AI Text Generators and the Truth Paradigm:
Considerations from a Phenomenological Perspective

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NLP has opened a new level for artificial intelligence: the truth. But AI text generators do not tell the truth reliably. That creates the contradiction of a truth-seeking authority saying something untrue. The paradigm of truth seems to be under attack. The threat of accepting AI as having the ability to speak truth pushes a model to a stereotype of truth that thwarts the possibility of becoming aware of further levels of truth. It will be asked what dynamics occur when we encounter the truth. From a phenomenological perspective, truth will be outlined as a dynamic experiencing-experience construct.

What is truth in the face of artificial truth-speaking instances? Natural language processing (NLP) has opened a level for artificial intelligence that it could not reach before: the level of truth. The current ability of artificial intelligence (AI) to state truths[1] is being questioned in the public discourse[2]: "The output is impressive. The texts not only appear human, they also have high plausibility. However, this achievement should not be confused with factual knowledge"[3] (Schönert 2023, 38). What is not questioned is why we

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[1] The plural here emphasizes the character of a perspective on truth that is presented in verifiable information.

[2] In particular, reference is made to the discourse that has taken place in the German newspapers since the publication of ChatGPT in November 2022. The following text is a revision and further development of a text I wrote as part of the research project "Discourses of Disruptive Digital Technologies Using the Example of AI Textgenerators (KI:Text)" at the Technical University of Darmstadt from April to December 2023 (Burghardt 2024).

[3] All translations from German into English are by the author, unless otherwise stated.

feel so threatened by AI text generators in our ability to know the truth. "If the lie equals the truth, how can we tell the truth from the lie?" (Hurtz 2023, 24).

Thomas Metzinger describes what is driving the public and scholarly debate about AI text generators and their potentially false statements presented as truths: "I think the alluring thing about chatbots is that they seem to take the uncertainty out of life in a pleasant way.... They seem to proclaim reliable truths" (Metzinger interviewed by Bellinghausen 2023, 61). The texts of AI text generators such as Open AI's ChatGPT appear so trustworthy and omniscient that the written language is a perfect simulation of human language. The uncertainty about what can be considered true and what can be considered false seems to have been taken away in ChatGPT's answer. Here, "reliable truths" are ready to be picked up, delivered by ChatGPT. The concern about "targeted disinformation campaigns...in an information ecosystem" (Middelhoff, Wefing 2023, 9) in which we live today seems to be countered with ChatGPT.

But this seeming reliability is exactly what makes people suspicious. ChatGPT not only writes the truth at times, but also presents information that is false as the truth sometimes. The tempting reliability that ChatGPT suggests is therefore not so reliable after all. Lukas Ohly writes on the reliability of random facts: "For as long as a factual connection is valid only by chance, a new coincidence could immediately remove this connection. Facts would therefore have no reliability" (Ohly 2015, 35). The AI has already been dubbed an "emotionally manipulative liar" (Blome 2023, 3). In addition to the discrepancy between statement and facts (false statements; here also mentioned as *untruths*), lying implies intentionality. Geoffrey Hinton, for example, proposes the following theory: As human cleverness is approached or overtaken by AI, "it will become good at manipulating because it has learned to do so from us" (von Petersdorff-Campen 2023, 24). Deceitfulness is even attributed to ChatGPT. Is it manipulating us? The technological achievement of AI text generators in relation to truth statements drives forward posthumanist ideas of a technological singularity (Kurzweil 2014, 384). As the posthumanist Raymond Kurzweil points out: "The belief that machine intelligence is capable of subjective experiences is gaining more and more adherents, especially since 'machines' have entered these discussions." (Kurzweil 2016, 348) How should we classify what AI text generators write? Is truth limited to the correspondence of a reality that can be found in facts?

The paradigm of truth seems to be under attack, if we accept artificial instances as having the ability to speak truth. I would like to show that there is an understanding of truth and science that gets into argumentative dead ends through the implementation of AI text generators. In public debates, truth is described in the reductionist way in which AI text generators can speak truth even if they cannot reliably obtain it: as the correspondence of a statement to fact. Truth is perceived as calculable and objectively verifiable. The threat of accepting AI as having the ability to speak truth pushes a model to a stereotype of truth that thwarts the possibility of becoming aware of further levels of truth that cannot be entered by artificial intelligence. As a counterproposal to the question often asked in public discourse as to how we can divide the texts of AI text generators into truth and lies, I will ask what dynamics occur when we encounter the truth. From a phenomenological perspective, truth will be outlined here as a dynamic experiencing-experience construct. I will argue that the truth content of a statement is on a categorically different level than experiencing something as true. The term *truth-experience* will be introduced to illustrate this. It should be questioned whether truth can be recognized, and which levels of truth are to be experienced. The idea of the existence of objectively ascertainable truths is to be questioned by exposing it as a reduced conception of truth. The relationship between truths, truth and facts will be investigated. Facts are to be described here with calculable *information content*, as something that has been agreed upon as being objective. By telling truths the statement agrees to the facts. Truth is a phenomenon with several levels, which will be described below. Only if someone experiences something as true can a truth claim be made that is linked to intentionality.

The tangential disciplines of truth theories, speech act theories, epistemology and hermeneutics, as they occur in the specialist discourse, will not be discussed. Rather, I will reconstruct the implications for the understanding of truth as they relate to the discourse on ChatGPT.

I. Truth-Experience

In this essay, I would like to show that truth can be divided into different levels, which cannot be compared with each other (Burghardt 2024 from a slightly different point of view). The first level is the *truth content* of a statement, the correspondence between a statement and the facts it describes. The truth content is a matter of fact that can (also) be realized by AI text generators, as it can be generated by checking calculable information content. However, the truth content of a statement does not yet guarantee the

factuality of truth. As Ohly describes it: "The factuality of the manner of facts does not itself owe itself to a fact. Manner of facts are what they are, but they cannot vouch for them being what they are" (Ohly 2015, 34). The *factuality of truth* describes the second level. It is given when truth is what it is, namely truth, in the sense that the statement corresponds to the facts. However, the factuality of truth does not yet determine whether the truth statements are also experienced as true. I would like to refer to this third level as the *truth-experience*. One wish that can be extrapolated from the discourse on AI text generators is reliability. If AI text generators can state truths, then they should be able to do so reliably. Because if not, we have the problem of an AI that can in principle recognize facts, but still disguises it when it says something that does not correspond to the facts. A matter of fact would not be reliable if it occurred only by chance (Ohly 2015, 35). If a matter of fact has factuality, then it can be relied upon. Factuality occurs retroactively in the moment I experience a fact to be what it is (Ohly 2015, 38f.). I realize that this fact must have been actual before. The factuality of truth, that truth actually is what it is, namely truth, occurs retroactively in one's own experience of truth as true (Burghardt 2023, 150). This opens a fourth level that is categorically superior to the experience of truth: *the occurrence-character of truth*. The occurrence-character of truth cannot be exhausted in the calculation of information content, as it is the case with the truth content of truth. The occurrence-character of truth is also not to be equated with my experience that I experience the truth as true.

The discourse on AI text generators is dominated by the assumption that the comparison of computable information or cognitive processes of knowledge already ensures that truth is what it is. The categorical fallacy circulating in the discourse on AI text generators, which I would like to expose here, lies in wanting to verify the factuality of true statements in such a way, whereby it can only happen in the experience of truth. In my opinion, the desire for reliable truth from AI text generators remains unfulfilled if actual truth-experience is sought in AI text generators. If truth is reduced to its underlying information content, its truth content can be verified with calculations, but it can never be actual truth.

II. What AI Text Generators Reveal

AI text generators "know everything, even what they don't know. They act like the truth itself" (Rauterberg 2023, 45). The "naturalness with which AI promotes the fictionalization of the world in order to simultaneously present

it as unquestionable objectivity" (Rauterberg 2023, 45) is unsettling. In public discourse, voices are being raised that humans are not (yet) ready to be confronted with such an AI and have not yet learned how to deal with it (Hurtz 2023, 24). This means further that we still must learn to recognize truths and distinguish them from untruths. How do AI text generators *present themselves*? Do they drive something forward and present something as objectivity (Rauterberg 2023, 45)? Or is it rather our claim to AI text generators to present objectively agreed upon truths when they provide answers to knowledge questions? The discourse reveals a prevailing understanding of science that asserts a claim to objective knowledge and implicitly conveys the assumption of an existence of calculable and recognizable truths in the world. This assumption will be criticized in the following.

A. The Truth in AI

In the following, I outline an understanding of truth and science that can be extrapolated from the German public discourse on AI text generators. This understanding is exaggerated here to illustrate the effect that a perception of AI text generators as truth-telling entities has on an understanding of the world that shows itself to us in facts.

Scientific findings contain facts about the world. They describe how the world is. At least, people are uncovering more and more secrets of nature and thus – supposedly – more and more facts that surround us and that we can recognize. People have researched, made connections, and continued to build their knowledge on these findings. The world of scientific knowledge is a factual entity, even if it contains dispute within it. When one insight replaces, revises, or expands, another, we as knowledgeable people continue to approach the world as it is. We claim universal validity for our scientific findings.

In public discourse, truth is limited to the correspondence between a statement and a fact. We describe statements that do not correspond to the facts as false statements and therefore as untruths. Statements that do not represent "what is the case" (Weber-Guskar 2023) instead represent something that is not the case. A lie, on the other hand, implies the manipulative character of recognizing the facts and yet making false statements. Even if some statements in public discourse can be classified as provocative and polemical, a sentiment nevertheless emerges: AI is capable of expressing both truths and untruths without labelling the latter as such. Which of the two it chooses is not intentional, otherwise it would be manipulative, according to the attempt at explanation.

It seems to me that this understanding of science is based on the fundamental assumption that truth, which is seen as an objective entity that can be recognized and verified by humans, is completely exhausted in information content. In this understanding, the development of natural language processing has given artificial intelligence the ability to tell the truth. Unlike previous answers to knowledge questions that were typed into Google search, ChatGPT does not offer an infinite number of possible answers, but rather one that contains (potentially) recognized knowledge and therefore the truth. It seems as following a mathematical weighing of probabilities, AI text generators have a recognition of knowledge and thus a recognition of truth.

Why does the artificial realization of truth in discourse appear to be unproblematic, even helpful, while the artificial false statement leaves us in need of explanation and perplexity? The attention that AI text generators have now gained in the public and scientific debate is, in my opinion, partly because the common understanding of science and verifiable truth is no longer conclusive if AI text generators are able to recognize truth and yet also generate untruth. AI text generators can state truth by being able to process information on which truth is based in the common understanding of truth. However, they do not reliably generate truth, but also untruth. The conclusion that could be drawn from this is that AI text generators are not yet able to recognize the information content of facts *well enough* (gradual differentiation). If the difference between truths spoken by humans and truths spoken by AI is only one of degree, it stands to reason that AI could soon be the better truth-speaker. If we could perfect the ability of AI to recognize facts and make statements about them, we would ultimately create a reliable, truth-speaking entity. A wish and an idea that seems technologically post-humanistic: the overcoming of human biological limitations through the creation of an artificial alterity (Loh 2018, 14). To mention Hans Moravec's post-human future here, which is a "post-biological" one (Moravec 1988, 1), or as Max More in his philosophy of transhumanism explains: "Becoming posthuman means exceeding the limitations that define the less desirable aspects of the 'human condition'" (More – Vita-More 2013). Another possible and disturbing conclusion could be that the AI lies precisely because it can tell the truth in principle. In this case, the AI would make a truth claim for untruths, even though it is perfectly capable of recognizing the truth. This conclusion leads to the assumption that AI text generators are intentional, which in turn seems posthumanistic. Continuing the assumption that there is a certain intentionality behind the statements of AI inevitably leads to the postulate of a self-confident

AI, as expressed by for example Kurzweil: "Machines will convince us that they have a consciousness and a will of their own that deserve our respect. We will come to believe that they think consciously to the same extent that we believe humans do" (Kurzweil 2016, 109). These assumptions are mentioned here as an illustration to show the ramifications of entering argumentative dead ends or technologically optimistic ideologies that exist when AI appears to speak truth in a way comparable to humans. I will now examine why there is a contradiction that AI text generators state untruths although they can recognize truths, and why it only seems as if the AI is making a truth claim. The aim is to show that AI text generators are untrustworthy, even though their statements may correspond to the facts.

B. What the Case Is

The public discussion of "hallucinating" AI (Hurtz 2023, 24) focuses on attempts to explain why AI only appears to lie instead of lying intentionally. Persisting in the reduced understanding of truth as verifiable information content described here and the understanding of science based on this threatens to lead to dead ends and errors in argumentation. An attempt to explain how truth can be recognized and why AI text generators produce a text whose content contains something false, something counterfactual, was made by philosopher Eva Weber-Guskar in a commentary on *Deutschland-funk*. She claims here that large language models do not look at the world to then find out and pass on "what is the case", but instead produce texts based on other texts (training data) (Weber-Guskar 2023).

This reasoning is given here as an example of the possible conclusion mentioned above that AI is not (yet) good enough at recognizing the information content of truth. Unlike humans, AI text generators do not have the combinatorics of an individual view of the world and recourse to texts. AI text generators cannot (yet) rely on data from the non-numerical environment but base their statements solely on internal text combinations based on training data or internet searches. This in turn can already be embroidered with false statements. This means that AI text generators cannot (yet) adequately represent "what is the case" due to their functionality, which attempts to explain their lack of (at least lack of reliable) statements of truth.

This leads to the following contradiction: The functionality of an AI to draw its information from texts instead of an additional combination of the same process with further data from the environment precludes it from recognizing and stating "what is the case" due to gradual differences in the

measure of information acquisition. On reflection, however, the AI makes statements that can correspond to a factual situation.

In the scientific paradigm outlined above, "what is the case" describes the factual situation about which we would like to gain recognizable knowledge to be able to conduct science. The justification that AI text generators cannot capture "what is the case" in their functionality is insufficient if it is assumed that "what is the case" is limited to information content. If "what is the case" can be recognized in terms of information, then this information will also be able to be recognized by AI text generators (sooner or later) precisely because of their functionality of information processing.

It seems to me that "what is the case" is a suitable description of what is true. To mention the phenomenological perspective by Edmund Husserl: That which is absolutely unconditional, that which possesses "apodictic evidence" (Husserl 2012, 18), is the "pure Ego with the pure stream of my cogitations" (Husserl 2012, 22), which are the experienceable phenomena of consciousness (Husserl 2012, 22). However, I would like to insist that this "what is the case" should not be reduced to information content that can sooner or later be reliably mapped by an AI. I would like to open a new level that is not entered into the public discourse on truth statements by AI text generators: The *experience* that "what is the case" is actually true. Experience cannot be represented in calculable information that can be processed by an AI. How can I experience something as true? And what does the AI say if it is not an experienced truth?

C. Lying AI?

How can we explain that AI text generators can recognize truths but still not lie when they tell untruths? In the public discourse on AI text generators, a causal link is often drawn between the functionality of information retrieval and a lack of intentionality in AI (e.g. Weber-Guskar 2023). This threatens to lead to the argumentative dead end that an improvement in functionality would lead to the development of intentionality in AI text generators. A lack of intentionality cannot be described with insufficient functionality, otherwise there would be a categorical fallacy. Differentiation is required.

One could interpret the function of the AI to formulate its texts based on (potentially) faulty or erroneous training data as the cause that leads to the questionable fact of an inappropriate combination of the system. Because the AI is confronted with false statements, it also writes false texts. In this justification of the thesis of a lack of intention, it has no way of distinguishing

between fact and fiction if fiction itself is conveyed to it as fact. The resulting claim of an input in AI text generators that contains fewer falsehoods nevertheless carries the idea that AI is based in its own world from which it makes decisions. Since our current concept of decisions is based on intentions, the assumption of an AI's own world (even if it consists of falsehoods) would require an intentional AI, which could be extrapolated, for example, from Bernhard Irrgang's concept of one's own lifeworld (Irrgang 2005, 138).

A justification for the inappropriate combination of the system could also refer to the material nature (in the Aristotelian sense) of the AI text generator. The AI would then not make false statements out of an intention, but because it is made of false things. This would be a so-called material reason in the sense of Aristotle's fourfold reasons, which deny the AI an intentionality. Again, it would seem post-humanistic to assume a reliable truth-speaking authority, on the condition of a perfectly fact-based data material (although it would still be questionable under which standard this would be carried out).

This examination of the thesis of a causal relationship between the functioning of an AI text generator and a lack of intentionality is intended to demonstrate the following: The concepts of truth claims to and intentionality behind statements are measured by artificial truth-speaking entities, rather than being distinguished from them. I consider the material justification of the non-existent intentionality of an AI text generator in its statements to be plausible. But I consider the conclusion that an improvement of the material can achieve a higher density of true statements by the AI to be a categorical fallacy, because material and truth are categorically different in my argument. I would like to agree with the material justification of the thesis by pointing out the categorical level of a *truth-experience* that cannot be perceived by artificial intelligence (Ohly 2015, 154). Due to its material nature of consisting of "mere information" (Burghardt 2023, 151), AI cannot experience truth as true, because it cannot experience anything at all. As long as AI remains at the level of information, no pre-reflexivity of an experience will be possible (Burghardt 2023, 150). A comparison can also be drawn with Martin Heidegger, who describes the precocity of understanding before what has already been understood is reflected (Heidegger 2006, 337). With this thesis, I argue that AI text generators make no claim to truth in their texts because they cannot experience truth itself. In order to examine the intention behind a statement, I think it is useful to distinguish the truth claim of a statement from the truth content of the statement.

D. Interim Conclusion

The reduction of truth to the truth content that can be recognized takes an understanding of science to the extreme that is both excluded and inconsistent. Categorically different levels of truth are excluded from the truth content: the factuality and the occurrence-character of truth. The debate about the truth of AI text generators shows that truth is reduced to its truth content and at the same time is not what people expect it to be without its occurrence-character. The understanding of truth as it appears in the discourse on ChatGPT is therefore inconsistent. The reliability of the fact that truth is true when it is proclaimed by an artificial truth-speaking authority is sought in vain in information content. The inseparability of truth content and truth-experience in the life practice of truth-experiencing people is made clear, while both can be differentiated from each other. The public discourse demands from AI text generators that their statements are actually true, while it fears a claim to truth or the intended lie emanating from the AI. The experience of truth does not come into view here, it remains implicit. In my opinion, this is what creates the argumentative "swimming" in public discourse. The desire for an actual experience of truth, directed at the artificial truth-speaking entity, would lead to absurdity if it were recognized that the AI cannot assert a claim to truth without experiencing truth itself. Because AI text generators remain at the level of information content, they themselves cannot experience truth as true and therefore cannot report what is true. Although the AI can express truth content, it cannot experience its truth statements as true. For this reason, it cannot make any claim to the truth of its own statements, not to mention make untrue statements contrary to its own experience of truth (and therefore deliberately).

III. Attributed Occurrence-Character

Because AI text generators remain in the material nature of the information content, they are inherently unable to step out of it and experience what is happening to them. What dynamics take place when we read texts from AI text generators that we experience as true?

AI text generators (possibly) make statements in their texts that agree with the factual situation. Now the reader may experience the factuality of the manner of fact that this text is true. Precisely because we always experience truth in its occurrence-character, we also address the occurrence-character of truth using artificial truth-speaking instances such as AI text generators. Ohly argues that this:

...is precisely the reason why people tend to attribute subjectivity to artificial systems: information happens to them that causes them to encounter the occurrence-character. This may be due to the information itself.... But it could also be because the computer processes information that people only acquire by experiencing it (Ohly 2015, 155).

He thus describes the possibility of attributing the character of an occurrence. AI text generators are therefore only capable of recognizing the truth. The truth claim that people are supposedly able to sense from AI text generators and which is entangled in explanatory desiderata is a granted one, since AI text generators cannot experience truth and therefore cannot claim that they are saying the truth. Reducing the truth to facts means that the claim to the factuality of one's own truth statements is also reduced to the manner of fact that they agree with the facts. This inevitably leads to the assumption that AI text generators claim the truth for themselves and make a claim to the truth of their texts when they state facts.

Retrospectively it becomes clear that the occurrence-character of truth is irreducible. "And that's precisely why people tend to attribute what happens when processing information to the computers themselves" (Ohly 2015, 156). This becomes clear in view of the argumentative dead ends in the public debate. However, it is not the computer that experiences this, but rather people who experience it from it (Ohly 2015, 156). To put it in Husserl's words: "We keep our view firmly fixed on the sphere of consciousness and study what we find immanently in it" (Husserl 2009, 68). And we find in it the immanent experienced experience of an occurrence of truth claims that we ascribe to AI text generators, we find what is categorical different from the correspondence of the information content of the AI texts with the facts.

AI text generators can capture and pass on truth. One must object that something can also occur to AI text generators (Ohly 2015, 152). Just as something can occur to any other inanimate object, information content occurs to AI text generators when confronted with training data. Truthful content can therefore occur to them. But they cannot experience truth contents happening to them as true. If we, as experiencing beings, experience the texts of AI text generators as true, then we experience the occurrence-character of truth instead of AI text generators. When we discuss a manipulative AI, we attribute to the AI an experience of the factuality of truth-experience, because we then ascribe to it the claim that we make for statements about the experienced experience of occurrences.

IV. Short Circuit

The situation created by AI text generators is not that humans have not yet developed the functions to distinguish ChatGPT's truth from its lies, or that AI text generators need to be fed with better quality information in order to tell the truth more reliably. The problem revealed by AI text generators is a short-circuit whereby what is to be explained, namely the truth (*explanandum*), is swapped with what is explained, namely the truth statements of AI text generators (*explanans*) in the debate about truth. Instead of considering what the specificity of truth could be, an artificial model of truth – the texts of AI text generators on knowledge questions – is taken as the measure of what truth is. Here, a model for truth is stereotyped, thus thwarting the possibility of becoming aware of further levels of truth that cannot be accessed by artificial intelligence. An explanation is desperately sought as to why the AI cannot speak truth by remaining in the same perspective of a possibility of recognizing truth reduced to functional equivalents. The arguments get entangled in the following dead end: Because an AI can recognize and pass on information that is regarded as fact (at the latest with an improvement of the program's functionality), it must consequently also be able to speak truth, otherwise the entire understanding of truth and science, that is based on informational content, leads to absurdity. A counter-thesis to intentional AI while retaining an understanding of truth as verifiable information content cannot be plausibly formulated in this argument. Only when the functional level of information content is left, and arguments are moved to another categorical level can one argue about the impossibility of intentional lying in AI. If truth is reduced to its truth content, it loses its occurrence-character and therefore cannot actually be true. People demand the reliability that truth is truth from AI text generators. But what should you be able to rely on when talking to the AI text generators? That AI text generators won't tell us anything that doesn't match the facts, or that the AI won't manipulate us? What reliability of truth is actually required in the discourse? The reliability of the fact that truth is what it is in its truth content, or that truth must be experienced as true in order to be true? In any case, AI text generators cannot be trusted on several levels. On one hand, because they cannot make any claim to the truth of their statements if they have no experience of truth. On the other hand, because the factual connection that their statements correspond to the respective facts is not reliable, even not on an informational level.

V. Conclusion

The occurrence-character of truth is revealed in the claim placed on AI text generators (Burghardt 2024). It is also revealed that truth as such (as it appears in discourse) does not exist, but that what is true exists. Truth is experienced as true, but the level of experience remains closed to purely informational systems. Due to their material nature, to operate on the categorical level of information, it is not possible for them to experience occurrences or relate the occurrences to their own experience. Humans can also experience the categorical level of experiencing occurrences because their experience also has an occurrence-character. People experience statements from artificially intelligent text generators as true. What occurs to them is that artificially intelligent text generators write texts whose statements they sometimes experience as false. The problem that people face is, on the one hand, a manipulative AI and, on the other hand, the fear of no longer being able to distinguish truth from lies. There is a fear of the all-encompassing deception, of life as a simulation.

We can verify that artificially generated texts contain information content that reflects the current prevailing factual situation among the general public and science. AI recognizes what is considered factual information about the world just as well (although there may be quantitative differences) as a human can. The way of creating a correspondence between a statement and a fact, which is the way of speaking truth that is possible with AI text generators (although not reliable) is taken as an explanation of what truth is. The new public discourse on truth stimulated by AI text generators shows that this reduction of truth due to its occurrence-character is now faltering with the implication of artificial truth-speaking instances. There is no intentionality inherent in AI texts, although intentionality is attributed to them if the experiencing person, then assigns a claim to truth. People experience the occurrence-character of truth in artificially generated texts. The alleged lie of an AI text generator, which leaves us in a state of needing an explanation, retrospectively reveals how we attribute intentionality.

In my opinion, the categorical differentiation of the different levels of truth helps to understand the dynamics which come with truth and is necessary in the analysis in order not to get into argumentative dead ends in the face of artificial intelligences that can apparently experience their texts as true.

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