful.⁸¹ It is what reveals the *Who* of somebody. It reveals the narrative of the “hero”. Even more, it is one of the reasons we know more about Socrates as a person, even if he did not leave anything behind in terms of work (*techne*), than Plato.⁸²

Because, unlike the motion of *techne*, the acts of truthfulness can be on full display as long as they are appearing (presencing) since how can I be deemed truthful if I do not appear as such in front of others? And what can it be so tragic and yet not absurd than a man who, in the name of the pursuit of the truth, knew nothing of it? The same is for the false semblances under willing and intentional pretence because the only way to distinguish willing pretence from reality and truth is the “former’s failure to endure and

remain consistent”.⁸³ But can I be or seem to be truthful even when no one is with me? Can I face myself when doing morally wretched actions, such as lying? Or even when lying for “higher” goals? If the answer is negative, then the so-called good lie in politics is acceptable only when dealing with its consequences, that is, with planned results. In other words, with *techne*. But if the answer is positive, the side-effect of such thinking (battle) that happens within me in times of moral crisis is the finding of the *conscience*. The latter is non-specialised, non-cognitive thinking that, in contrast with the thinking of the consciousness, which can be absent but not withdrawn from the world of appearances, is firmly present among appearances because it concerns the faculty of judging.⁸⁴ The faculty of judging represents political *krinein*, the ability to separate the truth from falsity. Since within political space, opinions and facts are hard to separate, such faculty helps separate facts and opinions because they form a political Appearing and examines the truthfulness of our opinions. If the faculty of judgement springs out of conscience in order to stir particular events anew, then we should bear in mind Aristotle’s notion of conscience, as found by Heidegger in the lecture *Plato’s Sophist*⁸⁵, namely that prudence, *phronesis*, is nothing other than conscience set in motion. Prudence is a conscience because it cannot be forgotten.⁸⁶

Exploring the interconnectedness of facts with opinions more closely, Arendt, in the text *Truth and Politics*, argued that even though facts and opinions must stay apart, they belong to the same realm.⁸⁷ First, as much as opinions, factual truths possess no necessity. However, from the political point of view, what makes them seen as a part of the necessity is that “we usually view action from the point of view of its completion rather than its inaugural moment”.⁸⁸ Indeed, what has been done, it cannot be undone, but that does not mean that it could not have happened any other way than it did. It is what Arendt called an “optical” illusion”.⁸⁹ The paradox of factual truths is that they are stubbornly persistent and inherently contingent. Second, both opinions and facts need the “theatre” since their existence and truth rely on witnesses. How can I be sure that something happened without witnesses to collaborate? And how can I test my opinions truthfully if I do not engage in dialogue? Hence, because they both form the fabric of Appearing, facts are no less self-evident than opinions. Facts are not totally transparent, and they can be easily discarded just as another opinion. Even old facts are liable for falsification. With relative ease, we can destroy and distort factual credibility, their existence and pretend they never happened or happened in another way. This can be done intentionally or not. Thus, for Arendt, the danger of political judgment comes from taking facts as necessary and denying or manipulating them. Moreover, philosophical truth also suffers the same fate as facts when stepping down to the public domain; it turns into an opinion due to different human existence. It will be ridiculed as much as facts.⁹⁰

As we said in the previous chapter, the change into an opinion denotes not different beings but different mode(s) of their uncoverness; the philosophical truth is precisely revealed as an opinion when made public. It is communicated with the help of metaphorical speech as Plato’s “light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself”.⁹¹ On that note, now it becomes clearer why Heidegger’s ontological attempt of breaching *logos*, metaphorical or not, from *sophia* as the highest mode of truth, was needed; the constant danger of philosophical truth slipping into *logos* of opinions, and thus potential falsity.

Looking solely at the facts and opinions as they appear in public space, the inner quality of facts, stubborn persistence and contingency, offer great possibilities for manipulation. Stubborn persistence of (desired) facts can echo political fatalism and create a stable, fixed, and static political entity without contradiction since everything becomes necessary. In this context, Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, described the difference between a fanatic and an idealist; the latter is bound by new experiences that may change his or her initial conviction, whereas a fanatic is totally entrenched in “cold” reasoning and “irresistible power of logic” influenced by “iron” laws of History and Nature.⁹²

On the other hand, if facts appear only in constant movement, then, using Aristotle’s example⁹³ nothing will be true, and everything will be false. In this case, we revert to such clichés as saying history is written by victors and that it is falsely written. The latter example totally blurs the line between facts and opinions. I will believe in anything but the truth, which is, of course, a paradox. Not only is Appearing tragic but now becomes absurd as well. For example, I can say, “Facts do not work”, and find “alternative facts”. But this is impossible; facts present are beyond the power of actors and spectators to erase them in terms of their pure “thereness”.

Nevertheless, I agree with Peg Birmingham, who stated that we should not confuse manipulation with re-interpretation.⁹⁴ Because it is one thing to judge and reinterpret past, factual events in a new meaning, and another to re-shaped them by either discarding them as mere opinions or selecting and using them to produce new reality in the same manner as the shoe-maker manipulates leather to create shoes. Truth is not “made”. As Heidegger, Arendt rejected the modern paradigm that truth and history are made like chairs.⁹⁵ Meaning and truth are not made but revealed to us. By knowing the boundaries and limitations of mortals, the truth is not the *raison d’être* of politics, but freedom is. In light of man’s political deeds, the truth and meaning can never be the aim of the action itself. Rather, both will rise out of deeds once the action stops. There is no substitute for truth. “Conceptually, we may call truth what we cannot change; metaphorically, it is the ground on which we stand and the sky that stretches above us”.⁹⁶

However, where lying constantly overshadows the truth, as in the case of the phenomenon of mass, organised lying in politics, then those mortal’s boundaries are breached. In this case, Arendt in *Truth and Politics* admits that the lie is more in the service of political action than the truth because those who begin lying can initiate the change of facts.⁹⁷ They begin to act. They start to falsify present and past facts for future gains. But there is also a counter-tendency, namely that in a political climate dominated by fear and lying for various reasons, one who simply tells the truth is the one who has indeed begun to act. In other words, one who simply tells the truth in these circumstances is courageous. “Courage liberates men from their worry about life for the freedom of the world. Courage is indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake”.⁹⁸

Even more, what informs men to take action is precisely conscience. Without it, courage is no more than recklessness. How can I live with myself if I do not take action? In such rare events when one must step out of conventional rules of behaviour in society, conscience awakes because it cannot be forgotten. I can be very well educated and informed on many political matters, but that does not mean I am not politically inept. For example, blindly following conventional rules in tyranny, having knowledge and know-how is not stupidity since I want to survive. It is, however, an absence of thought.⁹⁹ My

political opinions were not “purged” by critical dialogue with others, nor has my conscience awakened as the result of the soundless dialogue I have with myself.

I argue here that Arendt employs or evokes, without explicating it though in aforementioned text, the notion of Socratic *parrhesia*, the inclination toward telling the truth since the one who speaks the truth, *parrhesiastes*, risks life.¹⁰⁰ Not every truth-telling act can be considered *parrhesia*. But I risk my life because life has no meaning if I remain silent in the face of danger; I speak up, and appear trustworthy in dangerous circumstances, unlike a coward whose care for bare life outweighs the truthfulness of his *doxai*, which remain hidden. I appear trustworthy because my *logos* and deeds do not contradict each other. There is a harmony between one’s *logos* and *bios*. The account of *bios* is not a matter of factual, chronological events in someone’s life. On the contrary, but whether your rational *logos* is evident in your actions. “Just as was the case in the political field, the parrhesiastic figure of Socrates also discloses the truth in speaking, is courageous in his life and in his speech, and confronts his listener’s opinion in a critical manner”.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, a liar is in constant contradiction with himself because his or her *logos* and *bios* are apart. For they are not in harmony. For example, in the case of false promises, a liar acts differently from an initial promise. A politician gives a promise to something he or she knows it cannot keep. However, here we are still dealing with the standard lie, namely with voluntary acts of lying to deceive general population because a politician knows the truth about which he or she is lying. A quite different and more dangerous form of lying is when a liar does not know when he or she is lying. It becomes impossible for actors and spectators to know the difference between truth and falsity. Is it not in this sense that a liar is not only content with hiding the truth but with completely destroying it? Could it not be that a liar does not fear the truth to better disguise lies as with the standard lying?

Conclusion

The last two questions of the previous chapter lead to understanding a relatively recent political phenomenon, namely the notion of post-truth. But does this notion denotes something completely new? Did not lies and deception always play a part in politics? Is a notion a mere symptom of something more catastrophic or rather the cause of today’s perceived political populism? Furthermore, does a paradox of post-truth lie in the fact that the more educated and technologically advanced Western societies have become, the more democratically dysfunctional they are?

From a nominal point of view, a definition of post-truth is a term that denotes a relation in which objective facts are less important in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.¹⁰² What becomes more important is the integrity of a person’s opinion, taste, more so than on what opinions are actually based. Certainly, if this is indeed the case, then the phenomenon at hand might not be new as we think it is. After all, truth can not be banished altogether from the world since it is a condition of man’s existence. However, we have established that the *physis* of political Appearing can be distorted; opinions can overshadow factual truths to the point of their seeming disappearance. If facts are completely overrun by dominant opinions, the latter turns to prejudices.

Today the usage of algorithms and political trolls ensure that false narratives

manipulate our opinions and prejudices. They enforce prejudices by inventing stories consistent with our beliefs.¹⁰³ Indeed, one of the remarkable features of *doxa* is that it does not matter *what* has been said but *who* said it. *Doxa* has a peculiar authority and stubbornness.¹⁰⁴ Often, the reputation, *der Schein* of someone can mislead us to the point that we disregard the content of what has been said. The content of refutation becomes meaningless. We cannot convince those who have already been convinced. Those who have been already convinced choose to be willingly ignorant. Persuasion that occurs amid interchangeable opinions now distorts into mere circulation of the information. Because persuasion can happen only among the plurality of others and thus can purge the established opinions, stubborn opinions that have been distorted into prejudices now have no use for it.

If we try to convince someone that their *doxa* is false, and does not contain any factual truth, that individual would most likely be offended, not because of the content of counter-*doxa*, but solely because we attacked the individual's right to an opinion. To attack someone's political opinion would be to attack that someone personally. Someone who does not care for the truth of his or her opinions can be easily swayed by the pure power of fantastical political stories. What only matters for such individuals is the consistency of the narrative. It potentially resembles Arendt's "fanatic" who lacks any political conscience. Or someone who may not be a "fanatic" in terms of an ideology but is cynically oblivious to facts. Nevertheless, both types of individuals are absent of thought. Politically speaking-one's own *doxa* is not moved by awakened conscience. What only moves such *doxa* is the power of pure imagination.

But is a complete denial of public facts something new? No. Arendt makes cases for De Gaulle in France and Adenauer in Germany that built their basic political premises on lies; De Gaulle in asserting that France belonged among the victors of World War II, and Adenauer in claiming that only a small percentage of Germans were part of Nazi barbarism.¹⁰⁵ Hence, given the nominal definition, we can say that the post-truth phenomenon is not completely new. In other words, the term has not appeared out of thin air.

Moreover, what Arendt located, when analysing truth in politics, is that mass, organised, and very much public lies (image-making) replaced old ways in the diplomacy of withholding facts from the enemy.¹⁰⁶ I suspect the seed of the post-truth phenomenon can be placed before and after the World War II; in practices of totalitarian regimes and movements. "The most striking difference between ancient and modern sophists is that the ancients were satisfied with a passing victory of the argument at the expense of truth, whereas the moderns want a more lasting victory at the expense of reality".¹⁰⁷

This "mentality" breeds total indifference toward truth and falsity. For example, while I speak the truth of the matter, I must recognise it from falsity, and *vice versa*; a liar must carefully shield a lie from the truth. But "conspiratory" thinking believes in everything and nothing. This is true for both actors and spectators because an actor, a politician, is not trying to cover up what he or she is revealing to supposedly his or her naive audience in political discourse. The only thing a post-truth teller is trying to cover up is the difference between truth and an opinion, not between truth and lie. The mirror image of ontological confusion arising from the condition in which the post-truth mob believes in everything and nothing, is the same as one would say- "I doubt everything and

nothing”. Using wise words from Wittgenstein: “If you tried to doubt everything you would not get as far as doubting anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty”.¹⁰⁸

There is no “great” narrative a post-truth politician is concerned about, whether in persuading the audience or *producing* political truths. I think the phenomenon of post-truth is beyond traditional political *techné*, namely beyond carefully organising means to its ends in creating new political entities. The politics around the post-truth phenomenon still contain elements of manipulation, as with *techné*, since we cannot completely erase the truth from this world, and post-truth teller must choose which facts to use. However, post-truth discourse, unlike with *techné*, is aimless. It is aimless since there is a gulf between what is said and what is meant.¹⁰⁹ This gives post-truth teller a great advantage in manipulating. As highly uncertain and unpredictable, the possibility of manipulation in post-truth discourse is limitless. Insofar as the latter is true, can the meaning of post-truth *logos* be revealed? Can such a narrative lead its audience to *catharsis*, to new findings about the world? I think not.

While totalitarian regimes took their line of reasoning in the form of logical syllogisms “dead serious” as a matter of literal life and death, organised around “iron laws” of History and Nature, the contemporary post-truth-teller is not concerned with any particular *pistis*, belief, that can be used in political manipulation or creation. The post-truth discourse lacks a coherent, logical, non-contradictory set of beliefs. It is void of any coherent worldview. The post-truth teller cannot distinguish reality from fiction or does not care for its dichotomy.¹¹⁰ Such *logos* will be entirely covered up in clichés and buzzwords. It will be shocking but more so confusing since it is a contradiction; not caring for *krinein* of what is true or false, the post-truth teller will have to assert that all appearances are at the same time true and false.

Speaking from Foucault’s and Arendt’s point of view, the post-truth teller does not care for himself or herself since such individual does not put his or her *doxai* to the test, and consequently, the care for the world is absent because human beings are of it and not just in it. The post-truth teller may appear trustworthy to its ignorant audience, but such an individual cannot be truthful. He or she is not guided by a *sense* of what is true. Thus, this state of affairs does *not* denote the rule of a lie or systematic lying at the expense of truth. On the contrary, but rather the destruction in which “the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world-and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end-is being destroyed”.¹¹¹

Given the nominal definition, it is understood now that emotions and affectivity are more important than facts. This is somewhat true. But not completely. It is true insofar as the post-truth climate evokes political discourse centred around *ad hominem* attacks when we equate, as said before, political *logos* exclusively with a personal sense of identity. Detached from the substance of an argument, such *logos* will most likely result in a highly charged emotional state in both actors and spectators. But appeal to emotions has always played a role in politics. “Defending truth might involve as much emotion as violating it”.¹¹²

Where the subject matter is not firmly decided as is the case in politics, the use of persuasion must rely on the speaker’s ability not only to present himself or herself as trustworthy through rational *logoi* but also to influence the hearer’s emotion “for we do

not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile”.¹¹³ Every understanding is attuned. Hence, to conceive political discourse as a completely rational exchange of arguments is misleading.

Moreover, this position can slip into a belief that the phenomenon evolves around not what is true but rather about criteria of what is true since it concerns knowledge and power, as Steve Fuller suggested.¹¹⁴ In other words, a position as this takes us back to the division of *doxa* and *episteme* and their continuous struggle against each other. It divides those who know from those who are ignorant. However, the rules of the truth game and one's position in it are now not easily visible. Both truth and falsity become democratised.¹¹⁵

In this social constructivist paradigm, the underlying motif is a struggle for power over the criteria of what and how something is true; from Plato vs. playwrights to Trump vs. Establishment, the truth game is the same—a struggle not for disclosedness of truth because the truth is not revealed to us but for modal power in which the truth is fought over. Metaphorically speaking, truth is no longer the ground in front of us nor the sky above us but clay waiting to be moulded. Into what is it to be moulded is the fight for criteria among players in the truth game.

If we take seriously notion that the truth can completely disappear from the world, whether by systematic lying or simply not caring for its differentiation from a lie, then it only makes sense that the post-truth phenomenon involves a struggle about its criteria. The winner of the game always imposes criteria. Hence, the truth is not in itself liberating but the control over the *production* of the truth.¹¹⁶ The struggle for criteria is a struggle for authority over the truth. To a certain degree, I can agree; those who were traditionally viewed as an authority, namely scholars, judges, and the philosopher-king, are in the post-truth era confronted by those who simply refuse to obey the rules of the game.¹¹⁷ I do not dispute that. With the advent of contemporary technology, it has become easy to place oneself against traditionally accepted authority.

However, I disagree with Wight that the post-truth paradox¹¹⁸ describes the decline of democratic practices and the co-presence of highly educated Western population. As we said, Arendt's phenomenological understanding of politics is beyond the division of *doxa* and *episteme* because the absence of thought in politics can concern those highly educated as much as those who are not.

I agree that the phenomenon is not new. It is a symptom. But a symptom of what? Of the passage from the transcendence of disciplinary society to an immanent society of control? However, the latter would only denote that the traditional authority is absent from contemporary politics. From the context of Appearing, I argue with Arendt that the cause of the post-truth phenomenon lies in World alienation, not self-alienation as the hallmark of the modern world.¹¹⁹

Politics need others who co-shape given events and give them meaning; the loss of what Arendt called *sensus communis*, a sixth sense that fits man into a reality that surrounds human beings, depicts the contemporary inability to judge and potentially think in place of everybody else. For that aim, Arendt, in Kant's lectures and elsewhere, always emphasised the “enlarged mentality”, purged from our narrow self-interests, in which judgments of taste reach relative disinterestedness.¹²⁰ But nothing can be self-evident if Being and Appearing part company, and everything must be doubted. As this scenario

becomes more and more acute, man will likely be unable to come to a potential agreement with others. Political appearances would not only be tragic but absurd as well. The post-truth phenomenon is a place where the absurd happens.

If in political sense, men are not able to agree on anything anymore, this not only signifies our inability to judge, but also to act together in actualising tangible freedom, unburdened with bare life. And if the absurd, meaningless nonsense becomes fully entrenched in political deeds and speech, then fatalistic and cynical *ethos* will prevail over truth, and with that, over truthfulness since the former is a condition of the latter. Hence, while the post-truth phenomenon is not a new concept, it is also not a mere buzzword; it represents the real possibility of political appearances turning into absurdity.

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