

Reflections on Post-truth and its Relationship to the crisis of Common Sense

Reflexões sobre a Pós-verdade e sua Relação com o Senso Comum

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ABSTRACT:

The Brazilian political landscape reveals a shift in the relationship between politics, reality, and truth, marked by the centrality of social media. This has favored the massive dissemination of false or factually unfounded information, compromising public discernment and shifting the criterion of truth towards emotional security and affective inclinations. This gives rise to a situation of post-truth, in which truth, its epistemological foundations, and reality lose their adherence to facts. This article proposes a political-epistemological analysis, inspired by phenomenology and hermeneutics, articulating the crisis of common sense with Hannah Arendt's reflections on alienation from the world.

KEYWORDS: Truth; Politics; World; Alienation; Social Media.

RESUMO:

O cenário político brasileiro revela uma inflexão na relação entre política, realidade e verdade, marcada pela centralidade das redes sociais digitais. Isso favoreceu a difusão massiva de informações falsas ou sem base factual, comprometendo o discernimento público e deslocando o critério de verdade para a segurança emocional e as inclinações afetivas. Funda-se, então, a situação de pós-verdade, na qual a verdade seus fundamentos epistemológicos e a realidade perde a aderência aos fatos. O presente artigo propõe uma análise político-epistemológica, de inspiração fenomenológica e hermenêutica, articulando a crise do senso comum às reflexões de Hannah Arendt sobre alienação do mundo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Verdade; Política; Mundo; Alienação; Redes Sociais Digitais.

INTRODUCTION – POST-TRUTH AND THE LACK OF ADHERENCE TO REALITY

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On May 3, 2023, the Minister of Justice and Public Security, Flávio Dino¹, during a meeting held at the Financial Oversight and Control Committee of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, refuting some accusations made by Federal Deputy Deltan Dallagnol², stated:

You, talk about dictatorships. You talk about major scandals. Honestly, looking at you, I think you believe what you say. Which, in my view, is more serious. **Because you really start from a very particular, very unique belief system that has no basis in reality.** (Estado de Minas, 2023) (emphasis added)

Despite the political use of the opinions expressed that led Minister Flávio Dino to speak out, his words reveal the occurrence of a new phenomenon in the public sphere which, despite its novelty, has rapidly advanced upon it. This phenomenon, dubbed by several authors as post-truth.³ It is sustained and strengthened by the feeling of loss of the “concreteness of reality” external to individuals, conveyed by mass adherence to the virtual world, fostered by the advent of the internet and reinforced with the creation of social medias.⁴

¹ Flávio Costa Dino is a Brazilian jurist and politician. He was a federal judge, federal deputy, governor of the state of Maranhão (2015–2022), and subsequently appointed Minister of Justice and Public Security at the beginning of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's third term (2022–2026). Flávio Dino served as minister from January 2023 to February 2024, a period in which his work was marked by debates on public security, democracy, confronting anti-democratic acts, and strengthening republican institutions. In February 2024, he left the ministry to take office as a Justice of the Supreme Federal Court.

² Deltan Martinazzo Dallagnol is a former prosecutor for the Brazilian Public Prosecutor's Office. He gained national prominence for his role as coordinator of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office task force in Operation Lava Jato (2014–2021), which aimed to combat corruption and financial crimes involving public officials and private companies. His actions were widely debated in public and academic circles, especially due to the legal and political controversies related to the operation's methods, the relationship between the prosecution and the judiciary, and the institutional impacts of Lava Jato on the democratic rule of law in Brazil. After leaving the Public Prosecutor's Office in 2021, Dallagnol entered party politics, being elected federal deputy in 2022, with his mandate subsequently challenged and revoked by the Superior Electoral Court in 2023. Regarding Operation Lava Jato, see Kerche and Marona, 2022.

³ Regarding the concept of “post-truth”, see Kucharski, 2016; D’Ancona, 2018; Dourado, 2018; Barbosa 2019; Santanella, 2018.

⁴ The perception of this new phenomenon's arrival on the public scene was initially noted by journalists and professors. For example, Ângela Randolpho Paiva, a professor in the Department of Social Sciences at PUCRJ, in an interview with UOL news on June 17, 2013, recounted her surprise at the fact that protests confined to São Paulo against a twenty-cent increase in bus fares in 2013 gained national proportions and became the trigger for a series of other protests that, amidst a plurality of agendas and disparate objectives, likely had only one common goal: dissatisfaction with investments in the “Confederations Cup” and the “World Cup”, which took place in Brazil in 2013 and 2014 respectively. In response to this, she highlighted something important: “I would say there is dissatisfaction when you see that these events [Confederations Cup and World Cup] have the number one priority in public management. All the money is spent on them. One thing is certain, the power of social media. This cannot be disregarded under any circumstances. This issue of travel expenses is very unexpected in having reached this proportion.” (Uol, 2013).

The use of social media and the virtual environment changed the rules of the political game with such speed that it became difficult to perceive and understand what was happening in the second decade of the 21st century. However, almost a decade after its emergence, its occurrence has opened up opportunities to notice that the changes were much more profound. The mass migration of our society to the virtual world has caused changes both in the ways we communicate our experience of reality to others, and in the ways we use to verify what is true or not.

The phenomenon of post-truth may be just the tip of the iceberg: beneath it lies a world in which trust is dissolving. Trust is being undermined on social media, with new beliefs and values that challenge the scientific method and defy long-established consensus. (Roque and Bruno, 2019, p. 10) (emphasis added)

We have noticed changes affecting the relationship between the real and the virtual, and the political consequences of this. Traditionally, in the public sphere, the real has never been the virtual. Virtuality, since the work of Aristotle, has presented itself as a possibility to be realized. Reality, in turn, is constituted from the realization of a latent possibility. Virtuality, in the realm of “human affairs”, was reserved for the possibilities of an action or discourse occurring, or for particular opinions and idiosyncrasies, dreams, desires, aspirations, emotions, and subjective wishes that, to become real, needed to be communicated, manifested to other individuals, and therefore, publicized.

With the phenomenon of post-truth, we perceive the emergence of a historical context in which the concreteness of facts is shattered by the advent of the internet and social medias. A fact, in a certain way, can exist and reveal itself as an instance “independent” of the wills, desires, and emotional inclinations of those who witness its appearance. However, from post-truth and its relationship with social medias, facts are stripped of their concreteness, and their character as phenomenal evidence of reality no longer has the basis for the formation of a “public consensus”. There is, therefore, a growing process of replacing “consensus” based on perceptions, beliefs, desires, and wishes founded on a common world, with the indications of mathematical algorithms that coordinate the exposure of a particular content to a user of a network, based on the tracking of their idiosyncratic tastes and pleasures and the establishment of their profile.

What we notice, therefore, is that the advent of post-truth is based on the experience of alienation from a factual world shared with other individuals. From this, what is true is reduced to being the expression of one value among others, something relative, negotiable, relegated to emotions and the desiderative satisfaction of citizens, because it reflects an atomized user, confined to themselves by the operability of algorithms. This process of alienation from the world historically predates the advent of post-truth and, with it, begins to crystallize into a new historical facet.

The process of alienation from the world, therefore, does not emerge with post-truth, but finds in it one of its most recent and intensified expressions. The weakening of the link with a common factual world, which sustains the reduction of truth to subjective and affectively oriented opinions, points to a deeper and earlier problem, related to the erosion of the conditions that make possible the sharing of an objective reality among individuals. It is within this horizon that Hannah Arendt's reflection becomes particularly illuminating, offering a philosophical analysis of alienation as the loss of the experience of the world as a common space of meaning.

2 THE PUBLIC WORLD AS A CONDITION FOR THE CONCRETENESS OF REALITY

In *The Human Condition* (1958), the process of alienation is understood as the loss of experience of the world on the part of individuals.⁵ For her, the world is a distinct instance from planet Earth, from the natural processes and entities, organic or inorganic, that compose the Universe. The world is constituted as the direct result of human activity on the natural environment and is composed of the things produced by human activities (Arendt, 2001, p. 17): the set of works and artifacts, institutions, laws, traditions, language, and public spaces, which convert the “environment of human existence from a mere ‘biophysical environment’ into a world that serves as a stable non-natural shelter and common subject among plural men.” (Neto, 2008, p. 248).

⁵ Walsh (2017) explains that Arendt approaches Marx's thought by using the concept of alienation to address the deformation of dignity and the fundamental activities that constitute human existence that occurred with the emergence of modernity. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, the process of alienation was analyzed from the relationship between the worker and the product of their labor. Labor (*Arbeit*) is understood by Marx as the fundamental activity and ontological sphere of human existence and, therefore, the ultimate basis of all types and forms of activities we perform. It is through labor that the necessary “self-mediation” between man and nature is constituted. Thus, the elements, raw materials, and forces of nature are transformed into means, into objects of labor. These, in turn, are not simply products of nature, but a “humanized nature,” since “the product of labor is labor that has become fixed in an object, has become a thing (*sachlich*), it is the objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*) of labor. The actualization (*Verwirklichung*) of labor is its objectification” (Marx, 2004, p. 80). Based on this, Chagas (1994) highlights that for Marx there is a positive instance of alienation that exists at the moment of the objectification of labor. The worker, in producing an object that has an existence separate from him, enters into a positive connection with the product of his labor and with other human beings, and through this with his own existence and self-identity: “the object (*Gegenstand*) that labor produces, its product, confronts him as an alien being, as a power independent of the producer” (Marx, 2004, p. 80). However, through the expropriation of labor – the occurrence of the historical process by which the worker is deprived of the means of production, of control over their own productive activity, and of the constitutive relations conveyed by it – their ontological positivism is lost, so that “the appropriation of the object appears as alienation (*Entfremdung*) such that the more objects the worker produces, the less they can possess and the more they are under the dominion of their product, of capital” (Marx, 2004, p. 81). However, Arendt rejects Marx's analyses and indications, understanding them as too restrictive because they limit the realization of human dignity and freedom to the sphere of labor (Walsh, 2017, pp. 13-15). This view, according to Arendt, reduces human beings to mere users of tools trapped in a “world of objects,” ignoring action as an activity distinct from labor and freedom as the political experience that is situated in a sphere different from the “world of objects.” Regarding the concept of political alienation in Hannah Arendt, see Villa, 1997.

From this, the fundamental characteristics of the world are: to be the shelter for human works and artifacts, establishing itself as a space of stability in which the products of human activities can gain durability in a constantly changing and moving universe; to be the sphere of protection and safeguarding of the existence of mortal beings in a universe that is marked by the transience of the natural processes of birth, growth, and corruption.

It is worth highlighting that the works and artifacts produced by human beings are not limited to tangible materials such as objects and instruments. Due to the organic mortality of humans, they are obliged to coexist with one another in order to find ways to cope with their existential limitations. However, while initially human interaction serves as an aid to our organic needs, the communication of our interests to others and the identification of common interests with them enable the foundation of a series of immaterial artifacts and works that are established among us through actions and discourses (Arendt, 2001, p. 210). Therefore, actions and discourses allow the construction of a world of direct interactions between individuals themselves, composed through the communication of what makes each one “who” they are uniquely: their interests, their opinions, their actions, their words, and their history.

Therefore, the world constitutes itself as a stage that gives concrete existence to what is real, because it creates the conditions so that what happens can appear, can be publicly witnessed. Since the real, in itself, is what is placed before someone's eyes and ears, something that appears and manifests itself in some way, there is a direct correlation between the real and the world. However, since the possibility of something manifesting as real presupposes the establishment of a space that guarantees the necessary conditions for this manifestation, then the world must logically precede the appearance of the real, but ontologically it coexists with it, because when the world comes into existence, the existence of what is real is also founded.

Now, with the existence of the world, the space is created in which that which can exist emerges from the obscurity of “non-existence”, reveals itself publicly before an observer or an “audience”, and thus becomes real. The consequence of this is that reality needs to manifest itself to someone in order to be something; historical events only gain meaning when they appear to a spectator, just as individuals need to appear publicly to have the reality of their manifestation preserved (Arendt, 2001, pp. 51-68).

Thus, worldliness and reality, through their intrinsic relationship with the foundation of the sphere of phenomenal manifestation, combine and constitute themselves as the “public sphere” that allows for the maximum visualization of their occurrences. This sphere, in turn, presents two fundamental phenomena for human existence: the constitution of reality as such, in which any phenomenon, to be something, needs to be seen and heard by everyone and have the widest possible dissemination (Arendt, 2001, p. 59); and the actualization of what is intersubjectively shared, which is

placed between human beings like a table, which interposes itself between those who sit at it and, therefore, establishes the space proper to each one, differentiating them and relating them (Arendt, 2001, p. 62).

From this, a fundamental criterion is established for the manifestation of a given phenomenon to gain the status of reality, to gain concreteness: public testimony. It is not enough for something to manifest itself only to one subject as a phenomenon to be understood as real. Reality only reveals itself authentically and reliably when things can be perceived and communicated by different people, from multiple perspectives, without losing their identity, so that those who observe them recognize that they are facing the same phenomenon, even if from different points of view (Arendt, 2001, p. 67)⁶.

Thus, witnessing is not limited to the perception of something appearing: if, on the one hand, witnessing means being present when something happens; on the other hand, it requires that what is perceived be “prepared” to be publicly manifested, reported, and transformed into an intersubjectively comprehensible narrative. It is this intersubjective sharing constituted by testimonies and accounts of what happened that gives concreteness to what was seen and/or heard. And the preparation of individual apprehensions is possible, according to Arendt, due to common sense.

3 COMMON SENSE AS THE SENSE OF REALITY

Common sense is understood by Arendt as a “kind of faculty” that enables us to understand the reality of the world. According to Filho (2020), common sense is understood by Arendt “as the means by which men can be certain that their particular experiences in the world are not mere illusions or fantasies.” (Santos, 2020, p. 27)

Although there is no direct mention of Aristotle's thought, the explicit citation of Thomas Aquinas in *The Life of the Mind* (Arendt, 2000, p. 67) allows us to infer that Arendt was aware that the term

⁶ The understanding of reality in *The Human Condition* exposes a vision that presents assumptions constituted from phenomenology. For phenomenology, a phenomenon is what occurs temporally in the here (in a place), in the now (in a time), and before a subjectivity (a someone) that intentionally presents this occurrence as something (Husserl, 2006, p. 34). Therefore, there is a logical, ontological, and epistemological necessity for the joint existence of something that manifests itself and someone who witnesses this manifestation for a phenomenon to occur. Thus, the phenomenon is simultaneously part of reality outside of consciousness and an element present in it, with a kind of overlap existing between the phenomenon and its presentation to consciousness for its concretization as real (Hintikka, 1995, p. 82). For this reason, the phenomenon can only be apprehended from its relation to consciousness, that is, as a “something-for-a-subject”. On the other hand, the influence of phenomenology on Hannah Arendt, since “phenomenology designates a method and an intellectual attitude” (Husserl, 1990, p. 46), does not exclude the possibility of objectivity on the part of the phenomenon being studied, because “it is always a matter, not of establishing arbitrary phenomena as given, **but of bringing to understanding the essence of the giving and constituting of different modes of objectivity**. Certainly, every phenomenon has its objective reference and – here is a first piece of evidence of essences – has its ingredient content with the totality of the moments that compose it; and, on the other hand, it has its intentional object, an object that aims, according to its essential nature, as constituted in such or such a way” (Husserl, 1990, p. 105) (emphasis added). Regarding the influences of the phenomenological method and other methods on Arendt's thought, see Cf. Dias, 2019

sensus-communis is a Latin translation of the Aristotelian concept of *koine aisthesis* (*De Anima*, 425a27). Thus, recognizing that the *sensus-communis* presented by Arendt refers, through Thomism, to the Aristotelian tradition and thought, it becomes necessary to revisit the philosophical foundation, since the Aristotelian exposition of the operability of common sense in sensory perception presents an epistemological basis that allows for a better understanding of the functionality of common sense for Arendt.

For Aristotle, sense perception [*aisthesis*] is the faculty responsible for the perception of the external world by the perceiver. It is initially responsible for the primary apprehension of the sensible qualities of objects, their forms, through the bodily organs proper to each of the five senses: touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. Contact with what is perceived causes an alteration in the perceiver's body, which may lead to the apprehension of its sensible form without encompassing its matter, analogously to wax taking the shape of a ring without becoming the metal from which it is made. Thus, for sensible perception to occur, there must be a coincidence between the activity of the correlated object and the reception of the specific sense associated with it – for example, the act of hearing and the act of sounding must persist and cease together. (*De Anima*, 426b8-12)

However, in addition to distinguishing between black and white, human beings are able to discriminate between different kinds of perceptible objects, since we can differentiate both between objects related to distinct senses – such as, for example, a smell from a taste or a color from a sound – and between distinct objects related to the same sense – such as, for example, the entire spectrum of colors constituting green from the spectrum constituting red. And this is possible thanks to the action of a “common faculty” a “common sense”, which acts by combining the sensations captured in disparate ways by each of the separate senses.

Therefore, it is the unity in the operation of a common faculty of sense-perception that enables Aristotle to defend the possibility of true or false judgments on the part of men. For, as he points out in *De Anima* II, 2, if the perception of two distinct phenomena (white and sweet), which are apprehended through the reception of two distinct sensory organs (the eyes and the tongue), produced the perception that they are different, then this perception by two different individuals could at most indicate their differences, but never the conjunction of these in the same perceived object. The consequence of this would be the impossibility of affirming a judgment about the unity between two perceptible objects of distinct kinds such as “white + fluffy = rabbit” (*De Anima* 426b17-22) by two distinct individuals and, with this, the impossibility of affirming true or false propositions.

Therefore, it is not the distinct parts of the psyche, by themselves, such as specific sensory organs that function as separate channels, that can unite the objects correlated to them and produce a judgment such as “white and fluffy are rabbit”. Aristotle, then, argues that it is necessary for both the

stated judgment and the perception and thought that support it to present a unity in order to guarantee the conditions of possibility for the affirmation of something about something. In this way, sensoperception acts to provide an indeterminate conceptual content that, mediated by imagination and memory, can be determined into a proper concept through the activity of the intellect.

Thus, Aristotle does not deny his postulate that sensory perception is always of particulars. However, he indicates the existence of a unity in the operation of sensory perception with the intellect through imagination and memory, because its apprehension of particulars corresponds to the possibility of affirmations about unities in the human psyche. Consequently, the possibility of recognizing a unity in the multiplicity of particulars apprehended by sensory perception is only realized in its joint action of imagination and reason.

So, while, on the one hand, in sensory perception, the physiopsychological changes are like the “impression” of an iron seal on melted wax ⁷; On the other hand, imagination apprehends the “impression” that the object imprints on the senses as representations that appear even in the absence of affection. If a phantasmata appears from the absence of the sensory impression of a particular object perceived on the sense of the perceiver, this means that imagination does not discern particular objects, but conceptual forms in an operation similar to the rational operation presented in *De Anima* III, 4, in which Aristotle writes that: “It is discerned, then, either by a different part or by the same part arranged in another way. In general, then, just as things are separated from matter, so are those concerning the intellect.” (*De Anima* 429b20-22).

Now, just as in Aristotle, for Arendt, “common sense” is understood as a faculty that enables us to deprivatize the perceptions proper to each of the senses and to combine these private sensations into a common conceptual perception, which can be communicated to others and, therefore, intersubjectively shared. This is why, for her, common sense is “that sense through which all the others, with their strictly private sensations, adjusted themselves to the common world” (Arendt, 2001, p. 296).

In this sense, the most common way of transforming our private experiences into a “public experience” occurs through storytelling or the artistic transposition of individual experiences (Arendt, 2001, p. 60). It is common sense that ensures that the meanings of words and discourse as a whole, as

⁷ Regarding the possibility of physiological changes in the perceptual organ when an affliction occurs, three relevant interpretations have recently emerged: on the one hand, Sorabji's literal interpretation, which understands that when the eye is affected by the color red, the eye membrane becomes red (Sorabji, 2003, pp. 42-64); on the other hand, Burnyeat understands that there is no literal physiological change, but an awareness, an apperception, a “spiritual change” (Burnyeat, 1992, pp. 20-21); a third way is expressed by Cassin, who positions himself similarly to Burnyeat, but notes that for Aristotle, mathematics also has physical effects, “[...] an 'excessive' *logos* (zero/infinity) destroys sensation and obscures or nullifies the organ (and sometimes the animal)” (Cassin, 1999, p. 168).

expressed in a narrative, are the same for both the narrator and the audience. Thus, common sense is not only a meaning internally located within the body of the perceiver, but a meaning shared with other individuals, which enables the public communication of internal meanings, as it transforms these into words, symbols, signs, concepts, discourses, and narratives that are intersubjectively constituted. Therefore, according to Arendt:

O único atributo do mundo que nos permite avaliar sua realidade é o fato comum a todos nós; e, se o senso comum tem posição tão alta na hierarquia das qualidades políticas, é que é o único fator que ajusta à realidade global os nossos cinco sentidos estritamente individuais e os dados rigorosamente particulares que eles registram. (Arendt, 2001, p. 220,221)

Common sense operates prior to more elaborate rational processes and is directly linked to the existential condition of human worldliness. If reality and the world converge with each other, since the real is everything that appears (Arendt, 2001, p. 59), becomes public to a set of witnesses, and if the public means the world itself (Arendt, 2001, p. 62), insofar as it constitutes the space of appearance of everything else, then common sense is what allows reality to reveal itself as public evidence. If there is any doubt about the veracity of this evidence, it is enough to speak to other individuals who “co-sent” to the world with us, to see if what is evident to us is identical to what is evident to them or if it is merely an illusion. The “co-sent” to a reality common to all is guaranteed thanks to the operation of common sense. Therefore, the veracity of the operation “white + fluffy = rabbit” only gains the status of reality when we communicate it to other individuals who can “co-sent” with us to the same observed phenomenon and confirm the truth content of our statement. That is why, for Arendt,

The world is not human simply because it is made by human beings, nor does it become human simply because the human voice resonates within it, but only when it has become an object of discourse. However affected we may be by the things of the world, however deeply they may instigate and stimulate us, they only become human for us when we can discuss them with our companions (Arendt, 2003, p. 31).

Only the experience of sharing a world with others who observe it from different perspectives allows us to see reality in its totality. Without this, what remains are only the egocentric fragments of subjective perceptions.

4 THE ALIENATION FROM THE WORLD AND THE LOSS OF COMMON SENSE

The loss of experience of the world can thus be understood as the dissolution of the “space-between” people. This space is a fundamental condition for the realization of the reality of phenomena,

as well as for individuals to be able to come together, establish bonds and, at the same time, distinguish themselves from one another as subjects capable of acting and speaking, since they are not reduced to beings exclusively focused on the satisfaction of biological needs.

However, this space has been gradually weakened within a society structured around work (Arendt, 2001, pp. 47-59). In this context, the activity of work assumes a central position in human concerns (Arendt, 2001, p. 78), favoring the generalization of the economic logic oriented towards production and consumption, to the detriment of the durability of the world and the space of action.

The mass man in modernity—especially after the transformations triggered by the Industrial Revolution and the successive ruptures caused by the First World War—came to live, as Arendt observes, in “a world that had become inhuman” (Arendt, 2003, p. 30). According to Neto (2008, p. 250), the loss of world experience translates into a situation of “desolation.” To be desolate, for him, manifests itself as an experience in which men are deprived of the world. Desolation, from this point on, compresses individuals against each other in superfluous masses, subjecting them to a process of deworldization, which affects not only the material dimension of the world, but also the space in which they could exercise the initiative to act and speak, that is, the very sphere of political action (Neto, 2008, p. 250).

Now, the process of alienation from the world resulted in a flight into the interiority of one's ego as the ultimate refuge from “concrete” experiences. According to her, the process of alienation from the world is directly linked to three historical events: the “discovery of the Americas”, carried out by Columbus and his associates in 1492, and with it, the discovery of the size of the globe, which resulted in the beginning of the process of diminishing distances on Earth and the shrinking of the world (Arendt, 2001, p. 262); the “Protestant Reformation”, initiated by Luther in 1517, and with it the process of individual expropriation and the accumulation of wealth, which created the basis for capitalism, leading to an incessant process of consumption and production, resulting in a breakdown of the stability and durability of the works and artifacts that make up the world (Arendt, 2001, p. 264); The “use of the telescope”, implemented by Galileo Galilei for the purpose of observing astronomical phenomena in 1609 and 1610, presented to human eyes an even larger universe for our understanding and called into question the capacity of the senses to perceive reality, “leaving us with a universe whose qualities we know only by the ways in which they affect our mediating instruments” (Arendt, 2001, p. 273).

Although all three events acted together in the process of alienation from the world, for the purposes of this article, the latter event had more relevant consequences, as it directly impacted the traditional constitution of reality. Its main consequence was the suspicion that reality was evident to our five senses. Galileo's use of the telescope showed that there were certain phenomena and processes that were not revealed to us unless we used some scientific instrument. This, in turn, led to the idea that truth

could only be effectively attained through instruments we had built ourselves; what appeared to us through the five senses did not hold true with certainty.

Doubt regarding evidence in the world of appearances, in turn, resulted in the insecurity that what is publicly witnessed and agreed upon by other individuals could safeguard veracity, or that the testimony of others constituted a reliable way of attesting to reality. This, in turn, resulted in the human need to close in on oneself, on one's subjective representations, which, in philosophical terms, found its main answer in Descartes' philosophy (Arendt, 2001, p. 273). If the evidence of being is most evident through its appearance to the five senses, then nothing else can be accepted in good faith and everything must be questioned. Thus, according to Arendt, with Descartes, truth ceased to be something belonging to evidence and became the result of mental operations constituted through subjective soliloquies.

Cartesian doubt, as mainly discussed in the first book of the *Meditations* (2000), had a consequence, unplanned by Descartes, which was the demolition of the concreteness of the evidence of worldly phenomena: if it is not possible to place trust in the senses, in common sense or even in reason, it becomes plausible to hypothesize that what we take for reality is merely a dreamlike illusion; a dream produced by a deceiving spirit, which would have constituted the human being as an entity oriented towards truth, but endowed with cognitive faculties incapable of apprehending it in a clear and evident way.

Ultimately, Cartesian doubt manifests itself as the loss of immediate evidence that dispenses with demonstration. In general, before modernity, the exercise of thought was always based on what is evident in itself—not only to the one who elaborates the reasoning, but in a way that is equally accessible and recognizable to all. (Arendt, 2001, p. 288). However, from Galileo's use of the telescope and Descartes' methodical doubt, we came to understand that it is only possible to know with certainty what we can ascertain through our instruments, just as self-knowledge is only possible through introspective reasoning. (Arendt, 2001, p. 287)

Therefore, what appears to the “ego” through introspection is not an external fact shared with others through a “felt” experience. The image produced by the “ego” is fabricated in a space that precedes its appearance, in the obscure inner domain of the self, for a society that increasingly lacks a reliable experience of the world and, therefore, possesses only its internal processes as a guarantee of some “concrete experience.” What appears is not the revelation of the singularity of some agent or a fact of the world, but an ego-referred mental image, which possesses a concreteness similar to a fiction:

O que se perdeu na era moderna não foi, naturalmente, a capacidade de conhecer-se a verdade ou a realidade ou a fé, nem a concomitante e inevitável aceitação do depoimento dos sentidos e da razão, mas a certeza que antes havia nesse depoimento (Arendt, 2001, p. 290)

5 CONCLUSION

Now, the “co-sent” of reality, which is founded on world experience, requires that something be seen and heard by a collective of individuals. Individual apprehension alone is not enough to guarantee the “reality” of the manifestation of something. It is important that what is shown be manifested to and apprehended by a public; that this appearance has a minimum of stability and durability that allows others to apprehend it; that these can publicly confirm their perception through a narrative and, from this, converse with other witnesses of the phenomenon in order to understand the meaning of the manifestation and give concreteness to the phenomenon, transforming it into fact.

However, as we have seen, this entire structure has been slowly altered by the process of alienation from the world. This process of alienation has resulted in the constitution of a society characterized by individuals who are increasingly isolated from one another, increasingly alone, and whose efforts are reduced to simply surviving, to staying alive. This experience, in turn, leads them to a state of loneliness that shakes the entire sphere of human existence. Loneliness is not limited to withdrawing from the public scene and isolating oneself; the loss of the world shared with others reveals itself as withdrawing from existence in the broadest sense, almost characterizing itself as a death for the individual, destroying both their private and public existence.

The advent of the internet, the mass migration to social medias, and the establishment of the post-truth situation, in our view, represent yet another step in the process of alienation from the world, deepening the experience of loneliness among individuals, as well as politically coordinating them in a new way. Closed in on themselves, the circulation of information, data, knowledge, etc., has as its imperative the satisfaction of instinctual needs linked to ego-referred desires and narcissistic emotions.

Unlike communication systems prior to the advent of social medias, in which the dissemination of messages was centralized and relatively passive on the part of the audience, these networks operate according to a participatory model, in which the propagation of content depends directly on the actions of the users themselves.

Initially, the algorithms focused on identifying audiences with the greatest potential for consuming certain products. Over time, however, it became clear that this same mechanism could recognize groups particularly susceptible to certain types of messages. This possibility opened the door to inducing specific moods through the repeated exposure of these groups to content tailored to their affective dispositions. In this process, the user actively contributes to the functioning of the algorithms by expressing their worldview through their interactions with the networks, allowing the system to map

their preferences and reproduce them in a feedback loop, reinforcing what is already presupposed by the users. In the end, the networks end up correlating users only with themselves.

In this context, egocentric desire tends to override reflective thought or correlation with a shared factual world, since the sharing of information occurs primarily based on its ability to mobilize narcissistic affects. Thus, a news item—whether false, fraudulent, or even factual—achieves wide repercussion to the extent that it resonates emotionally with its recipients, regardless of its commitment to the truth. The recording of the factual gives way to the sensational—hence sensationalism—establishing a communicational dynamic that is based solely on the recognition of perceptions, which are driven by egocentric desire, sensationalism, sentimentality, and self-centered pleasure, focused only on bringing psychic comfort to individuals entangled in their narcissistic fantasies. As Bucci points out, “social medias have expanded the walls that separate the egoic and narcissistic preferences that seem to preside over the noisiest groups. They don’t network people; they network the walls, privatized walls.” (Bucci, 2019, p. 37)

Thus, the type of social interaction that social medias constitute among individuals is no longer measured by the world, but by the actions of algorithms that, identifying egocentric tendencies, correlate them to a group of like-minded people, inserting them into a “digital social bubble” in which opinions and their sets of beliefs have no connection whatsoever with factual reality.

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