

# Organized Lying and the Restoration of the Common World: Arendt on Propaganda in Cuba and Nicaragua

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**Abstract**— This article examines the relationship between organized lying, disinformation, and authoritarianism through Hannah Arendt’s political thought, focusing on the contemporary cases of Cuba and Nicaragua. Drawing on Arendt’s reflections on factual truth and organized lying, it analyzes how propaganda and disinformation operate as mechanisms for shaping appearances, neutralizing political plurality, and legitimizing authoritarian rule. The article explores the Cuban 11J protests and Nicaragua’s 2018 uprising as moments that exposed the gap between official narratives and social reality, prompting intensified campaigns of repression and information control. It also examines the contemporary use of anti-imperialist rhetoric as a strategy for sustaining political legitimacy despite growing external dependencies. The article argues that the combination of propaganda, censorship, and disinformation contributes to the erosion of the common world, the shared space in which facts can be discussed and subjected to political judgment.

**Keywords**— Hannah Arendt; organized lying; disinformation; propaganda; Cuba; Nicaragua; and authoritarianism.

## To Begin: Theoretical Considerations on Lying in Politics

*“The Sophist does not merely argue; he teaches others to argue as he does, and about all things. Anyone might believe that he possesses universal knowledge, but his knowledge is only apparent; instead of truth he presents only images of it, and the art he practices belongs to the great art of imitation”.*

— *Plato, Sophist*

Within Hannah Arendt’s vast intellectual oeuvre, the texts that explore the complex, and at times frankly uncomfortable, relationship between truth and politics may appear, perhaps, as secondary contributions. Yet among them, two essays of a more journalistic nature undoubtedly stand out, “Truth and Politics” and “Lying in Politics”. Both have been published together on various occasions, likely because of the obvious affinity of their subject matter and the provocative character of their diagnosis. Although they are rooted in specific events of their time, such as Daniel Ellsberg’s leak of the Pentagon Papers and the resulting crisis of credibility faced by the U.S. government, these texts ultimately point, as is often the case in Arendt’s work, to broader and more structural concerns

regarding the nature of politics as an eminently human activity of appearing in the world.

The reflections presented below are framed within what Arendt (2020) referred to as exercises in political thought, whose defining characteristic is taking as their point of departure political incidents that we have experienced, with the sole purpose of exercising thought. For this reason, we do not intend to offer definitive or conclusive answers. Rather, the objective of this section is to reflect upon and understand the political implications that emerge from drawing a parallel between Arendt’s notion of organized lying (Arendt, 2020, 2023a) and the way Rid (2021) describes and characterizes the phenomenon of disinformation, noting that although it is not new, our generation has experienced its existence in what he terms the “age of organized professional deception”. Seeking to highlight the genuinely political nature of Hannah Arendt’s thought, we will later also turn to her reflections on judgment as a means of finding a way out of the problem under consideration.

At first glance, Arendt’s essays may be read as specific interventions concerning the excesses of an administration trapped within the tensions of the Cold War. Yet Arendt identifies in them a phenomenon of much greater scope, the structural fragility of factual truth in the face of the interests of those who hold power, and the modern tendency, intensified by the scale assumed by bureaucratic apparatuses and communication technologies, to replace facts with strategically designed narratives. Lying ceases to be an anomaly and becomes a political technique; and the public realm, that space where action and speech are intertwined, becomes contaminated by fictions aspiring to occupy the place of reality.

The distinctive feature of Arendt’s analysis of lying lies precisely in her refusal to dissolve it into a purely logical problem or reduce it to a moral denunciation. Instead, she roots it in an ontological dimension. In other words, she is concerned with what happens when broad sectors of the population are exposed, through propaganda, pressure, or even terror, to political viewpoints that they must accept as true because, in extreme contexts, their survival and very existence depend upon it (Arendt, 2020).

A historical survey reveals that deception, lying, and falsehood have not entered politics accidentally or arbitrarily; rather, they have been employed as legitimate means for achieving political ends. It is therefore unsurprising that sincerity is not traditionally counted among political virtues and that lying has long occupied a place within political treatises as a justifiable instrument (Arendt, 2023a). Despite this, philosophical and political thought had devoted relatively little attention to its meaning and implications.

In “Truth and Politics”, Arendt argues that there are two kinds of truth, rational truth, characteristic of mathematics, philosophy, and certain religious traditions; and factual truth, which concerns events that occurred in the world and whose existence depends, inevitably, on testimony, documents, memory, and institutional preservation. The former is immune to political falsification, no government can repeal a theorem or alter the principle of non-contradiction. The latter, by contrast, is profoundly vulnerable, it could have been otherwise, its traces may be destroyed, its records manipulated, and its memory eroded.

Hannah Arendt (2023a) approaches this phenomenon through Leibniz’s distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact. In the former, reasoning is necessary and its opposite is impossible, mathematical, scientific, and philosophical truths being prime examples. Truths of fact, by contrast, are contingent and their opposite remains possible; among their defining characteristics is their vulnerability, since they always refer to acts and events arising from human beings who live and act together (Arendt, 2020). Our attention will focus on truths of fact because of their genuinely political character, they always depend upon relations among individuals and are therefore susceptible to distortion and partisan manipulation by political actors and authorities who dominate the public sphere.

Because factual truths concern events and circumstances, they give rise to opinions inspired by passions and interests. Since not all aspects of human affairs can be directly witnessed by those who seek knowledge about them, such truths depend upon the statements of witnesses, records, documents, and monuments, all of which may or may not be believed (Arendt, 2023a). Consequently, the opposite of factual truth is neither error nor illusion, but deliberate falsehood or organized lying, which relies on rhetorical stratagems and propaganda and, at times, even resorts to the systematic use of terror in order to alter the way a population thinks and acts, at the cost of sacrificing evident facts (Arendt, 2020).

This vulnerability helps explain why factual truth becomes the preferred target of political lying. Arendt emphasizes that wherever politics is confronted with inconvenient facts, the temptation arises not merely to conceal them but to redefine

or replace them. It is here that she introduces a central idea in her reflections on this problem, the distinction between traditional lying and modern organized lying. The former, characteristic of older diplomatic practices, is episodic, limited, and recognizable. The latter, typical of mass societies and highly bureaucratized states, is technical, expansive, and systematic.

Modern lying no longer consists in denying a particular fact; rather, it involves fabricating complete and coherent versions of reality capable of competing with the facts themselves. Hence Arendt describes the emergence of a form of political fiction that no longer seeks merely to embellish information but aspires to replace the common world with a carefully constructed narrative. It is a parallel world, built through speeches, memoranda, manipulated statistics, and official statements, which ultimately imposes itself as the dominant horizon of meaning.

In “Lying in Politics”, this diagnosis acquires historical concreteness. The publication of the Pentagon Papers revealed not only that several administrations had lied to the American public, but also that the very bureaucracy responsible for designing strategy in Vietnam operated under a regime of institutional self-deception. Reports were written to confirm preexisting assumptions; intelligence data were filtered or rewritten to fit political objectives; failures were reinterpreted as successes; contradictions became signs of complexity. The result was that political decision-makers could no longer distinguish between their internal narrative and realities on the ground.

Arendt identifies here a troubling phenomenon, when lying becomes systematic, it ceases to be directed solely at citizens and begins to operate inwardly within the state apparatus itself, distorting its relationship with reality. This form of self-deception is more dangerous than public deception because it prevents those who wield power from receiving truthful information. Without access to facts, no political action, however virtuous it may claim to be, can be properly oriented.

Politics, stripped of its relationship to reality, retreats into appearance. This is another fundamental aspect of Arendt’s thought, appearance is not an accidental element of politics. Every action must be displayed, must appear before others, must be seen. Yet when appearance emancipates itself from facts, when symbolic prestige becomes an end in itself, politics runs the risk of sacrificing factual truth in order to preserve a convenient image. The American case in Vietnam illustrates this with particular clarity. Arendt argues that much of the military strategy was shaped not by realistic prospects of success, but by the need to maintain the appearance of superpower status, a geopolitical role whose loss was perceived as unacceptable. Appearance, that delicate form of symbolic capital, became

a reason of state, even when the facts demonstrated that the war had already been lost. Thus, lying served not merely to conceal mistakes; it functioned to sustain an image before the world and, crucially, before themselves.

It is precisely here that Arendt introduces a decisive warning, factual truth faces enormous difficulties in prevailing over appearance when the latter is supported by power, bureaucracy, and political necessity. Facts possess no coercive instruments; they cannot impose themselves on their own. They require institutions, witnesses, memories, and a public sphere capable of sustaining them. Organized lying, by contrast, can mobilize normative, media, and symbolic resources to make itself appear credible. In a world saturated with appearances, truth becomes a fragile guest.

### **Disinformation as a Contemporary Technique for the Production of Appearances**

Although Arendt could hardly have anticipated the full dimensions of the digital revolution or the profound transformation of the global communications ecosystem, her theoretical framework provides a precise basis for understanding the contemporary phenomenon of disinformation. Far from being an improvised or chaotic phenomenon, disinformation, particularly when promoted by states, political elites, or geopolitical actors, constitutes a technique for intervening in public perception. In many respects, it represents a technological refinement of the modern form of lying that Arendt described.

According to scholars such as Thomas Rid (2021), disinformation shares three fundamental characteristics with Arendtian political lying:

- 1) It is organized.
- 2) It is systematic.
- 3) It seeks to intervene in the relationship between citizens and reality.

At the same time, it incorporates new elements, algorithmic automation, audience segmentation, the speed of circulation, and the capacity to produce hyperrealistic appearances through manipulated images, altered videos, or narratives tailored to specific behavioral profiles. Its objective is not to advance a single lie or impose an absolute narrative. Rather, it aims to erode the factual horizon itself, creating an environment in which no claim appears fully verifiable. Doubt becomes a permanent condition, leaving citizens trapped among multiple contradictory versions of reality and unable to distinguish truth from falsehood. This shift corresponds precisely to Arendt's central concern, the issue is not the erasure of a particular

fact but the hollowing out of the very notion of shared factual reality.

In recent years, we have witnessed how different political regimes, both democratic and authoritarian, have experimented with, deployed, and institutionalized sophisticated methods of disinformation with the "objective [of] creating division by placing emotion above analysis, division above unity, conflict above consensus, and the particular above the universal" (Rid, 2021, p. 44). Those responsible for implementing such strategies are the "professional liars" or disinformation specialists, who operate within genuine bureaucratic machinery dedicated to altering perceptions of reality, especially during periods of heightened political tension, most notably electoral campaigns and episodes of social mobilization, because these moments provide fertile ground for shaping sensitivities and redirecting interests (Waisbord, 2025).

To launch disinformation campaigns, these "professional liars" identify the vulnerabilities of societies, locating political fractures, tensions, and fault lines through the recognition of historical traumas or existing grievances that can later be mobilized. Because facts are no longer the basis of agreement but the source of conflict, emotions and opinions are mobilized in order to influence what others think, say, and do (Rid, 2021). What is decisive, then, is understanding disinformation as a technique for the production of appearances, rather than directly contesting a fact, its purpose is to saturate the public sphere with alternative versions, entangle interpretive frameworks, and render truth and falsehood interchangeable within everyday experience.

In our region, the phenomenon of disinformation has proven particularly complex because modern and highly technical forms coexist with traditional media such as radio and television. Since at least 2010, broad sectors of the population have incorporated new technologies and internet culture into their daily lives as a means of participating in public debate and social interaction.

To this we must add the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and social media algorithms that foster distorted perceptions of reality, stimulate emotions such as anger and fear, and contribute to the radicalization of those who spend increasing amounts of time connected to these platforms. The result has been a transformation of the arenas in which public debates unfold. In many contexts, discussion within legislative chambers, newspaper columns, or radio and television programs appears to matter less than content published in digital spaces, where individuals often operate behind diffuse identities and responsibility for what is said becomes diluted (Applebaum, 2023).

Because the spread of falsehoods is not a spontaneous occurrence but the methodical product of large bureaucratic structures, those who orchestrate such efforts frequently share a common profile, they have been recruited from universities and think tanks, belong to political cadres, or occupy influential positions within cultural sectors. From this vantage point, their inability to engage in self-examination becomes evident. They often regard themselves with pride as rational actors, above sentimentality, and deeply committed to theory and intellectual abstraction.

For many professional problem-solvers, the ultimate ambition is to discover formulas capable of unifying diverse phenomena. Consequently, they are strongly attracted to theories that allow them to generate laws capable of explaining and predicting political and historical events as if these unfolded according to necessity (Arendt, 2023a). Under such circumstances, it is not unreasonable to point to the relationship between the rise of disinformation specialists, recast as political entrepreneurs and propagandists, and the growth of xenophobic, racist, and hate-filled discourses, which are sometimes accompanied by acts of violence. The result is increasingly polarized citizens, unwilling to listen to voices beyond those of their own reference groups, along with a weakening of intersubjective ties and a diminished capacity to engage with those who think differently.

Within the contemporary digital ecosystem, appearance, already central to Arendt's theory, acquires an expansive new power. It is not merely produced strategically; it is reproduced automatically. It does not simply generate a convenient image; it disseminates that image in real time, tailored to the biases of each audience, capable of obscuring sources, attributing authority to false actors, and inserting narratives into cognitive bubbles where they are unlikely to be challenged. Truth, in this context, faces even greater obstacles. It no longer competes solely with state narratives or official discourse, but with a transnational web of content specifically designed to simulate authenticity. Factual truth, which for Arendt depended in part upon robust institutions, now also depends upon algorithmic transparency, the critical resilience of citizens, and the capacity of media organizations to avoid becoming unwitting amplifiers of manipulation campaigns.

Faced with this troubling and increasingly complex landscape, one may ask, how have we arrived at this point? Is there anything in Arendt's work that can help us understand and explain this political trajectory? We believe the answer is yes. Among the broad conceptual repertoire of her thought, the notion of a sense of reality is particularly useful for understanding how human beings can simultaneously possess the capacity to alter facts and the faculties required to resist deception. This sense of reality emerges from a threefold affinity, the five senses share a common object; members of a

community inhabit a common context that provides meaning to particular objects; and sentient beings, despite perceiving the same object from different perspectives, nevertheless agree regarding its identity (Arendt, 2023a). This shared experience, together with judgment, constitutes the condition of possibility that allows us to confront deception and falsehood.

This observation aligns perfectly with the condition that makes disinformation effective, in order to function successfully, it must respond, at least partially, to reality or to viewpoints already accepted within a given society (Rid, 2021). To the extent that the common world, that space in which facts can be shared and debated, is eroded, organized lying and systematic disinformation find fertile ground in which to operate, whether in democracies or authoritarian regimes. In contexts where the state controls the media, legislates the flow of information, and deploys propaganda apparatuses to replace facts with narratives, as we shall see in the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua, this technique of producing appearances becomes a central instrument of governance and a decisive mechanism for the destruction of the common world.

### **Cuba and Nicaragua: Post- Revolutionary Rhetoric and the Administration of Falsehood**

The (post-)revolutionary rhetoric of the now closed autocracies of Cuba and Nicaragua provides a useful mechanism for the construction of appearances and the systematic violation of truth, both internally, as a means of political control and discipline, and externally, as an instrument of international projection. Although the regimes that emerged respectively from the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the 1979 Sandinista Revolution originally equipped themselves with a discursive arsenal consistent with the historical context, particularly the anti-imperialist rhetoric directed against U.S.-backed governments during the Cold War, that same repertoire now appears deeply exhausted and, above all, radically detached from reality.

What once aspired to be a language of emancipation has ultimately become a device of appearance, repeated with the inertia of a formula that no longer corresponds to the facts. Anti-imperialism, once conceived as a form of resistance to foreign intervention, now functions as a resource for neutralizing domestic dissent, discrediting civic movements, and justifying systematic practices of repression. In this transformation, rhetoric ceases to serve as an instrument of political articulation and instead assumes the role of a veil, an ideological alibi that conceals institutional hollowing and the absolute concentration of power.

At the same time, this discursive register, despite its age, retains utility beyond national borders. Cuba and Nicaragua

employ it to present themselves internationally as part of a “resistant” bloc capable of symbolically challenging the liberal international order, while simultaneously deepening ties with authoritarian partners that provide diplomatic support, financing, and media platforms through which their narratives can be amplified. In this sense, post-revolutionary rhetoric functions as an ideological interface that facilitates the integration of both autocracies into transnational networks of propaganda and disinformation, networks more concerned with sustaining political images than with confronting facts.

Indeed, the anti-imperialism proclaimed by these ruling elites today is directed toward preserving appearances and justifying the continuity of aging dictatorships, rather than defending national sovereignty or popular will, concepts that, in practice, have been dismantled through decades of repression, censorship, and comprehensive control over the public sphere. What remains is not the original political project but its rhetorical echo, a carefully preserved narrative because it enables the administration of falsehood, endows it with symbolic coherence, and circulates it as a source of legitimacy before both domestic and international audiences. As the following sections will demonstrate, this transformation of post-revolutionary discourse constitutes one of the keys to understanding the relationship among propaganda, appearance, and truth within the contemporary authoritarian ecosystem.

### ***Plurality as a Threat: Cuba’s 11J Protests and Nicaragua’s Totalitarian Drift***

The July 11 (11J) protests in Cuba and the 2018 social uprising in Nicaragua reveal, perhaps more clearly than any other recent events, the extent to which plurality, that basic condition of politics, composed of multiple voices, divergent demands, and the simultaneous appearance of many actors in the public sphere, has become an existential threat to the post-revolutionary autocracies of Havana and Managua.

In both cases, what initially emerged as specific grievances, blackouts, shortages, unpopular reforms, and economic deterioration—evolved into a collective act that shattered the barrier of fear and made visible something that had been accumulating beneath the surface for years, the complete disconnect between official narratives and the lived reality of ordinary citizens. It was precisely this rupture, this moment in which society revealed itself to itself, that activated a machinery which, in both regimes, operates with remarkable symmetry, accelerated repression, mass arrests, intensified surveillance, and a communicative operation that, in line with what Arendt identified more than half a century ago, seeks to replace facts with an appearance more palatable to those in power.

In July 2021, Cuba witnessed an unprecedented scene. Entire towns and cities filled with people who, without formal organization or identifiable leadership, took to the streets chanting “freedom”. It was a spontaneous eruption, but also confirmation that the post-revolutionary order had reached a point of no return. The regime responded not only with mass detentions, many arbitrary, others designed to interrupt the flow of information about ongoing events, but also with a carefully crafted narrative intended to depoliticize what was, above all, a civic act. Protesters were labeled “mercenaries”, “criminals”, and “counterrevolutionaries financed from abroad”, and the 11J protests ceased to be, in official propaganda, a genuine social uprising and instead became an episode allegedly manufactured by foreign powers (Gobierno y Análisis Político, 2022).

This discursive operation did not seek to erase the event itself, it would have been impossible to deny that tens of thousands of people had taken to the streets, but rather to deny its meaning. Where there had been civic demands, the regime inserted the idea of conspiracy; where there had been accumulated discontent, it introduced the figure of an external enemy; where there had been plurality, it substituted an artifice. As Arendt observed, when political authorities attempt to reorganize the meaning of events in order to preserve their image, factual truth is relegated to the margins, it becomes irrelevant, almost an inconvenience. What matters above all is restoring the appearance of stability, even when the country is experiencing its largest mobilization in decades.

At the normative level, Cuba strengthened an already restrictive framework aimed at controlling information. Although no independent “fake news” law exists, in 2021 the government implemented Decree-Law 35 together with Resolutions 104 and 105 of the Ministry of Communications, which classify the “dissemination of false news”, “social subversion”, and “damage to the country’s prestige” as cybersecurity incidents (Lima, 2021). In practice, this legal architecture functions as a mechanism of silencing, it does not combat falsehood but rather the circulation of unauthorized versions of reality. Following the 11J protests, these regulations became a perfect complement to state propaganda, digital dissent transformed into a criminal offense; informational plurality redefined as a threat.

In Nicaragua, the sequence is similar, although more rapid and direct. The protests of April 2018, initially triggered by reforms to the social security system, became within hours a direct challenge to the government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo. The state apparatus responded with bullets, arrests, extrajudicial executions, and a level of repression so systematic that international organizations ultimately classified it as a crime against humanity. Yet beyond physical violence, the regime also constructed a narrative designed to strip the protests of their civic character. According to the government,

what had occurred was not a social uprising but a “failed coup d’état”, a conspiracy financed by the United States, and a “terrorist operation” orchestrated by young people, students, and activists who, overnight and according to the official version, had become agents of destabilization (Lacombe, 2020; Álvarez, 2018).

The coup narrative served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it justified repression as an act of national defense, if the events constituted an attempted overthrow, then the government was not repressing citizens but rather “defending peace”. On the other hand, it eliminated any trace of plurality, if all protesters are terrorists, then none can represent legitimate grievances; if the entire opposition is portrayed as a foreign agent, then the very concept of critical citizenship is rendered void. Since then, the erosion of rights has been constant, media outlets have been closed, NGOs expelled, citizenship revoked, private property confiscated, universities intervened, opposition leaders imprisoned or forced into exile, and finally, in 2025, a constitutional reform formally consolidated the absolute concentration of power, transforming authoritarian drift into an institutionalized model of governance.

It is from this gap, between the real country and the country the regime needs to project, that the appeal to organized lying emerges, now transformed into a fully institutionalized apparatus of disinformation. In Nicaragua, the Special Cybercrimes Law functions as the central mechanism of this system, it allows the government to declare any independent account of events illegal, to classify citizen reporting as “fake news”, and, conversely, to grant official statements the status of legal truth. Its purpose is not to combat falsehood but to discipline perceptions and shield the official narrative, ensuring that any divergence can be criminalized with minimal resistance. In this way, the regime possesses legal instruments to repress perceptions as much as bodies, progressively erasing the very conditions of plurality that the 2018 protests had exposed so clearly.

In both countries, the protests constituted moments of appearance, instances in which citizens, outside party structures and institutional mediations, entered the public sphere to present their own truth. This act shattered an indispensable component of authoritarian rule, the appearance of unanimity. For regimes that depend upon a post-revolutionary repertoire, a narrative that presents itself as eternal, heroic, anti-imperialist, and morally irreproachable, plurality does not merely challenge the story; it exposes it. For this reason, discontent cannot be acknowledged as such. To recognize it would be to admit the failure of a political project that claims uninterrupted continuity for more than half a century.

Plurality thus becomes noise that must be eliminated. Organized lying, today transformed into systematic disinformation, emerges as the preferred technique for accomplishing this task. The objective is not simply to deny facts, but to populate the public sphere with alternative versions, saturating communications with narratives designed to confuse or erode the meaning of what has occurred. Thus, in the official account, the 11J protests cease to be a popular uprising and become a political experiment orchestrated from Miami; the Nicaraguan protests cease to be civic demands and become terrorist operations. Lying is no longer an ethical failing, it is an instrument of political survival.

What is ultimately at stake in Cuba and Nicaragua is not merely the repression of protest, but the destruction of the common world, that shared space in which facts can be discussed and debated. State violence suppresses protest; propaganda suppresses its meaning. And without facts, without the factual foundation that Arendt regarded as indispensable, there can be no judgment; without judgment, there can be no politics. Faced with these eruptions of reality, post-revolutionary power responds only by intensifying control and deepening falsehood. For these regimes, plurality is not the essence of politics; it is its negation.

### *Anti-Imperialism and Appearance*

If organized lying operates internally to neutralize plurality and strip events of their meaning, as seen in Cuba’s 11J protests and Nicaragua’s 2018 uprising, it performs an equally important function externally, producing an international image consistent with the role these autocracies believe they occupy in the global arena. Cuba and Nicaragua present themselves as bastions of sovereignty in a hemisphere supposedly captured by U.S. interference; as heirs to an anti-imperialist tradition that has resisted Washington’s pressures for decades. In practice, however, this rhetoric functions less as a political program than as a device of appearance, carefully preserved to sustain a self-image of national dignity that, when confronted with the facts, proves deeply eroded.

Arendt famously warned that when politics detaches itself from the world and turns toward image-making, “the objective is no longer to avoid a humiliating defeat but to find ways to avoid admitting it and to save face” (Arendt, 2023a, p. 21). Something similar has occurred in the Latin American context, anti-imperialist rhetoric no longer reflects a genuine commitment to sovereignty but rather a performance whose purpose is to sustain the revolutionary narrative even when, and precisely because, the facts contradict its claims. Anti-imperialism has become a script repeatedly performed before

domestic and international audiences, closer to theatrical staging than to a project of national self-determination.

What recent developments in Cuba and Nicaragua reveal is that this narrative of “unbreakable sovereignty” coexists with increasingly deep forms of strategic dependence on non-Western powers. In Cuba, multiple studies have documented the presence or expansion of intelligence facilities operating with Russian and Chinese support, including electronic interception capabilities, that are difficult to reconcile with a discourse centered on absolute territorial control or strict vigilance against foreign interference (Funairole et al., 2024).

In Nicaragua, the situation is even more transparent, mining concessions granted to Chinese companies in ecological reserves, special economic zones designed to integrate into the logic of the Belt and Road Initiative, and recent episodes of large-scale expropriation, particularly in border regions, intended to facilitate megaprojects involving extra-regional actors (Oliveras, 2025; Selser, 2025). None of these decisions align with the regime’s insistence on defending national sovereignty. Rather, they point to a pragmatic adaptation to new forms of geopolitical dependence, disguised under the label of selective anti-imperialism.

At this level, appearance does not merely replace reality, it deliberately distorts it. What is presented as “historic resistance to empire” is, in practice, an anti-American discourse that coexists without internal contradiction, at least from the regime’s perspective, with the transfer of critical portions of sovereignty to China and Russia. Far from promoting Latin American autonomy, anti-imperialist rhetoric has become an instrument for justifying asymmetric partnerships that compromise national decision-making capacity in sensitive areas such as security, natural resource extraction, and digital governance.

The Cuban case illustrates this disjuncture with particular clarity. The U.S. embargo, transformed into a totalizing explanation for all hardship, functions as the regime’s grand narrative of appearance, a story that seeks to condense the origins of a multifaceted crisis into a single external actor. Yet that crisis is also the result of the exhaustion of the state-centered economic model, the absence of meaningful reforms, and the inability of the ruling elite to provide basic goods and services to the population. As numerous recent analyses have shown, the Cuban economy suffers from structural distortions that predate and exist independently of sanctions, while its energy crisis, chronic inflation, and productive collapse cannot be explained solely by the embargo (Angel Baquero, 2025). Nevertheless, on the international stage the regime continues to cultivate an appearance of permanent victimhood, replacing factual discussion with an epic narrative in which the revolution

heroically resists all adversity, even when events such as Hurricane Melissa, the seemingly endless electricity crisis, or student protests against rising internet prices suggest otherwise.

This mechanism, the systematic substitution of reality with narrative, also carries regional consequences. Official Cuban and Nicaraguan anti-imperialism has historically contributed to political polarization in Latin America, undermining efforts at regional coordination and complicating the construction of a shared inter-American world grounded in common facts and diagnoses, as Ricardo Lagos, Jorge G. Castañeda, and Aguilar Camín (2022) have persuasively argued. It is therefore no coincidence that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), conceived as a hemisphere-wide trade liberalization project, collapsed at the 2005 Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, where technical debate was displaced by an anti-American spectacle that governments such as those of Venezuela, Cuba, and Argentina successfully exploited for political gain.

During the following decade, this same logic became institutionalized through mechanisms such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), whose emphasis lay not in economic or regulatory integration but in ideological affirmation and the construction of an alternative geopolitical narrative. Even the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), created deliberately without the participation of the United States and Canada and presented as a “sovereign” alternative to the Organization of American States (OAS), has, on numerous occasions, prioritized symbolic declarations and rhetorical alignments over effective cooperation, turning distance from the OAS into a political gesture rather than an instrument for strengthening regional governance.

The contrast with now-defunct mechanisms such as the Rio Group is striking. For years, the latter managed to transcend the left-right divide and create spaces for political coordination in which democracy and the peaceful resolution of conflicts functioned as shared minimum principles rather than bargaining chips. The cost of the rhetorical turn has been considerable, instead of fostering a serious debate about autonomy and development, much of regional politics has oscillated between discursive isolation and silent dependence on extra-regional powers.

Thus, revolutionary anti-imperialism now operates as a distorting mirror, it proclaims sovereignty while producing subordination; it invokes national dignity while concealing strategic concessions that are difficult to justify in light of the principle of “self-determination of peoples”. In Arendtian terms, appearance ceases to be a necessary vehicle of politics and becomes its substitute. And in that substitution, when image carries greater weight than facts, the destruction of the common

world is completed, both within the borders of these autocracies and across the shared political space of the Americas.

## The Faculty of Judgment: Restoring the Common World

If organized lying, and its contemporary variants of propaganda and state-sponsored disinformation, erodes the common world and suppresses plurality, it is worth asking what capacities remain available to resist such degradation. In the preceding discussion, where Cuba and Nicaragua illustrated the extent to which appearance can replace facts and sovereignist rhetoric can distort reality, Arendt's later work offers a possible path forward, the faculty of judgment. This is neither an institutional solution nor a political program, but rather a human capacity for reconstructing shared reality wherever power has attempted to dissolve it. For this reason, this final section turns to Arendt's posthumous writings, where judgment emerges as the deepest counterpoint to organized lying.

Among the details that came to light following Hannah Arendt's untimely death, Ronald Beiner recounts that a sheet of paper was found in her typewriter bearing the title "Judging", accompanied by two epigraphs, one from Cato and the other from Plato. *The Life of the Mind*, the work she was preparing and left unfinished, no longer had political theory as its direct object, but rather what she called transpolitical matters (Jonas, 2018). What did Arendt mean by such transpolitical concerns? Nothing less than the triad of thinking, willing, and judging.

In this section, we seek to explain why we consider Hannah Arendt's thought to be genuinely political. Once the problem of lying in politics has been described and analyzed, judgment appears as the faculty that allows us to respond to what otherwise seems an aporia. If political thought is characterized by identifying a problem and moving beyond mere denunciation toward a possible response, Arendt's work can rightly be understood as authentically political. One example is the distinction she tirelessly emphasized between the political and the social, granting greater autonomy and prestige to the former.

If there was one certainty in Arendt's life, it was her desire to devote herself to philosophy. It is said that during her youth, while browsing her family's library, she discovered a text by Immanuel Kant. From that moment, she became convinced that if she did not study philosophy, she might as well throw herself into a well. There is no doubt about the profound influence the philosopher of Königsberg exerted upon her. Arendt referred to him as "the secret king of contemporary philosophy" (Arendt, 2018) and as the "distinguished representative of critical thought" who was capable of destroying everything. Motivated by the search for Kant's unwritten political philosophy, she

devoted herself to reconstructing passages and works that could serve as points of reference and support. We argue that two elements were especially important for Arendt, the idea of judgment and its relationship to the problem of evil, and the concept of freedom that informed her work throughout her life.

Arendt acknowledged that, prior to her engagement with Kant, insufficient attention had been paid to the faculty of judgment. She even suggested that the discovery of this "gift" might be one of humanity's greatest inheritances. In Kant, judgment appears as a mental capacity, a talent that cannot be taught but only exercised. Because it concerns particulars, the things of the world of appearances that are always before us, this "gift" helps us confront reality. For that reason, it is necessary to explore this faculty more deeply in order to understand its mode of operation.

In simple terms, we identify at least four conditions that help illuminate the faculty of judgment and explain how it attains a degree of objectivity, sociability, publicity, communicability, and impartiality. Since no human being can live entirely alone and we are fundamentally interdependent, the highest faculty of the human mind cannot operate outside society. Judgment always requires sociability in order to be exercised. The thinking self, which remains hidden while we think, emerges when reflection leads us to question experiences and situations in the world. Whenever Arendt sought a model thinker, she turned to Socrates as the archetype of the non-professional thinker who neither withdraws into private contemplation nor rushes to impose abstract models upon reality. Rather, driven by thought, he encounters others and engages them in dialogue about his perplexities (Arendt, 2023b).

Communicability, in turn, presupposes a community of individuals to whom one can speak, who are willing to listen and be addressed. Although thinking begins as a solitary activity, we always think in relation to others, to whom we communicate our thoughts. Because taste is the faculty that guides communicability, Arendt makes a distinctive move by incorporating embodiment into her account. Recognizing the body as the locus and support of the senses, she distinguishes between private senses (smell and taste) and public senses (sight, hearing, and touch). The latter are public because they allow us to identify objects, share them with others, express what we perceive in words, and debate their meaning. They also possess a degree of objectivity because they make representation possible, that is, they allow what is absent to be made present. Such a condition is impossible with smell and taste, which exist only in immediacy and are characterized by their ineffable quality.

Impartiality is reflected in the capacity to perceive an object from different angles, broadening one's horizon while striving

to adopt all conceivable viewpoints and test one's observations. It is what Kant called an "enlarged mentality", which enables us to compare judgments and place ourselves in the position of others. Through this capacity we contemplate, observe, and form judgments; in other words, it is the basis upon which we reflect on human affairs (Arendt, 2012). Arendt illustrates this condition through the figure of the impartial spectator, whose existential foundation is disinterestedness. Because the spectator is not immersed in the action itself, he is able to grasp the sublime dimension of events, he perceives what is most significant because he discerns a meaning in the course of events that often escapes the actors themselves.

The criterion of publicity arises from the confrontation of one's thought with the thought of others. It rests on the capacity to make public use of reason everywhere, since thought must always be subjected openly and freely to critical examination, a process that benefits from the participation of as many individuals as possible. This implies that critical thinking is anti-authoritarian in principle, for it does not submit to any school, authority, or doctrine. At the same time, it requires that the perspectives of others remain open to examination; otherwise, neither thinking nor opinion formation would be possible.

At this point, Kant emphasizes the importance of dissemination, linking it to the freedom to think and write. He believed that the larger the public capable of understanding a judgment, the stronger the argument could become. Connected to political life, publicity helps explain why revolutions tend to favor maximum openness, revolutionaries assume that coordinated public action is the most effective means of challenging authority. By contrast, coups d'état depend upon secrecy, since their success requires that no one know what is being planned.

Having outlined these elements of judgment, we may conclude that everyone possesses the capacity to judge, provided they are willing to exercise it and enjoy the freedom to express what they see, hear, or touch. Isolation is the one condition that deprives us of our ability to act, speak, and judge human affairs. For this reason, totalitarian government was founded upon the elimination of the public sphere, the space where human beings can appear and reveal themselves through words and deeds. It relied on rigid police control grounded in the systematic use of terror, designed to discourage and suppress any attempt at resistance to its project of total transformation. It also appealed to a nihilistic ideology according to which everything was possible. In short, it was based on violence rather than power, which in Arendtian terminology refers to the capacity for collective action that arises whenever individuals interact and persuade one another within the public sphere.

Although Arendt's theory may at times appear discouraging, particularly given that the denial of factual truth, the capacity to lie, and the capacity to alter facts are closely connected, this is the price we pay for freedom. Understood in Kantian terms, freedom stands opposed to necessity and is characterized not as a phenomenal but as a noumenal reality. As several scholars within the Arendtian tradition have noted, freedom emerges only in particular moments; it is experienced but never exhausted by institutions. We feel free and experience the joy of freedom whenever we give ourselves laws, create institutions that help prevent suffering, or make promises that function as islands of stability in an uncertain future.

Finally, we wish to emphasize the role of imagination in political life. Through this faculty, we refuse to believe that all is lost and strive instead to construct utopian horizons that enable us to imagine new forms of human association, recognizing plurality not merely as a criterion but as a way of life. In this sense, judgment, as the capacity to view the world from multiple perspectives, engage in dialogue with others, and make thought public, emerges as the indispensable political faculty in the face of organized lying. Wherever the Cuban and Nicaraguan regimes have sought to replace reality with narrative, erase the meaning of protest, and suppress plurality, judgment reappears as the minimal condition for reconstructing a common space. It does not guarantee liberation or secure democracy, but without it there is no way to distinguish appearance from reality, nor any possibility of reappearing in a shared world.

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