# A post-factual society

Patrícia Fernandes[*]

*ABSTRACT: In 2016 Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as its international word of the year, and in the last years our vocabulary has enlarged with words and expressions such as alternative facts, disinformation, misinformation, fake news, etc.. Media and social media have undertaken fact-check mechanisms, and several academics have engaged in research on conspiracy theories. One seems to live in a post-factual society, with crucial implications concerning our democratic regimes. This paper aims to address this problem, adopting a philosophic-political approach. Firstly, I consider the emergence of Modernity and its relation to scientific revolutions and the inception of science as a vital arrangement of this historical period. For two centuries we had a strong consensus on the value of science as a tool to describe, understand and control nature and reality – and the notion of fact was central to that consensus. Furthermore, liberal democracy was developed from the conviction that, albeit our different opinions concerning political values, one's discussion would be confined by facts that were not disputable. That old world seems to have disappeared as a new period has emerged since the 1960s, usually designated as postmodernity. Therefore, secondly, I address the rise of the postmodern period. Obsessed with language and identity, postmodernity has gradually made the ideas of truth and fact vulnerable – even obsolescent. Which consequences result in Western societies and liberal democracies? May democracies survive the assault on truth, science, and the very idea of fact? Or are we condemned to the next stage of government, according to Plato: authoritarianism?*

*KEYWORDS: Post-truth – liberal democracies – illiberalism – authoritarianism.*

[*] PhD in Social and Political Philosophy (University of Minho). Guest Assistant Professor at the University of Minho (Political Theory) and University of Porto (Political Philosophy). Researcher at CEPS-UM (Centre for Ethics, Politics and Society – University of Minho).

> *Against the positivism which halts at phenomena – 'There are only facts' – I would say: no, facts are just what there aren't, there are only interpretations.*
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the late Notebooks*

## 1. Introduction

In 1967 the philosopher Hannah Arendt published a seminal essay in *The New Yorker*, entitled *Truth and Politics*. In this essay, Arendt contemplates the difficult relationship between truth and politics: if the latter is a privileged field of argument and the former is the domain of non-debate, both notions are in a permanent conflicting relation. Arendt recalls:during the twenties, so a story goes, Clemenceau, shortly before his death, found himself engaged in a friendly talk with a representative of the Weimar Republic on the question of guilt for the outbreak of the First World War. "*What, in your opinion,*" Clemenceau was asked, "*will future historians think of this troublesome and controversial issue?*" He replied "*This I don't know. But I know for certain that they will not say Belgium invaded Germany*".[1]

In this anecdote we are confronted with the tension between politics and truth: in democratic societies, we may discuss different interpretations of events and disagree about principles and values, but we do it using information that we accept as *factual* – factual truth is the common ground from what we can politically disagree. Factual truth represents, as such, the foundation where our societies were built and the last resource we may appeal to in case of disagreement. Essentially, these are the terms of what we mean by a *rational conversation* in a liberal democratic paradigm.

One hundred years after Clemenceau's witty remark, the circumstances have completely changed: in 2016 Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as its international word of the year, and in the last years our vocabulary has enlarged with words and expressions such as alternative facts, disinformation, misinformation, or fake news. Media and social media have undertaken fact-check mechanisms, and several academics have engaged in research on conspiracy theories. One seems to live in a post-factual society, in what would be one of the main causes of the *weakening of liberal democracy*. From a philosophical point of view, I will engage in the discussion about this crisis, addressing the following questions: is it still possible in liberal democracies of the 21st century to anchor the political debate and action in the idea of factual truth? And if not, what are the potential consequences of that impossibility?

## 2. Modernity and the paradigm of factual truth

In order to advance my argument, I must begin by evoking the crucial role of the concept of factual truth in Western societies and recalling the emergence of the modern period. Although the establishment of historical periods is the result of mere convention, we can say with some certainty that modernity was established in the 16th century as a consequence of essentially two elements. The first one is presented by Niccolò Machiavelli in his book *The Prince* and consists of the affirmation of the State as the most relevant political structure. In fact, the state

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[1] Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics", *The New Yorker*, February 25, 1967.

as we know it is a recent political figure and it is profoundly different from the political experiences that preceded it, either the *polis* as the political reference in the ancient times or the diffuse political power of the medieval period. Differently from both forms, the modern state is the result of the concentration of power that was in process for at least two centuries earlier, around the three elements identified by Jellinek: political power, territory, and population, with the following contributions of Jean Bodin concerning sovereignty.

The second element of modernity is the scientific development that allowed a series of revolutions that began with the work of Nicholas Copernicus, *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543). Copernicus' work inaugurated a scientific period of thought revolution with several important contributions by Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Johannes Kepler (1571-1630). This scientific spirit will be philosophically captured by Francis Bacon, the philosopher, and his defence of a new scientific method to substitute the Aristotelic logic, inaugurating the idea of science as a tool for man to discover all nature's secrets.[2] Within this frame of reference, modernity was embedded in this scientific and rational paradigm and was presented as a period illuminated by the lights of Reason and scientific thought.

This path culminated in the Enlightenment, even though we must consider the lessons of Gertrude Himmelfarb on the plurality of enlightenments. In France, for instance, the passion for Reason will be taken to the extreme, constituting a feature specifically French and opposed to British and American enlightening.[3] Despite all of its excesses, it will be the French Revolution (the last one of the three liberal revolutions) to symbolize the new world and the modern paradigm, with the substitution of the three elements of the Ancient Regime, as Richard Rorty recalls: God is replaced by Reason, the Church by Science and the priests by the scientists – and this intellectual revolution will establish a new vocabulary, epitomized in capital letters: Truth, Reality, Objectivity.[4]

The scientific paradigm conceded new waves of scientific revolutions and the industrial revolution, thus reinforcing social confidence in its methodology. In fact, the scientific method became the symbol of rational functioning, inspiring all areas of thought, including philosophy (with Kant's attempt to promote a philosophical revolution like the one Newton had made in physics). *To know something* would mean *to have a scientific approach* to something in direct relation to nature and reality: there is an objective reality that becomes knowable to human beings through the scientific method (formulation of hypothesis and approximations by experiment and error). The scientific method would thus allow a growing knowledge of nature and, simultaneously, the control of nature for the satisfaction of our needs. We can think of medicine as its main success: with a direct impact on people's lives, it allowed a consensus of trust in the scientific truth.

At this point, I should make clear the relation between this scientific paradigm and factual truth. Modern science established the concept of fact as correspondence to reality – which is, thus, beyond subjectivity: we can have a subjective experience

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[2] We owe this idea to Francis Bacon, in *Novum Organum* (1620).
[3] Gertrude Himmelbfarb, *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).
[4] This strategy is frequently used by Richard Rorty: for instance, in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

of reality, but there is only one immutable reality, and it doesn't depend on our will. Reality appears as a third element, even though we refer to it from our subjectivity, as Renée Descartes put it when he inaugurated the individualistic perspective of modernity. Kant would philosophically surpass the limitations of the subjective experience by appealing to the notion of transcendental subject and defending a common universality that would bond all human beings through the notion of Reason – in reality, the liberal paradigm owes Kant this universalistic point of view.

The modern public sphere resulted from this paradigm: politics would be the place of discussion and debate of values, but this discussion and debate should start with factual and objective truths that are beyond discussion. As such, liberal democratic regimes rely on a culture of information, that should be provided by the *media*, to such an extent we can establish a direct relation between democratic societies and journalism. Mediation is an essential element of liberal democracies.

As Norberto Bobbio stated,[5] albeit modern democratic regimes inspired themselves in Athenian democracy, they are of different nature: instead of devices of direct democracy, modern democracies introduced the mechanism of representation that was unknown to ancient Greeks. Not only the representation mechanism was more adapted to modern States (much larger than the small Greek *poleis*), but it was also more appropriate to the enlightening intellectuals, that saw popular masses with distrust and wanted to protect their regimes from the political and social chaos of Athenian democracy and Roman popular republics. The mechanism of representation was, thus, a fundamental aspect of the new political system, introducing the idea of *mediation* to the principle of division of powers: to assure that political power remains limited (in compliance with the liberal spirit), it should be diffused in different institutions (as Locke's principle of separation stated, or Montesquieu's principle of division of powers), in a system of internal supervision (usually called checks and balances).

This internal supervision should be complemented by external supervision: this is the function of the *media*, which should assume itself as a fourth power, counterpower or watchdog, and also perform the task of mediating the relation between power and citizens in order to fulfil the essence of a democratic system: to participate politically, citizens must be informed and journalism is the source of that information, i.e., it represents access to truth and the guarantee of transparent use of power. As Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel stated, the main goal of journalism is to give people the information they need to be free and rule themselves.[6] Or, to use Walter Lippman's idea, newspapers are the bible of democracies, from which people can determine their conduct.[7] And to pursue that goal, the first commitment of journalism is to the truth.

As a matter of fact, this commitment is far from being simple: at its core lies the complex relationship between truth and pluralism, as a result of the way human beings experience reality. If there was only one way of experiencing reality, it would be just one way to convey the truth and all the media would publish the same news the same way. But human nature makes us experience reality in different ways and value those experiences differently. Thus, the effort of journalism consists

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[5] Norberto Bobbio, *Liberalismo e democracia*, trans. M. Nogueira (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988).

[6] Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *Os elementos do jornalismo: o que os profissionais do jornalismo devem saber e o público deve exigir* (Porto: Porto Editora, 2004).

[7] *Apud* José Manuel Fernandes, *Liberdade e informação* (Lisboa: FFMS, 2011), 95.

in an approximation to reality, selecting the best elements of what is important in a certain event or situation.[8] As the *Expresso* Conduct Code for Journalists states: "*Absolute objectivity does not exist, but that doesn't invalidate the pursuit of factual truth. It is because we are aware of subjectivity that we need to pursue objectivity. The journalists should pursue the truth and disclose it*."[9] Freedom of expression and freedom of the press fulfil therefore an essential role in liberal societies: they guarantee the place for truth to appear, symbolized in the old expression, if it's in the news, it must be true.

To recapitulate, the *media* perform this double task: first, to give the citizens the information they need to participate democratically; second, to supervise the exercise of power aiming to guarantee its good functioning. But I should add here a third function: the mass media allows a collective dialogue that is fundamental for a collective project. Open societies and liberal democracies consist of a space for plurality and different understandings of the good, but that pluralism must end in a process of negotiation and collective compromise. We owe this idea to James Madison: a liberal democratic system will guarantee the competition of different political interests and understandings, but the deliberative process must end with concessions of all parties in order *to compromise*. Yet compromise implies a common ground, a collective conversation, and that is the third function of the media.

In the end, all this institutional design – representation, separation of powers, intermediation – enables the mediation necessary for a liberal democratic system: these multiple structures of power take into account that the final goal is the pursuit of a rational argument and a consensual compromise, and not emotional polarization and permanent agonistic tribalization.

## 3. Postmodernity and post-truth

In the previous section, I presented a philosophical and political description of what we may call the liberal paradigm or Liberalism-with-capital-letter. As a result of modernity, the liberal paradigm became hegemonic in Western societies and established an essential set of tools that allowed the constitution of democratic societies. One of these tools was the valorization of a rational dialogue, which would permit the conciliation of pluralism and functioning regimes: the rule is that we may have different opinions, we may disagree and discuss, but in the end, we should compromise and deliberate using the majority rule. However, as I stated, this process implies the idea of factual truth: in fact, it is not possible to argue, and ultimately compromise, with someone who refuses what we perceive as the empirical reality or presents facts that do not match our sensorial experience or scientific information generally accepted. If we stop identifying facts as a common ground, there is no room for rational argumentation and compromise becomes impossible. But that was precisely the path that was taken in the 20th century, whose consequences one observes today. To understand this path, we should further our comprehension of postmodernism.

François Lyotard describes the postmodern condition as the one characterized by the end of the totalizing narratives founded in the faith in progress and

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[8] Fernandes, *Liberdade e informação*, 54.
[9] "Código de Conduta dos jornalistas do Expresso", https://expresso.pt/sobre/codigoconduta/2008-01-05-Codigo-de-Conduta-dos-jornalistas-do-Expresso-2366503d (free translation of the author).

enlightening ideals of the beginning of modernity.[10] This new condition has emerged as a consequence of the so-called Frankfurt School and the process of examining Reason-with-capital-letter. Also relevant was the influence of philosophers like Roland Barthes, and structuralism, Jacques Derrida, and deconstructionism, Herbert Marcuse, and his analysis of the unidimensional man, and Michel Foucault, and his thought on power. All these ideas unsettled the paradigm of rationality and truth as it was formulated by modernity.

Strictly speaking, the process of questioning truth and rationality began previously: in his last writings, Friedrich Nietzsche stated, against positivism, that there were no facts, only interpretations; and Sigmund Freud noted the limitations of the rational process when he affirmed that our actions were mostly motivated by unconscious mechanisms. With profound political implications, Walter Lippman, in *Public Opinion* (1922), and Edward Bernays, in *Propaganda* (1928), demonstrated how individual behaviour could be conditioned and political consent manufactured in mass society (an idea Noam Chomsky will reclaim later with Edward S. Herman, in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, 1988).

However, it was postmodernism and its obsession with language that led us to a post-truth world. The foundation of this thought can be found in the continental linguistic turn, that Charles Taylor labels the H-H-H tradition (Hamann, Herder and Humboldt), which refuses the representative function of language: words would not serve to represent reality; instead, they have a creative function of the world. In other words: considering that our relationship with nature is always mediated by language, we have no direct access to reality, therefore the world as we know it is created by the language we use to speak about it – additionally, it can be transformed if we adopt a different vocabulary or a new use of language. With this philosophical argument, postmodernism promotes a radical disruption between the human world and the natural world, by the understanding that the former prevails over the latter. This means that we are not conditioned by nature; on the contrary, language holds absolute emancipatory power in creating reality.[11]

By refusing the idea of an objective reality that exists outside the linguistic world (*the world outside*), postmodernism destroys the idea of Truth: if there's no objective reality, all descriptions of reality are possible and none of them corresponds to truth or can demand to be truer.[12] After the death of god prophesized by Nietzsche, one can find now the death of truth[13] – with the effect of losing all the objective references and adopting a relativistic attitude. Considering this mental scheme, the Foucauldian argument of power succeeds: if none of the narratives is more valid than the others, there is no reason for some of them to be presented as hegemonic – therefore, if one of them prevails over the others it must be the effect of being imposed by oppressive structures by the dominating groups of the society.

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[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *A condição pós-moderna*, trans. José Bragança de Miranda (Lisboa: Gradiva, 1985).

[11] This idea of an emancipatory language is particularly important to the radicalization of gender theories, which intend to dissolve the biological dimension of sex.

[12] Pragmatism (the only philosophical school truly American) is based on this same idea, although with different consequences. In Europe, Gianni Vattimo's idea of *pensiero debole* is a good example of this anti-foundationalism.

[13] Michico Kakutani, *The death of Truth: notes on falsehood in the age of Trump* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018).

The transformation of postmodernism in multiple critical theories[14] would identity this structure of power as the male heterosexual patriarchy, whereby the fight against oppression should mean the refusal of the values of this heteropatriarchal structure and the demand for *other truths* (in the plural form) or other forms of production of truths. This argumentation entailed a lethal assault on Science (with a capital letter), now seen as a manifestation of colonialist powers and patriarchal structures, and as such should be declined in order to allow new epistemologies.

In a way that George Orwell readers did not expect, this assault on truth and science placed Western societies in O'Brien's experience of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: there are no good reasons to deny that two plus two equals five.[15]

## 4. Welcome to the illiberal society

When Russia invaded Ukraine, on February 24th, the opinion space on the media was captured by articles trying to contextualize Putin's decision, considered irrational to Western eyes. Invariably, these studies referred to a group of illiberal thinkers, such as Ivan Ilyin, Lev Gumilev, Alexander Prokhanov and Alexandr Dugin, and the so-called Izborsky Group. What these authors have in common is the refusal of the liberal and democratic project, contemplated as inappropriate to Russian culture and history, and the vindication of national solutions to their country. Dugin, probably the most popular of these authors, has positioned himself against Western liberalism and in favour of an Eurasian identity, that would put Russia in the centre of a new civilization.[16] *Yet we can find in Vladislav Surkov the essence of the illiberal spirit when he says:* "*Knowledge only gives knowledge, but uncertainty gives hope.*"[17] The resemblance with the postmodernism assault on truth and knowledge is not a coincidence.

Accordingly, Putin has affirmed the obsolescence of liberalism[18] and his decision was probably the result of his evaluation of the current fragility of the West. And considering the reasons outlined, we should recognize that his decision seems less irrational than it would at first glance. In fact, the strength of a society results from its capacity to believe in common values and to have a common project (is due to this fact that its members, in case of necessity, would give their life for it). Contrastively, the confidence in Western identity and project has never been so fragile.

The first reason for this fragility results from the technological project that created a digital world. Unequivocally, the digital revolution contributed with many benefits in several social domains; however, it produced harmful implications concerning the media – especially considering, as we have seen, its fundamental role in liberal democracies. Firstly, I should notice the impact of the free access to information promoted by the digital world: the newspapers were already confronting

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[14] See Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: how activist scholarship made everything about trace, gender, and identity – and why this harms everybody* (Durham: Pitchstone, 2020).

[15] George Orwell, *Mil novecentos e oitenta e quatro*, trans. Ana Luísa Faria (Lisboa: Antígona, 2004).

[16] Mark Sedgwick, ed., *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: behind the new threat to liberal democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[17] *Apud* Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018), 160.

[18] See Financial Times, "Vladimir Putin says liberalism has 'become obsolete'", June 28, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/670039ec-98f3-11e9-9573-ee5cbb98ed36.

a severe economic crisis, as a result of the neoliberal politics of the last five decades, and the transition to a digital world of (apparent) free news only aggravated this problem. Subsequently, its economic vulnerability diminished the quality and the capacity to accomplish its function, whereby the trust in this institution has been decreasing continuously in the last years. Secondly, the digital world facilitated the proliferation of digital media, and that multiplication caused a process of social division. As we have seen, the traditional mass media enabled a common social dialogue: most people would follow the same news, be acquainted with the same problems, and argue about the same challenges. However, the proliferation of those sources created several different niches that aggregate portions of the population in confined narratives – and these confined narratives prevent a common social dialogue and hamper the existence of a common project.

Therefore, and against what the most charitable souls would expect, digital technology did not improve democracy – instead, it has polarized western societies insofar as each person is put in his or her narrow social bubble. On social media, this aspect is particularly evident with the functioning of the algorithm, which keeps us captive of information that only confirms our previous intuitions. In fact, the algorithm seems to reproduce our brain functioning: as Jonathan Haidt explains in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion,* human beings tend to believe in information that reinforces their previous ideas or intuitions and discredit information that refuses those ideas.[19] Furthermore, digital technology has permitted an abusive situation of new consent productions, as became evident with the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Finally, technological progress has produced the discredit of factual truth with the development of deepfake tools, that render it difficult to distinguish true from manipulated information. If once one could reliably affirm "there are images of those war crimes", now images and videos can be artificially made to create new realities.

The second reason for our democracies' vulnerability has resulted from the leftwing identity turn, that emerged in the United States in the 1960s and was expanded by postmodernism and the subsequent critical theories. This identity turn enforced identity politics and culture and inflamed an identity reaction from the radical right (in the United States, especially associated with the expression *alt-right*), causing the present moment of culture wars. What makes this identity turn a vivid assault on liberal democracies is the fact that different opinions (i.e., pluralism) are seen in this perspective as a threat to our existence: the one that thinks differently is not a political adversary, but an enemy. Alas, this vision hinders the possibility of compromise: we cannot compromise our existence; therefore, the enemy becomes a target that must be eliminated, not someone with whom we should negotiate (the essence of liberal democracy). Digital bubbles only aggravate this problem insofar as they enhance group reinforcement – the consequence being extreme polarization and tribalization in those societies where identity politics had most advanced.

Furthermore, one of the consequences of this identity turn has been the substitution of factual truth with moral values, replacing rational discourse with an emotional discourse. In the United States, the better example of this manifestation was given by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: in an interview for *60 minutes*, Ocasio-Cortez was confronted with factual errors in recent declarations, to which she replied: "*If*

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[19] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012).

*people want to really blow up one figure here, or one word there, I would argue that they're missing the forest for the trees. There's a lot of people more concerned about being precisely, factually, and semantically correct than about being morally right.*"[20] considering this, we must recognize that when Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to President Donald Trump, appealed to "alternative facts" to contradict the number of people that were presented in Trump's inauguration as President, she wasn't creating this idea *ex nihilo*: the basis for a post-truth culture was already there.

Thirdly, we should consider the process of erosion of trust in the political institutions in the last decades. There are many reasons for this process and a complete explanation falls far beyond the scope of this work – however, I want to briefly address the emergence of populist movements in the 2010s and the related emergence of a culture of disinformation. The process of erosion of political trust has been under the eye of political scientists since the rising of the electoral abstention rate in the last decades of the 20th century, signalled as a growing gap between representatives and represented. Yet this process of distrust had its peak with the economic and financial crisis that began in the United States in 2007/8. This crisis resulted in a rising of several populist movements, left and rightwing, fed by the lack of credibility of the system. And even though most of these populist movements didn't win elections, they signalled a general sentiment of distrust that facilitates the disinformation phenomenon. Academics dwell now on the topic of fake news, misinformation, or conspiracy theories, that are widespread in social media.[21] The problem is aggravated by strategies of expression limitation, that only fuels the sentiment of failure of the political system – that tries to silence people instead of solving their problems. During the pandemic crisis, this feature was particularly clear: the citizens who tried to scrutinize political decisions adopted by their governments (most of them under the clause of state of exception) were accused of being negationists and subject to a process of silencing and delegitimating – and the consequence was to throw those people to conspirative explanations, enhancing the spiral of misinformation.[22]

The reasons outlined place the West facing the Athenian dilemma during the Peloponnesian war: is there a future for democracy?

## 5. Plato's lesson

After a period of democratic splendour known as the century of Pericles, Athens began a war with Sparta that led to the end of its hegemony. Pericles' eulogy in the first year of the war, immortalized by Thucydides, can be read as the swan song: the praise to the democratic Athens was the beginning of the democratic decadence.

Although Socrates, the Greek, had already held severe caveats at the democratic functioning, the key assault on democracy was presented by Plato, giving birth to

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[20] As of January, 2019, *60 Minutes* posted on *Twitter* a snippet of an interview with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, responding to criticism that she's made factual errors. https://twitter.com/60minutes/status/1082068489597267968.

[21] See Michael Butter, *A natureza das teorias da conspiração*, trans. N. Faustino (Porto Salvo: Desassossego, 2022).

[22] In Portugal, this problem was addressed by a polemic regulation: the Charter on Human Rights in the Digital Era, that predicts a censorship mechanism formulated in a language very similar to the one used during *Estado Novo*.

the Western philosophical tradition: antithetical to *doxa*, philosophy consists in the search for Truth-with-capital-letter, the truth that imposes itself beyond our will and it is only accessible to philosophers. In his major political work *Republic*,[23] Plato uses the metaphor of the ship to argue that the government of a city should not be in the hand of the majority: if everyone wants to sail the ship without having the proper knowledge, the city will be condemned to fail its destination. The same applies to the government of the city – from which he concludes: if philosophers have a deeper knowledge of Truth and Reality than the rest of the citizens, they should be the ones to govern. This is the famous argument of the king philosopher: the king should be a philosopher, or the philosopher should be the king. As Hannah Arendt says in an essay dedicated to Socrates, "*it is in this situation that Plato designated his tyranny of truth, in which it is not what is temporally good, of which men can be persuaded, but eternal truth, of which men cannot be persuaded, that is to rule the city*".[24]

This criticism of democratic Athenian society, where the rhetoric used by sophists resulted in multiple truths, appealed to a Truth that asserts itself above opinions and cannot be an object of persuasion, only acceptance. For Plato, a city that doesn't value Truth and promotes several truths exercises its power with violence and paces into chaos. Accordingly, the form of power that follows democracy is tyranny – it is the only solution to recover order and peace.

History and philosophy show that democracies tend to devalue Truth and promote several truths.[25] This is a result of its nature – but when that happens, the process of decline has already started. Taking this lesson into consideration and the features of Western societies today, we can only ask ourselves: are we condemned to the appeal of authoritarianism and father figures?[26]

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[23] Platão, *A República*, trans. M. H. R. Pereira (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001).

[24] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005).

[25] See Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters* (Oxford: OUP, 2017).

[26] See Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: the seductive lure of the authoritarianism* (New York: Doubleday, 2020).