

**Hannah Arendt's Unwritten Theory of Political  
Judgment**

by

Samantha Fazekas

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## **Declaration**

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## Summary

The aim of this project is to justify Hannah Arendt's claim that she brings Immanuel Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition by appropriating aesthetic reflective judgment as a model for political judgment. The analysis consists of six parts.

The aim of Chapter One is to explore the reasons why Arendt's public-private distinction has been read as uncompromisingly stark. Her strict separation of these two realms also leads to the common misconception that private and political activities are sharply opposed. I will show that Arendt does not do herself any favors to avoid these readings.

The aim of Chapter Two is to show that Arendt's separation of the private and public realms is not as stark as it seems. By developing an 'Arendtian phenomenology' of privacy, I will demonstrate that non-privative activities promote the public realm. What is more, I will argue that non-privative activities also set one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence and stabilization of the public realm.

The aim of Chapter Three is to show that it is more consistent with Arendt's thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective activity. In order to make my case, I will argue against the claim that she empiricizes enlarged mentality by conceiving of it as a public

activity. This leads me to believe that her critics make an unjustified leap from hypothetical to public discourse by misreading Arendt.

The aim of Chapter Four is to show that Arendt can turn to reflective judgment for the impartiality required for political judgment. My analysis will justify Arendt's claim that enlarged mentality has political potential. Bringing Arendt closer to the reflective nature of aesthetic judgment also sheds light on her own conception of political judgment.

The aim of Chapter Five is to show that Arendt brings the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way Kant could not. This leads me to the conclusion that Arendt does not aestheticize politics. I will argue that reflective judgment has the potential to foster the kind of understanding that lies at the heart of her conception of politics.

The aim of Chapter Six is to justify Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. She is correct to claim that the general validity of reflective judgment can only be realized in a human community. Kant undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment himself. He sets empirical examples as standards to verify the validity of aesthetic judgments. I will bring Arendt closer to Kant by showing that political principles play the

same role as empirical examples in finalizing the general validity of political judgments.

My analysis will justify Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. What is more, it offers a richer account of Arendt's conception of political judgment.

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In loving memory of Dr. Paul J. Bagley

*“My friend, said Socrates, there is good hope that on arriving where I am going, if anywhere, I shall acquire what has been our chief preoccupation in our past life, so that the journey that is now ordered for me is full of good hope” (Phaedo 67b-c).*

## Abbreviations

All citations from Aristotle are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. The Revised Oxford Translation. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Volume I and II. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

*DA*            *De Anima*

Aristotle  
Translated by J.A. Smith.

*MP*            *Metaphysics*

Aristotle  
Translated by W.D. Ross.

*NE*            *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle  
Translated by W.D. Ross  
Revised by J.O. Urmson.

*Pol*            *Politics*

Aristotle  
Translated by B. Jowett.

*Lectures*    *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*

Hannah Arendt  
Edited by Ronald Beiner  
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

*Vita Activa*    *Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*

Hannah Arendt  
Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960.



*First Critique Critique of Pure Reason*

Immanuel Kant  
Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood  
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

*Third Critique Critique of Judgment*

Immanuel Kant  
Translated by Werner S. Pluhar  
Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing  
Company, 1987.

*Anthropology Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie,  
Politik und Pädagogik. Werke. Bd. VI. Nr. 28.*

Immanuel Kant  
Herausgegeben von Wilhelm Weischedel  
Berlin: Insel Verlag, 1964.

*Groundwork Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Immanuel Kant  
Translated by James W. Ellington  
3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett  
Publishing Company, Inc., 1993.



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## Introduction

*The victorious cause pleased the gods, but the defeated one pleases Cato*

– Hannah Arendt (1978)<sup>1</sup>

Hannah Arendt is known for her brilliant contributions to political philosophy and political theory. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* offers a comprehensive and groundbreaking study of totalitarian regimes. Her report on the Eichmann trial develops a novel conception of evil, which she coins ‘the banality of evil.’ Arendt’s account of the *vita activa* (active life) in *The Human Condition* breathes new life into the concept of action (*praxis*) by setting it as the “political activity *par excellence*.”<sup>2</sup> Even her unfinished work, *The Life of the Mind*, can be regarded as an innovative account of the *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life), which she intended to be the counterpart to the *vita activa*.

Hannah Arendt is also known for sparking considerable controversy. Her characterization of Adolf Eichmann as a *Hanswurst* (a buffoon),<sup>3</sup> and her accusation of the Jewish councils in their complicity in the Holocaust, caused outrage – to say the least. She was not only criticized and alienated by intellectual communities and Jewish organizations,<sup>4</sup> but she was also ostracized by her own friends. Arendt’s exclusion of social issues from

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Hannah Arendt, “Postscriptum to Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 216.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Zur Person: Günter Gaus im Gespräch mit Hannah Arendt*, Transkript, rbb Fernsehen: Sendung vom 28.10.1964. Web link: [https://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview\\_archiv/arendt\\_hannah.html](https://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview_archiv/arendt_hannah.html); accessed 31 March 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Amos Elon, “Introduction,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books 2006), vii.

politics is widely criticized,<sup>5</sup> and her commitment to this strict division leads her to draw shocking conclusions. For example, one of her most concerning conclusions is that desegregation in American schools is not a political concern.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this project is to justify one of Arendt's brilliant and controversial claims. I wish to defend her highly contested claim that she brings Immanuel Kant's "nonwritten political philosophy"<sup>7</sup> to fruition. In her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, she declares that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* contains "a political philosophy" that "he never wrote."<sup>8</sup> Arendt thus takes it upon herself to sketch "what Kant's political philosophy would have been like had he found the time and strength to express it adequately."<sup>9</sup> She intends to develop his 'unwritten political philosophy' by turning to aesthetic reflective judgment.<sup>10</sup> For Kant, reflective judgment is an aesthetic judgment regarding the beautiful (5:231).<sup>11</sup> Arendt believes it has political potential because she perceives

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<sup>5</sup> Seyla Benhabib (2003); Margaret Canovan (1985); Robert Bernasconi (1996); Richard Bernstein (1986); Hannah Pitkin (1981).

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 202.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Kant operates with two different types of reflective judgments: aesthetic and teleological (5:194). However, Arendt is only interested in aesthetic reflective judgment. Therefore, I will follow her lead by referring to aesthetic reflective judgment simply as one of the following: reflective judgment; aesthetic judgment; or judgment of taste.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987). All citations from the *Third Critique* will be from the Pluhar translation.

an analogy between judging aesthetically and politically, that is, ‘between beautiful and ugly, right and wrong.’<sup>12</sup>

The analogy she draws between judging aesthetically and politically is that it entails falling back on our own capacity for autonomous discrimination. For Kant, the task of reflective judgment is to create its own rule by which to judge the aesthetic quality of a particular object (5:179). For Arendt, the task of political judgment is to create its own rule by which to judge particular worldly events. Whereas reflective judgment proceeds without universal rules for cognition (5:217), political judgment kicks in when pre-existing standards and norms have collapsed.

What sparked Arendt’s interest in political judgment were the historical and political events that shaped her time: the rise of totalitarian regimes, the 1930 refugee crisis, the Holocaust, and the Eichmann trial. As she says, these events “clearly exploded our categories of political thought and our standards for moral judgment.”<sup>13</sup> Since the reigning standards and norms no longer suffice to discriminate between right and wrong, the only recourse is to fall back on one’s own capacity to judge. By perceiving an analogy between reflective and political judgment, Arendt thus believes to uncover the hidden political potential in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*.

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<sup>12</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 160. I will use single quotation marks when I am either indirectly quoting an author, when I am referring to a quote that is about to be cited, or when I am emphasizing certain terms. I will use double quotation marks when I am directly quoting an author.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Understanding and Politics,” *Essays in Understanding (1930-1954): Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 311.

This project offers a new reading of Arendt's interpretation of reflective judgment. The novelty of my account is that it situates reflective judgment squarely within her political thought – without compromising the integrity of Kant's aesthetics or Arendt's conception of politics. My reading thus sets itself apart from two prevailing views in the secondary literature. One prevailing view is that Arendt's declaration that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition is inconsistent with Kant's thought. On the face of it, her claim is factually incorrect because Kant wrote political texts, such as *Toward A Perpetual Peace* and "The Doctrine of Right" in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. This leads Ronald Beiner to conclude,

Arendt is clearly dead wrong when she states in Lecture 10 that Kantian political philosophy must be reconstructed from the third *Critique* because his real political philosophy remained unwritten.<sup>14</sup>

While Arendt was well aware of Kant's political writings,<sup>15</sup> it does not diminish the philosophical groundlessness of her claim. What questions the validity of her claim is that Kant's aesthetics does not lend itself to his conception of politics. This is the case because aesthetic judgments do not lead into political judgments. For Kant, they are distinct because they are

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald Beiner, "Rereading Arendt's Kant Lectures," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*. Edited by Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 193.

<sup>15</sup> Even though Arendt knew about Kant's political writings, she was highly dismissive of them. She claims that "the ironical tone of *Perpetual Peace*" indicates that "Kant himself did not take them too seriously (Arendt, *Lectures*, 7); and that *The Metaphysics of Morals* is "rather boring and pedantic" (Ibid., 7-8).

formed on different cognitive grounds.<sup>16</sup> Maintaining an analogy between aesthetic and political judgment therefore does not hold. To bring clarity to Arendt's claim, Beiner suggests that she should have maintained that reflective judgment contains Kant's "anticipation of *her* political philosophy."<sup>17</sup>

However, many commentators have taken issue with Arendt's insistence that reflective judgment is a "political ability"<sup>18</sup> that "fits us into a community."<sup>19</sup> It seems as though Arendt deviates from Kant because she intimates that shaping judgments of taste involves publicly discussing them with others. In contrast, Kant limits shaping judgments of taste to a theoretical process, which simply involves imagining the possible perspectives of others. To mention only a few of her critics, Richard Bernstein argues that Arendt "radically departs from Kant."<sup>20</sup> Robert Dostal contends that "[s]he violates not only the letter but the spirit of Kant's philosophy."<sup>21</sup> George Kateb holds that "[s]he enlists Kant in her project, but the project is most un-Kantian, anti-Kantian."<sup>22</sup>

Another prevailing view in the secondary literature is that appealing to reflective judgment is inconsistent with Arendt's own political thought.

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<sup>16</sup> Whereas the former emerge from the harmony of the imagination and the understanding, the latter are given by practical reason.

<sup>17</sup> Beiner, "Rereading Arendt's Kant Lectures," 95.

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Judging – the Actor and the Spectator," *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 232-233.

<sup>21</sup> Robert J. Dostal, "Judging Human Action: Arendt's Appropriation of Kant," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (June, 1984), 727.

<sup>22</sup> George Kateb, "The Judgment of Arendt," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 121.

For example, Bernard Flynn, Christopher Lasch, Andrew Norris, and Matthew Weidenfeld observe that the formality of reflective judgment does not square with the public nature of political judgment.<sup>23</sup> Weidenfeld remarks that Arendt “retains Kant’s thought that judgment is a reflective and intellectual capacity,” which “makes it difficult for her to conceptualize judgment as a practice.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, according to Arendt’s own thought, the analogy she draws between aesthetic and political judgments does not hold. This leads Norris to the conclusion that “Kant’s own conception of reflective judgment is inappropriate for Arendt’s purposes, as it cannot be said to grow out of the historical, worldly encounters it makes possible.”<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, I wish to show that Arendt was right to locate political potential in reflective judgment. I neither wish to claim that she writes a political treatise that Kant did not write himself, nor that aesthetic judgments lead into Kant’s conception of political judgments. Instead, I wish to argue that reflective judgment lends itself as a model for Arendt’s conception of political judgment – while remaining as consistent with Kant as possible.

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Flynn (1988); Christopher Lasch (1983); Andrew Norris (1996); Matthew Weidenfeld (2012).

<sup>24</sup> Matthew C. Weidenfeld, “Visions of Judgment: Arendt, Kant, and the Misreading of Judgment,” *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (2) (June 2012): 261.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” *Polity* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 168.

In order to make my case, I will employ Arendt's own method, namely, what Seyla Benhabib calls Arendt's "phenomenological essentialism."<sup>26</sup> Although Arendt never claimed to devise a systematic philosophical or political theory, it has been acknowledged that she operates with a quasi-phenomenological method.<sup>27</sup> Even Arendt reluctantly admitted herself that she was "sort of a phenomenologist, but *ach*, not in Hegel's way – or Husserl's."<sup>28</sup> Arendt's methodology somewhat resembles a phenomenological one, only insofar as she seeks to understand worldly phenomena by describing them. And in doing so, she places them in their respective categories, which include but are not limited to: public; private; social; moral; political; pre-political; unpolitical; anti-political; visibility; invisibility; light; darkness; worldly; unworldly; human; inhuman; material; immaterial; solitude; isolation; spatial and non-spatial location; human activities (*vita activa*); mental activities (*vita contemplativa*); conditions; and motive. Clearly, Bernstein is right when he claims that Arendt "was a great lover of distinctions."<sup>29</sup>

However, her 'love' of making distinctions leads to the common misconception that she erects rigid boundaries between them. The distinction I wish to question is the sharp divide between the private and public realms. My claim is that the two aforementioned criticisms of

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<sup>26</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought: The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 123.

<sup>27</sup> Benhabib (2003); Margaret Canovan (1958); Sophie Loidolt (2018).

<sup>28</sup> Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), 405.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 215.

Arendt rest on the common misconception that the five following distinctions are uncompromisingly stark.

- (1) The private and public realms are sharply opposed;
- (2) The private realm consists only of the household;
- (3) The public realm is only established and maintained by:
  - a. the political activities of speech and action
  - b. the work of the *homo faber*;
- (4) Political phenomena are only actualized through political participation;
- (5) Mental activities cannot translate into political activities.

My analysis will show that these five distinctions are not as strict as they seem. By developing an ‘Arendtian phenomenology’ of privacy, I will offer a new reading of Arendt’s private-public distinction. I will proceed by providing a descriptive account of an underappreciated aspect of the private realm, namely, “the non-privative characteristic of privacy.”<sup>30</sup> And place privative and non-privative activities in their respective categories.

The novelty of my approach is threefold. First, it offers a richer account of privacy. Second, it establishes an inter-relationship between the private and public realms without compromising Arendt’s strict distinctions. Third, it squares the formality of reflective judgment with the publicity and worldliness of political judgment. By following through on Arendt’s distinctions more consistently than she does herself, I will resolve the five aforementioned misconceptions.

- (1) The private and public realms are not sharply opposed;

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<sup>30</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71.



- (2) The private realm consists of the household (privative sphere) and the non-privative sphere;
- (3) The public realm is established and maintained by:
  - a. the political activities of speech and action
  - b. the work of the *homo faber*;
  - c. two forms of representative thinking;
- (4) Political phenomena are actualized by all activities listed under (3).
- (5) Representative thinking prepares persons for political participation.

The novelty of my claim is that all activities listed under (3) constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of the political world. I believe that reflective judgment is one of these activities. However, this entails that Arendt's categorization of reflective judgment must be slightly amended. It is more consistent with her own distinctions to say that it contains a public aspect (i.e., (3a.) public discourse) and an unpolitical aspect (i.e., (3c.) enlarged mentality).

Applying Arendt's distinctions more consistently than she does herself is not an easy undertaking, to say the least. For one, she is an unsystematic thinker. She 'dives for pearls'<sup>31</sup> in Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Montesquieu, Kant, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Karl Marx, Karl Jaspers – to name a few – and does not string these pearls together. Since Arendt did not see herself as a philosopher or as a political theorist, she did not take it upon herself to devise a consistent political philosophy or theory. As she claims, "I have neither claim nor ambition

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<sup>31</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," *Men in Dark Times* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 205.

to be a ‘philosopher’ or be numbered among what Kant, not without irony, called *Denker von Gewerbe* (professional thinkers).”<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, the nature of Arendt’s thought is best described by using one of her own metaphors for thinking. She says, “the business of thinking is like the veil of Penelope: it undoes every morning what it had finished the night before.”<sup>33</sup> The activity of thinking gives rise to thoughts, concepts, values, and judgments, and subsequently destroys, reshapes, and revises them. In other words, Arendt’s thought gives rise to many contradictions and inconsistencies. She neither applies her own distinctions systematically, nor worries about her un-systematicity. In this regard, Arendt could apply her characterization of Marx to herself. She maintains, “[s]uch fundamental and flagrant contradictions rarely occur in second-rate writers; in the work of the great authors they lead into the very center of their work.”<sup>34</sup>

What is more, deciphering Arendt’s notion of political judgment is difficult because the intended third chapter on “Judging” in *The Life of the Mind* remains unfinished. The page left in Arendt’s typewriter only contained two epigraphs.<sup>35</sup> However, Arendt’s gloss on reflective judgment in her *Lectures*, along with scattered remarks across several essays, indicate that she would have developed a political theory of

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<sup>32</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Introduction,” *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 166.

<sup>34</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 104-105.

<sup>35</sup> The first is cited at the beginning of this Introduction. The second is from Goethe’s *Faust*.

judgment by way of reflective judgment.<sup>36</sup> In addition to these sparse resources, I will use Arendt's untranslated personal notes (*Denktagebuch*) to glean a better understanding of her conception of political judgment.<sup>37</sup>

Teasing out Arendt's conception of political judgment will show that it comes strikingly close to Kant's conception of reflective judgment. While political and aesthetic judgments do not align perfectly, they hold the following four elements in common: enlarged mentality, the "two mental operations in judgment,"<sup>38</sup> the establishment of an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule, and public discourse. Unfortunately, it is unclear how these four aspects of political judgment work, let alone how they fit together. However, bringing Arendt closer to Kant will not only illuminate her own conception of political judgment, but it will also substantiate her claim that she brings his unwritten political philosophy to fruition. This will lead me to the conclusion that she stays truer to Kant than her critics give her credit for. I will make my case in six stages, which reflect six chapters.

### Chapter One: The Private Realm

The aim of Chapter One is to explore the reasons why Arendt's distinction between the private and public realms has been read as uncompromisingly

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<sup>36</sup> Ronald Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures*, 91.

<sup>37</sup> The translations of selected notes from Arendt's *Denktagebuch* are my own. I would like to thank Andrea Boudin for proofing and helping me finalize them.

<sup>38</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 68. For Kant, the corresponding mental operation is the harmony of the cognitive powers.

stark.<sup>39</sup> Her strict separation of these two realms also leads to the common misconception that private and political activities are sharply opposed. I will show that Arendt does not do herself any favors to avoid these common misconceptions. For one, she prioritizes the human activities that are responsible for creating the political world over the private activities that require withdrawal from it. As a result, Arendt prioritizes the *vita activa* (active life) over the *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life).

Furthermore, the private-public distinction is sharpened by the fact that Arendt establishes a hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself. She separates private from public activities by distinguishing between their spatial location, motive, and the conditions that make them possible. Since Arendt believes that private activities lack all of the characteristics of public ones, she regards the private realm as “privative,” that is, as “deprived”<sup>40</sup> of the plurality, publicity, and reality afforded by the public sphere.

## Chapter Two: The Non-Privative Realm

The aim of Chapter Two is to show that Arendt’s separation of the private and public realms is not as stark as it seems. To make my case, I will develop an ‘Arendtian phenomenology’ of privacy. By following Arendt’s own distinctions, I will provide a descriptive account of an underappreciated aspect of the private realm, namely, “the non-privative

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<sup>39</sup> Margaret Canovan (1985); Sophie Loidolt (2018); Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves (1994); Hannah Pitkin (1981); and Eli Zaretsky (1997) are examples of proponents of this view.

<sup>40</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 60.

characteristic of privacy.”<sup>41</sup> My claim is that the private realm consists of two parts: the privative household and the non-privative space of withdrawal. Whereas the former opposes the political realm, the latter is directed toward it. Uncovering the non-privative sphere thus shows an inter-dependence between the private and public realms without compromising Arendt’s strict demarcations.

Although Arendt did not work this out herself, it is consistent with her thought to locate in non-privacy the activities that can neither take place in the privative household nor in the public sphere. These activities are the work of the *homo faber* and representative thinking. This suggests that the political world is not only created by the political activities of speech and action. Instead, both non-privative and political activities constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the generation and stabilization of the political realm.

### Chapter Three: Misreading Arendt

The aim of Chapter Three is to show that it is more consistent with Arendt’s own thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective activity. In order to make my case, I will argue against two claims in the secondary literature. On the one hand, Arendt’s categorization of enlarged mentality as a political ability has led to the common misconception that she conceives of it as a public phenomenon.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Arendt’s

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>42</sup> Lisa Disch (1993); Flynn (1988); Passerin d’Entrèves (1994); Pitkin (1981); and Iris Marion Young, (2001) are examples of proponents of this view.

claim has led many to unfairly accuse her of misappropriating reflective judgment. Ronald Beiner, Annelies Degryse, Andrew Norris, and Majid Yar argue that Arendt ‘empiricizes’ or ‘detranscendentalizes’ reflective judgment.<sup>43,44</sup> For Kant, enlarged mentality is made possible by the *a priori* principle of *sensus communis* (common sense), not by publicly discussing aesthetic judgments with others. This leads Arendt’s critics to conclude that she makes an unjustified leap from hypothetical to public discourse.

In contrast, I will show that Arendt does not fall prey to either of these criticisms. First, Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that she does not misread Kant’s conception of enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon. This leads me to believe that her critics are the ones who make an unjustified leap from hypothetical to public debate by misreading Arendt. Second, if we read Arendt more consistently with her own thought, it becomes clear that she also views enlarged mentality as a reflective ability. My analysis will show that Arendt comes closer to Kant than her critics give her credit for.

#### Chapter Four: Impartiality

The aim of Chapter Four is to show that Arendt can turn to reflective judgment for the impartiality required for political judgment. Kateb observes that Arendt is unclear about how the impartiality of political

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<sup>43</sup> Beiner (1992; 2001); Annelies Degryse (2011); Norris (1996); Majid Yar (2000).

<sup>44</sup> ‘Detranscendentalizing’ and ‘empiricizing’ mean the same thing. As we will see, it means appropriating a transcendental principle as an empirical or worldly phenomenon. Therefore, I will use these terms synonymously.

judgment is achieved.<sup>45</sup> However, Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that it is achieved in a similar manner as the impartiality of reflective judgment. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant will lead me to draw three conclusions.

First, it disproves the common misconception that Arendt appropriates enlarged mentality as a moral ability.<sup>46</sup> Instead, it is more consistent with her thought to designate enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability associated with political decision-making. Enlarged mentality contributes to establishing impartiality by ensuring the public communicability of judgments. It directly prepares persons for political participation by giving them the ability to participate in public debate.

Second, I disagree with Degryse that the two mental operations of judgment lead Arendt further away from Kant.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, I will show that they rather illuminate Arendt's affinity to Kant. For Kant and Arendt, the two mental operations contribute to obtaining a standpoint of impartiality by freeing persons of the immediacy of worldly events. This leads me to the third conclusion. Arendt aligns herself with Kant, insofar as the two mental operations pave the way for creating an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule by which to judge political events. Bringing Arendt

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<sup>45</sup> Kateb (2001); Norris (1996) makes a similar point.

<sup>46</sup> Beiner (1992); Benhabib (1988; 2003); Degryse (2011); Disch (1993); Garsten (2007); Patrick Riley (1987); Young (2001).

<sup>47</sup> Annelies Degryse, "*Sensus communis* as a foundation for men as political beings: Arendt's reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37(3) (2011): 349.

closer to the reflective nature of aesthetic judgment thus sheds light on her own conception of political judgment.

#### Chapter Five: Bridging the *A priori* – *A Posteriori* Divide

The aim of this chapter is to show that Arendt can bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way Kant could not. Since he was limited by transcendental principles, he could not link the communicability of reflective judgment to a human community. While Arendt departs from Kant by empiricizing his notion of communicability, she nevertheless remains true to the spirit of his thought. Since she is not limited by transcendental principles, she can bridge the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide. Although Arendt did not have the opportunity to work this out, she indicated a potential plan. Namely, the imagination has the potential to bridge these two realms. This leads me to believe that the imagination also has the potential to bridge the non-private and public realms.

In order to show that Arendt can map Kant's anticipated dialogue with others onto her own notion of public discourse, I will reject the claim that she aestheticizes politics. Beiner, Bernstein, Jürgen Habermas, and Albrecht Wellmer argue that the subjectivity of reflective judgment does not have the potential to uphold and sustain Arendt's conception of public discourse.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, I argue that aesthetic judgments do not silence public debate, but rather have the potential to spark and maintain it.

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<sup>48</sup> Beiner (1992); Bernstein (1983); Jürgen Habermas (1977); Albrecht Wellmer (2001).



## Chapter Six: Kant's Unwritten Political Philosophy

The aim of this chapter is to justify Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. Her claim that the general validity of reflective judgment can only be realized in a human community is correct. Steven DeCaroli shows that Kant undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment himself.<sup>49</sup> This is the case because Kant sets empirical examples as "precedent" (5:282) to verify the validity of aesthetic judgments. This suggests that the general validity of reflective judgment is not only established by theoretically extending it to others. But it must also be tested against historically and communally validated standards of exemplary taste.

Furthermore, I will bring Arendt closer to Kant by showing that political principles play the same role as empirical examples in finalizing the validity of political judgments. When persons enact political principles in the world, their words and deeds serve as shared standards of exemplarity. In turn, actualized political principles can be used as general guideposts by which to measure the validity of political judgments. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant thus offers a fuller picture of her conception of political judgment.

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<sup>49</sup> Steven DeCaroli, "A Capacity for Agreement: Hannah Arendt and the *Critique of Judgment*," *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 2007): 374.

These six stages reveal a new reading of Arendt's thought that has the potential to bring Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition.

## Chapter One

### The Private Realm

*Sight may be present in the eyes, and the one who has it may try to use it, and colors may be present in things, but unless a third kind of thing is present, which is naturally adapted for this very purpose, you know that sight will see nothing, and the colors will remain unseen ... Then it isn't an insignificant kind of link that connects the sense of sight and the power to be seen – it is a more valuable link than any other linked things have got, if indeed light is something valuable.*

– Plato<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the reasons why Arendt's distinction between the private and public realms has been read as uncompromisingly stark.<sup>2</sup> Her strict separation of these two realms also leads to the common misconception that private and public activities are sharply opposed. I will show that Arendt does not do herself any favors to avoid these common misconceptions. For one, she prioritizes the human activities that are responsible for creating the political world over the private activities that require withdrawal from it. As a result, Arendt elevates the *vita activa* (active life) over the *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life). Whereas the former comprises of the human activities of labor, work, speech and action, the latter comprises of the mental activities of thinking, willing, and judging. Arendt elevates the active over the contemplative life because human activities, directly or indirectly, make the political world

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Republic*. Translated by G.M.A Grube. Revised by C.D.C. Reeve. *Plato: Complete Works*. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), (507e-508a).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Canovan (1985); Sophie Loidolt (2018); Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves (1994); Hannah Pitkin (1981); and Eli Zaretsky (1997) are examples of proponents of this view.

possible. She thus demotes the contemplative life because mental activities require retreating from the political world.

Furthermore, the private-public distinction is sharpened by the fact that Arendt establishes a hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself. This is the case because she separates private from public activities according to a *spatial divide*. Whereas labor and work must take place in the confines of the private household,<sup>3</sup> political speech and action must take place in the public realm. Furthermore, the *motives* that guide private and public activities stand in stark contrast to each other. Whereas the household is marked by the self-interest of the family, the public realm is marked by the common interest of the political community. This leads Arendt to conceive of the household in a pejorative sense, insofar as it lacks the *conditions* that characterize the public realm. The private sphere is thus “privative,” since one is “deprived”<sup>4</sup> of the plurality, publicity, and reality afforded by the public sphere.

## 1. The Public and the Private Realms

### 1.1 *Two Ways of Life*

Arendt’s opposition between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* is the result of her methodology in pursuing the fundamental task she sets for political thinking. As Arendt explains in *The Human Condition*, the

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<sup>3</sup> Work will be broached in Chapter Two, since I wish to locate it in another side of the private realm that is underappreciated in the secondary literature, namely, what Arendt calls the “non-privative characteristic of privacy” (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 71).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

task of political thinking is simply “to think what we are doing.”<sup>5</sup> What she means is that the central concern of political thought is to analyze the human condition, which consists of the activities that we characteristically engage in as human beings. Thus, analyzing them should lead to an understanding of ‘what we are doing.’ For Arendt, there are two components that constitute the human condition. (1) The *vita activa*, which encompasses the human activities of labor, work, and action. (2) The *vita contemplativa*, which encompasses the mental activities of thinking, willing, and judging.

In an attempt to understand these activities, Arendt groups them under strict and narrow categories, which pits the active and contemplative life against one another. As Margaret Canovan observes, “much of her own work consisted in the establishment of distinctions between categories,” which leads Arendt to employ “distinctions to mark off the areas she explored, erecting boundaries between categories ... with the enthusiasm of a medieval schoolman.”<sup>6</sup> The fundamental distinction Arendt draws between the active and contemplative life is their *relationship to politics*. She thus understands both ways of life from the viewpoint of the active life. Whereas the human activities that comprise the *vita activa* are all “somehow related to politics,”<sup>7</sup> the mental activities that comprise the *vita*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” *History of Political Thought* Vol. 6., No. 3 (Winter 1985): 617. Canovan refers to Mary McCarthy’s depiction of Arendt in “Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1979), 337.

<sup>7</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

*contemplativa* are all related to the self. As Arendt explains, “although there are great differences among these activities, they all have in common a *withdrawal* from the world as it appears and a bending back toward the self.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, human activities are directed toward the establishment of the public sphere, whereas mental activities attempt to escape it.

Putting the active and contemplative lives in their respective categories thus leads to the sharp opposition between the public and private realms. Since the *vita activa* is fundamentally world-oriented, it is always, directly or indirectly, associated with the public realm. Arendt maintains, “[t]he *vita activa*, human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something, is always rooted in a world of men and of man-made things which it never leaves or altogether transcends.”<sup>9,10</sup> The active life thus creates the worldly aspects of the human condition, insofar as human activities provide the conditions under which human beings can live on this earth. This goes to show that both the human condition and the world are artificial precisely because they are human-made.<sup>11</sup> However, the human condition is bound to the artificial life human beings can erect on

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<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Although Arendt typically uses male pronouns and masculine nouns, I have consciously opted for gender-inclusive language. Therefore, either when citing Arendt or when referring to male figures, I will use male pronouns and masculine nouns. Otherwise, I will use female or gender-neutral pronouns, as well as all-inclusive terms, such as ‘humankind’ or ‘persons.’

<sup>11</sup> It is important to keep in mind that, for Arendt, these conditions are *worldly*, insofar as they arise from the participation in the human activities that constitute the *vita activa*.

this planet.<sup>12</sup> As Arendt says, “[t]he earth is the very quintessence of the human condition.”<sup>13</sup> In this way, the earth is what makes it possible to construct an artificial life in the first place.

Each activity that comprises the *vita activa* relates to a condition that characterizes the life we lead as human beings.<sup>14</sup> First, labor is the activity that manages the biological life process, and thus relates to the condition of “life itself.”<sup>15</sup> Along with the condition of life come two other conditions as natural consequences of the life cycle, i.e., natality and mortality. That is, the fact that persons can always initiate something new, and the fact that their lifespan is limited. Second, work is the activity that fabricates the “unnatural” or “artificial”<sup>16</sup> world in which human beings can live, and thus relates to the condition of worldliness. Typically, Arendt refers to this artificial world as ‘the common world’ or ‘the human artifice.’<sup>17</sup> It is tangible, insofar as it consists of use-objects that allow persons ‘to go about their daily lives.’<sup>18</sup> Examples of use-objects can

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, Arendt begins the “Prologue” of *The Human Condition* with her concern that the first Earth satellite, Sputnik, shifted our perspective from considering ourselves as “earth-bound creatures” to “dwellers of the universe” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 3). The problem with this shift is that it exceeds the artificiality of human existence. The human condition is artificial, insofar as human activities create both a tangible and intangible world in which human beings live. However, since it is bound to the earth, widening the scope of artificiality carries with it “the wish to escape the human condition” (Ibid., 2). In other words, the desire to dominate space and potentially live on another planet extricates us from the very conditions of what it means to lead a human life. Therefore, in order to assuage these concerns, Arendt suggests focusing on the human activities that constitute our human condition. As she explains, “[w]hat I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing” (Ibid., 5).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The human artifice will be detailed in Chapter Two because I will locate the human activity of work in the non-privative side of privacy.

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Introduction into Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 99.

include publicly shared goods, such as parks, streets, buildings, sidewalks, and means of transportation. They can also include privately owned goods, such as furniture, personal possessions, and tools.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Arendt operates with another conception of the world, which is created by the third activity that comprises the *vita activa*, namely, political speech and action.<sup>20</sup> She has several names for this conception of the world. At times, Arendt refers to it as the space of appearances, the political world, politics, human affairs, or simply as the world, the public, or the *polis* (city). While this blurs the distinction between the human artifice and the space of appearances, it is usually clear based on the context which iteration of the world she has in mind.<sup>21</sup>

While distinct, both conceptions of the world constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of the public realm. She claims that the public realm “is related ... to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.”<sup>22</sup> However, unlike the human artifact, the political world is intangible, insofar as it consists of a network

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<sup>19</sup> While both common and private possessions technically contribute to the human artifact, we will see in Chapter Two that Arendt distinguishes between the two, insofar as the latter must be protected from the former.

<sup>20</sup> While Arendt only lists action as part of the *vita activa* at the outset of *The Human Condition*, it becomes clear later on that speech is also a political activity, and indeed inherently tied to action. As she says, “[n]o other human performance requires speech to the same extent as action” (Ibid., 179). Therefore, I have included speech alongside action in order to give it its rightful place in the active life.

<sup>21</sup> In this chapter, I will make an effort to distinguish between the human artifact and the space of appearances. However, in subsequent chapters, I will follow Arendt by using ‘the world’ and ‘the political world’ interchangeably, unless explicitly when making a comparison between the political world and the human artifact.

<sup>22</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.



of human relationships.<sup>23</sup> For they are centered on and emerge from the immaterial activities of speech and action. She clarifies, “[w]e call this reality the ‘web’ of human relationships, indicating by metaphor its somewhat intangible quality.”<sup>24</sup> As we will see, political activities relate to the condition of plurality.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, since the *vita contemplativa* is fundamentally related to the self, it is relegated to the private realm. Therefore, what sharpens the divide between the public and private realms is that neither way of life can be pursued in the opposing realm. Consequently, Arendt ends up with an uncompromising *spatial divide* between the realms in which certain activities can take place. Seyla Benhabib attributes this to what she calls Arendt’s “phenomenological essentialism.”<sup>26</sup> Benhabib defines it as Arendt’s conviction “that each type of human activity has a proper ‘place’ in which it can be carried out.”<sup>27</sup> Whereas human activities are directed toward the space of appearances in some way,<sup>28</sup> she maintains that mental activities “cannot come into being except through a deliberate *withdrawal* from”<sup>29</sup> it. Therefore, when it comes to mental activities, the

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<sup>23</sup> The immateriality of the political world will be delineated in Section 2 of this chapter (2. Politics: The Space of Appearances, 2.1 *The Role of the Citizen*).

<sup>24</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 183.

<sup>25</sup> Plurality will be explained in greater detail in Section 2 of this chapter (2. Politics: The Space of Appearances, 2.3 *Plurality: The Condition for Political Activities*).

<sup>26</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought: The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 123.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>28</sup> In the following sub-section, we will see that Arendt erects a strict division within the *vita activa* itself. Whereas labor and work take place in privacy, speech and action take place in public.

<sup>29</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 75.

corresponding spatial location is retreating from the world into the private realm.

Retiring from the world is necessary to activate mental activities, seeing as the goings-on of the world disrupt one's ability to turn inward. This is confirmed when Arendt maintains that we cannot possibly think in public. She says, "[d]oing and living in the most general sense of *inter homines esse*, 'being among my fellowmen' ... positively prevents thinking."<sup>30</sup> Her point is that thinking cannot take place in public because the presence of others interrupts one's train of thought. Therefore, the activity of thinking and the activities of speech and action are mutually exclusive. It means that they cannot take place at the same time. As Jerome Kohn explains:

Thinking is *self*-reflective, whereas an agent can act only with others than himself; and the activity of thinking, which takes place in solitude, stops when a thinker begins to act, just as the activity of acting, which requires the company of others, stops when an agent begins to think himself.<sup>31</sup>

Thinking and acting are mutually exclusive precisely because the former requires reflection, whereas the latter requires engaged participation. As Arendt claims, mental activities are "reflexive," insofar as "the mental agent cannot be active except by acting, implicitly or explicitly, back on himself."<sup>32</sup> Speech and action thus eclipse one's ability to turn inward, and thinking eclipses the ability to speak and interact with others. This

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<sup>30</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 176.

<sup>31</sup> Jerome Kohn, "Introduction," *Responsibility and Judgment*, xxi.

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, "Thinking," *The Life of the Mind*, 74.

shows that mental activities require the peace and quiet of solitude, which cannot be gained in the public sphere.

Furthermore, the third and last mental activity that Arendt attributes to the contemplative life is willing.<sup>33</sup> The will shares with political activities that it has the potential to initiate something new. She thus defines “the Will as an organ for the future and identical with the power of beginning something new.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly to speech and action, the will has the capacity to introduce infinitely new and unexpected possibilities in the political world. However, unlike speech and action, willing does not unfold between persons in the public realm, but rather in the interiority of the mind. This is the case because willing does not directly concern the fulfillment of the action, but rather the *anticipation* of its fulfillment.<sup>35</sup> Arendt thus defines willing as the “*urge* to act, any impulse to make a project, in short, any form of the I-will.”<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, willing is not a public phenomenon, but rather a “mental endowment,”<sup>37</sup> as it concerns “our *awareness* that we could also have left undone what we actually did.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, the will is the ‘awareness’ that persons are capable of committing the “infinitely improbable.”<sup>39</sup> We can therefore see that she maintains a sharp division between the *vita contemplativa* and *activa*,

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<sup>33</sup> While willing is the third mental activity that constitutes the life of the mind, for Arendt, analyzing it in greater detail exceeds the scope of this project. In order to justify Arendt’s appropriation of reflective judgment, the relevant mental activities are thinking and judging.

<sup>34</sup> Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, 29.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 195.

<sup>38</sup> Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, 5; emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178.

insofar as they differ in their relation to the political world, as well as in the spheres in which they can unfold.

### *1.2 Arendt's Inversion of the Two Ways of Life*

Arendt's aim in *The Human Condition* is to rescue the *vita activa* from its subordination to the *vita contemplativa*.<sup>40</sup> In particular, she singles out the Socratic School and Aristotle as the source of the denigration of the *vita activa* and the elevation of the *vita contemplativa*. Thus, the sharp opposition between the active and contemplative life reaches back to “the conflict between the philosopher and the *polis*.”<sup>41</sup> While she adopts the terms to describe the active and contemplative life, she employs the *vita activa* “in manifest contradiction to the tradition.”<sup>42</sup> Precisely because she seeks to elevate the human activities of speech and action to their proper rank. Her objective is to analyze the human activities that constitute the *vita activa*, without the term being “loaded and overloaded by tradition.”<sup>43</sup> What she means is that she wishes to take stock of the active life without the preconceived notion that speech and action deserve less consideration because they do not yield as pure and beautiful products as the

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, Arendt also wishes to rescue the *vita activa* from “[t]he modern reversal” (Ibid., 17) sparked by Marx and Nietzsche. From her perspective, Marx inverts the “hierarchical order” (Ibid.) of the *vita contemplativa* to the *vita activa* by elevating labor as the highest human capacity (Ibid., 85). However, in doing so, Marx reduces the human condition to meeting the biological needs of life (Ibid., 86). Since Arendt is not only critical of labor, but also of elevating one human activity, and hence one way of life, over the other, she rejects ‘the modern reversal.’ Certainly, her critique of Marx plays a major role in the development of her conception of the *vita activa*, specifically when it comes to the distinction she draws between labor and work (see “Chapter III: Labor” in *The Human Condition*, 79ff.). However, seeing as Arendt traces the inversion of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* to Plato and Aristotle, I will limit the above analysis to ‘the ancient reversal.’

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 12.

contemplative life.<sup>44</sup> As a result, Arendt ends up subordinating the *vita contemplativa* to the *vita activa*.

According to Arendt, the active life became inferior to the contemplative life when the Socratic School discovered “contemplation (*theoria*) as a human faculty;”<sup>45</sup> and when Aristotle designated as “man’s highest capacity” “not speech or reason, but *nous*, the capacity of contemplation, whose chief characteristic is that its content cannot be rendered in speech.”<sup>46</sup> In emphasizing the mental capacity of contemplation over the human capacities of speech and action, they relegated the latter to meeting “the necessities of earthly life.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, the life typically associated with the citizen, who actively shapes the *polis*, was associated with the laborer, who is tied to meeting the demands of the natural life cycle.

The subordination of action to contemplation was the result of two inter-related factors. Firstly, the contemplative life sought to free itself from the noise and chaos of human affairs because contemplation requires absolute quiet and isolation. As Arendt explains:

Every movement, the movements of body and soul as well as of speech and reasoning, must cease before truth. Truth, be it the ancient truth of Being or the Christian truth of the living God, can reveal itself only in complete human stillness.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 14; see also Ibid., 85. Arendt therefore concludes, “[t]raditionally, therefore, the term *vita activa* receives its meaning from the *vita contemplativa*; its very restricted dignity is bestowed upon it because it serves the needs and wants of contemplation in a living body,” (Ibid., 16).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 15.

While she traces the primacy of the contemplative life to Plato and Aristotle, it is also reflected in “the later Christian claim to be free from entanglement in worldly affairs.”<sup>49</sup> As a result, the *vita contemplativa* became “the only truly free way of life,”<sup>50</sup> that is, free from the “*askholia* (‘unquiet’)”<sup>51</sup> of human affairs and the necessities of the body.

Ridding oneself of worldly and bodily concerns thus leads into the second factor for elevating contemplation over action. This is the case because, for both Plato and Aristotle, and the Christian tradition, the products of human activities pale in comparison to the products of philosophical contemplation or religious revelation. Arendt thus claims:

The primacy of contemplation over activity rests on the conviction that no work of human hands can equal in beauty and truth the physical *kosmos*, which swings in itself in changeless eternity without any interference or assistance from outside, from man or god.<sup>52</sup>

Whereas the beauty and vitality of human products will inevitably fade, the beauty and vitality of eternal and unchanging truths will always remain. Since the purity and longevity of the products of philosophical and religious contemplation usurp “the ‘work of human hands,’”<sup>53</sup> it is no wonder why the *vita contemplativa* became superior to the *vita activa*.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 15; see also Ibid., 13.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 91.

Arendt thus seeks to save the *vita activa* from its inferiority to the *vita contemplativa*. However, it is important to keep in mind that it is not her objective to reverse the hierarchy by replacing the primacy of contemplation with action. She claims that it is not her intention to establish one and “the same central human preoccupation” which “prevail[s] in all activities of men.”<sup>54</sup> Instead, Arendt holds that her “use of the term *vita activa* presupposes that the concern underlying all its activities is not the same as and is neither superior nor inferior to the central concern of the *vita contemplativa*.”<sup>55</sup> While she claims that she does not wish to give one way of life priority over the other, she unfortunately does not achieve her goal.

As we saw previously, she sharply distinguishes between the self-oriented mental capacities that comprise the contemplative life and the world-oriented human activities that comprise the active life. This leads Arendt to invert the traditional hierarchy of these two ways of life, and to set action as the highest activity that comprises the human condition. This is the result of two inter-related reasons. First, not until her last and unfinished work, *The Life of the Mind*, her main priority was to preserve the integrity and continuity of the political world. As noted in the Introduction, Arendt’s concern with safeguarding politics from its disappearance can be attributed to the major political events that shaped the political landscape of her lifetime: totalitarianism, the 1930 refugee

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

crisis, the Holocaust, and the Eichmann trial. Thus, due to her philosophical reflections on her personal experiences and the collective concerns of her time, it is not at all a surprise why protecting the political world becomes her first priority.

Second, and as a result of her concern to safeguard politics, Arendt emphasizes the priority of the public sphere over the private sphere. This has to do with the fact that the two central activities that directly shape and uphold politics are speech and action. It thus seems that she does, in fact, raise one and “the same central human preoccupation” which “prevail[s] in all activities of men.”<sup>56</sup> For instance, Hanna Pitkin remarks, since Arendt “was so determined to save the public realm and political freedom,”<sup>57</sup> she “often sounded as if her only concern were with the first dimension of publicness: with publicity, the competitive striving for a memorable public image.”<sup>58</sup> Or, as Maurizio Passarín d’Entrèves explains, Arendt:

accords action the central place in the hierarchy of human activities and endows it with the potential to realize our highest human capacities, such as freedom and individuality. Moreover, in giving primacy to the category of action, Arendt is attempting to recover those features of human experience – such as innovation, plurality, membership, and remembrance – which

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Hanna Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public,” *Political Theory* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Aug., 1981): 339-340. In particular, Pitkin criticizes Arendt for leaving out the question of justice from politics (Ibid., 338-342). For Arendt, justice does not belong in the political realm because it is a “dangerous economic and social concern” having to do with “the hungry and passionate poor who would destroy what was to be saved,” i.e., “political freedom” (Ibid., 340). As we will see in Section 2, Arendt also establishes a sharp divide between the private, public, and social spheres, which leads her to exclude social concerns from politics (2. Politics: The Space of Appearances, 2.1 *The Role of the Citizen*).

<sup>58</sup> Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public,” 340.



have been denigrated by the tradition of political philosophy that originated with Plato.<sup>59,60</sup>

Elevating speech and action to the “political activit[ies] *par excellence*”<sup>61</sup> thus leads Arendt to prioritize them over the three mental activities that comprise the *vita contemplativa*. Whereas Plato and Aristotle denigrate the life of the citizen to the laborer, Arendt elevates the life of the citizen over the laborer, who is tied to meeting the demands of the life cycle; as well as over the *homo faber*, who is tied to constructing the human artifice.

In fact, the inferiority of mental activities to the political activities of speech and action is exacerbated by her denigration of the private sphere. This has to do with two inter-related factors. Firstly, and symptomatic of her phenomenological essentialism, Arendt erects a hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself. As Passarin d’Entrèves remarks, whereas speech and action “can only take place in a public sphere,” “labor and work take place in the private sphere.”<sup>62</sup> This is the case because, similarly to the activities that constitute the life of the mind, labor and work require withdrawal

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<sup>59</sup> Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 66. And he continues, “but whose importance for political life was recognized by Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Tocqueville, and which found expression in the Greek *polis*, the Renaissance republics and in the formative stages of modern revolutions” (Ibid.).

<sup>60</sup> Richard Bernstein echoes this sentiment when he explains, “Arendt’s chief intellectual concern became the attempt to recover what is distinction about the *vita activa*, and especially the highest form of human activity – what she calls action (*praxis*). To her this was not just an intellectual problem but the most vital issue of modern times. She felt that professional thinkers from Plato on had tended to distort the nature of action and politics, and that in the modern world a catastrophic reversal within the *vita activa* had taken place, resulting in the victory of a fabricating and laboring mentality” (Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 181).

<sup>61</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Passerin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 35.

from the political world in order to perform their respective functions. The spatial divide evinced within the active life itself thus reinforces Arendt's prioritization of speech and action.

Secondly, and as a result, she denigrates the private realm because the *motive* that guides private activities is antithetical to the motive that guides the political community. This is the case because she follows the ancient Greeks by reducing the private realm to the household. By remaining with the ancient Greeks, Arendt demotes the household the locus of self-interest, which is sustained by the human activity of labor. In contrast, the motive of the public sphere is common interest, which is sustained by the human activities of speech and action. Arendt insists, "the decisive division between the public and private realms, between the sphere of the *polis* and the sphere of the household and family" is owed to the distinction "between activities related to a common world and those related to the maintenance of life."<sup>63</sup> Thus, what exacerbates the tensions between the private and public realms is that the motive of the household stands in direct conflict with the public realm. In the following, I will explore Arendt's indebtedness to the ancient Greek conception of the household in order to explain why she denigrates the household, which will shed light on the sharp opposition between the private and public realms.

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<sup>63</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28.

### 1.3 The Denigration of the Household

It is difficult to decipher where Arendt's description of the ancient Greeks ends and where her own interpretation begins. However, what is clear is that the private and public realms are antithetical to each other, insofar as their motives stand in direct conflict with each other. Whereas the household (*oikos*) is motivated by the self-interest of survival, or 'what is one's own,' the *polis* (city) is motivated by common interest of the political community, or 'what is shared.' She explains:

According to Greek thought, the human capacity for political organization is not only different but stands in direct opposition to that natural association whose center is the home (*oika*) and the family. The rise of the city-state meant that man received 'besides his private life a sort of second life, his *bios politikos*. Now every citizen belongs to two orders of existence; and there is a sharp distinction in his life between what is his own (*idion*) and what is communal (*koinon*).'<sup>64</sup>

Arendt thus follows the ancient Greeks by identifying the household with necessity, since the task of the family is to sustain the 'needs and wants' of life. As she has it, "[t]he distinctive trait of the household sphere was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs."<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the guiding concern of the household is self-interest, which is synonymous with necessity, that is, caring for one's own wellbeing and that of the family.

For the ancient Greeks, the household was not only the sphere of necessity, but also of inequality and violence. The private realm thus

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 24. Arendt cites Werner Jaeger, *Paideia* (1945), III, 111.

<sup>65</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 30.

strictly opposes the freedom and equality gained in the public sphere. In the household, one is unfree because one is subject to the ‘needs and wants’ of life; and one is unequal because all activities, even life and death, were dominated by the father. As Arendt tells us, the power with which “the *pater familias*, the *dominus*, ruled over his household of slaves and family”<sup>66</sup> was absolute. Consequently, a hierarchy between the *ruler* and the *ruled* emerges, which was enforced by means of violence. She explains, “to force people by violence ... were prepolitical ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside of the *polis*, of home and family life, where the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers.”<sup>67</sup> While Arendt does not necessarily conceive of the household as being ruled by the *dominus*, what she does carry over from the ancient Greeks is that the household is the sphere of necessity and the absence of freedom.<sup>68</sup>

For Arendt, the household is linked to necessity and unfreedom because one is ruled by the exigencies of life. Therefore, she relegates the human activity of labor to the household, seeing as its purpose is to sustain the biological functions of life. Laboring thus includes, but is not limited to, financially providing for the family, meeting the demands of “growth,

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>68</sup> The household could also be seen as the realm of violence, for Arendt, insofar as labor destroys natural materials. Since laboring is characterized by an incessant process of production and consumption, it denotes a “destructive, devouring aspect” (Ibid., 100). As she explains, “[b]oth are devouring processes that seize and destroy matter, and the ‘work’ done by labor upon its material is only the preparation for its eventual destruction” (Ibid.).

metabolism, and eventual decay,”<sup>69</sup> and procreation. Traditionally, in the *oikos*,

individual maintenance should be the task of the man and species survival the task of the woman was obvious, and both of these natural functions, the labor of man to provide nourishment and the labor of the woman giving birth, were subject to the same urgency of life. Natural community in the household therefore was born of necessity, and necessity ruled over all activities performed in it.<sup>70</sup>

While this is an outdated dynamic, Arendt’s point is that the family is *ruled* by necessity, and hence is *unfree*.

Specifically, when persons adopt the self-interest associated with survival, they adopt the role of the *animal laborans*, i.e., of the laborer. The *animal laborans* is unfree because they are chained to a means-to-ends mentality. Their task is to create ‘consumer products’<sup>71</sup> in order to feed the ‘needs and wants’ of life. Since sustaining the natural life cycle is an endless process, laboring is associated with infinite repetition and consumption. As she has it, “[l]abor, caught in the cyclical movement of the body’s life process, has neither a beginning nor an end.”<sup>72</sup> This means that the products of labor are consumed as soon as they are created. As Arendt explains:

It is indeed the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent. And yet this effort, despite its futility, is born of a great urgency and motivated by a more powerful drive than anything else, because life itself depends on it.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>71</sup> Specifically, Arendt calls them “consumer goods” (Ibid., 94).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 87.

The laborer is thus unfree precisely because they “liv[e] from hand to mouth.”<sup>74</sup> Feeding the incessant cycle of life therefore prevents the *animal laborans* from adopting the role of the citizen.

Arendt thus ends up with the same rigid divide between the private realm as the space of necessity and unfreedom, and the public realm as the space of equality and freedom, as the ancient Greeks. As Passarin d’Entrèves has it:

The household is the sphere of satisfaction of material needs by means of labor and work carried out in private under the rule of necessity; the *polis* is the sphere of freedom where equality reigns and where citizens act with a view to excellence and distinction, with the aim of achieving a measure of immortality by glorious deeds and memorable words.<sup>75</sup>

In fact, Arendt continues to follow the ancient Greeks in the sense that the only way to inhabit the life of the citizen is to rid oneself of the necessity and self-interest associated with the household.

This means that freedom *from* necessity is a requirement in order to participate in politics. Indeed, she states that what the ancient Greek philosophers “took for granted” was “that necessity is primarily a prepolitical phenomenon, characteristic of the private household organization.”<sup>76</sup> As we saw previously, Arendt maintains that all human activities that comprise the *vita activa* are either directly or indirectly

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>75</sup> Passarin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 35.

<sup>76</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 31.

related to the public realm. In the case of labor, it is only indirectly related to the public realm, insofar as fulfilling the conditions of the ‘needs and wants’ of life enables persons to participate in political activities. Laboring is thus pre-political because it is a requirement for political freedom. As she holds, “if there was a relationship between these two spheres, it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the *polis*.”<sup>77</sup> This means that the private and public realms are only ‘related’ in the sense that the former must be left behind in order to partake in the latter.

However, for the ancient Greeks, as well as the Romans, the ability to enter into the public realm was limited to privileged, adult male property owners. They had the freedom to shape the *polis* precisely because the household needs were managed by the marginalized, that is, by the women and slaves. As Robert Bernasconi explains, the freedom to participate in politics “has historically been confined to the few, but also ... it is bought at the expense of others.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, the liberation from necessity was only made possible by those who were excluded from the public sphere.<sup>79</sup>

While Arendt stays with the ancient Greeks, insofar as labor provides the conditions for the possibility of political participation, she breaks with them by expanding political participation to all. The freedom to partake

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Bernasconi, “The Double Face of the Political and the Social: Hannah Arendt and America’s Racial Divisions,” *Research in Phenomenology* Vol. 26 (1996): 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12ff.

in politics is thus not achieved by relegating certain groups to the private realm to assume the necessities of life for others. Instead, it is achieved simply by shedding the self-interest of survival, and adopting common concern for the public realm. While Arendt carries over the strict divide between these two spheres from the ancient Greeks, she nevertheless makes it possible for all persons to participate in both ways of life.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, citizenship or membership in a political community is a way of life that everyone can inhabit. Entering the public sphere as a citizen thus involves suspending ‘what is one’s own’ and prioritizing ‘what is shared.’ In doing so, one adopts the role of the citizen, who is concerned with creating and maintaining the public sphere with others for its own sake.<sup>81</sup> In the next sub-section, we will see that while shifting priorities

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<sup>80</sup> However, it is important to note that not all interpreters read Arendt in this way. To name a few, Benhabib, Bernasconi, Canovan, and Pitkin, criticize Arendt for establishing too strict criteria for political participation, which excludes certain individuals from the very thing she sets out to achieve, i.e., securing the political world by opening it up to all. This leads Arendt to inconsistent, and at times highly controversial claims, insofar as she excludes certain groups of participating in politics. For instance, Pitkin notes, since Arendt is critical of private activities entering into the public sphere, it also seems that she is critical of “the ‘emancipation’ of workers and women” (Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public,” 336). Pitkin provides the following quote: “[f]rom the beginning of history to our own time it has always been the bodily part of human existence that needed to be hidden in privacy. Hidden away were the laborers who ‘with their bodies minister to the [bodily] needs of life,’ and the women who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the species ... The fact that the modern age emancipated the working classes and the women at nearly the same historical moment must certainly be counted among the characteristics of an age which no longer believes that bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 72-73; cited by Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public,” 336). Another passage that supports the aforementioned reading is when Arendt says, “[t]his space [the public realm] does not always exist, and although all men are capable of deed and word, most of them – like the slave, the foreigner, and the barbarian in antiquity, like the laborer or craftsman prior to the modern age, the jobholder or businessman in our world – do not live in it” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199). Pitkin thus implies that Arendt’s conception of politics operates with a fundamental injustice that clearly runs counter to its core values of equality, dignity, and freedom. As Pitkin asks, “[c]an it be that Arendt held so contemptible a doctrine – one that denies the possibility of freedom, a truly human life, and even reality, to all but a handful of males who dominate all others and exclude them by violence and privilege?” (Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public,” 336).

<sup>81</sup> It is important to keep in mind that Arendt does not mean ‘citizens of the world,’ who are all united by one world government. She makes clear in “Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the



accounts for a way to mediate between the private and public realms, it underscores the strict division between the two realms.

## 2. Politics: The Space of Appearances

### 2.1 *The Role of the Citizen*

While there is a strict spatial distinction between the private and the public realms, what makes it possible to move between them is, as Benhabib has described it, an *attitudinal distinction*.<sup>82</sup> Even though shifting one's motivation enables persons to physically liaise between the private and public realms, Arendt's attitudinal distinction reinforces the sharp contrast between them. This is the case because adopting the role of the citizen no longer involves caring for 'what is one's own,' that is, individual and familial welfare. Instead, it is defined by caring about the creation and continuity of the public realm. As Canovan explains,

this public realm within which people take action over the affairs of the world is contrasted with the realm of private life, in which one is concerned with one's own well-being and that of those with whom one has personal ties.<sup>83</sup>

Common interest is thus not defined as caring for the individuals who constitute the public realm on a personal level, as one might care about

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World?" that a world state would, in fact, destroy plurality, respect, as well as legal and territorial boundaries. A global state thus thwarts the crucial elements of her conception of politics, as it enforces one political agenda, which for her, is synonymous with tyranny ("Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?," *Men in Dark Times*, (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 81ff).

<sup>82</sup> While Benhabib makes this point regarding the 'attitudinal' division, she makes it in reference to the divide between the public and the social realms (Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 139-140). As we will see shortly, the 'attitudinal' distinction also holds true for social sphere, although it is a perversion of both private and public interests.

<sup>83</sup> Canovan, "Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm," 620.

friends and family members. But rather, as Arendt holds, it is “concerned with the *world as such* and not with those who live in it.”<sup>84</sup>

While this distinction might sound harsh, it is imperative that the interests that guide the private individual and the citizen remain strictly separate. Otherwise, approaching the public realm with private interest threatens the integrity of the political world. Accordingly, what underscores the conflict between these two realms, and indeed underlies Arendt’s desire to strictly separate them, is that self-interest is fundamentally anti-political. As we already saw, she claims that meeting the demands of life is *pre-political* in the sense that it provides the conditions for the possibility of participating in politics. However, the household is also *anti-political* when the self-interest that guides labor encroaches on the political world. If persons do not shed self-interest when entering the public sphere, it not only destroys the distinction between the private and public realms. But it also leads to the emergence of a third realm, which Arendt calls the social,<sup>85</sup> the social realm, or society.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Freedom and Politics, a Lecture,” *Thinking without a Banister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975*, ed. with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2018), 200.

<sup>85</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28.

<sup>86</sup> Specifically, Arendt traces the emergence of the social realm to ‘the modern age.’ She says, “the emergence of the social realm, which is neither private nor public, strictly speaking, is a relatively new phenomenon whose origin coincided with the emergence of the modern age” (Ibid., 27). It is a product of modernity precisely because, as Dana Villa correctly remarks, it was “created by the rise of market society, the Industrial Revolution, and the emergence of capitalism” (Dana Villa, *Arendt* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 145). When private interests creep into politics, it turns the concern of the state or government into managing the biological ‘needs and wants’ of life (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 45). The function of governing bodies is thus “pure administration” (Ibid.) of the life process. According to Arendt, the reduction of political governance to sheer bureaucracy, and the reduction of the political community to a society that pursues one interest alone, paved the way for politics to be regulated by economics and statistics (Ibid., 42). Since society turns political interactions into predictable “patterns of behavior” (Ibid.), she concludes, “[t]he uniform behavior that

What is characteristic of the social realm is that it ‘blurs’<sup>87</sup> the public-private distinction. Precisely because one does not enter the public realm with the common concern of the citizen, but rather with the self-interest that manages household affairs. Arendt thus defines the social as “that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance.”<sup>88</sup> In particular, self-interest morphs into “social interest”<sup>89</sup> because one views the political community as an extension of the family. Labor thus creeps into and destroys the political world because persons consider others “in the image of the family whose everyday affairs have to be taken care of by a gigantic, nation-wide administration of housekeeping.”<sup>90,91</sup> Social interest thus destroys the public realm, insofar as it replaces the political activities of speech and action with labor.

This substitution ‘functionalizes’ politics, insofar as it reduces the purpose of politics to sustaining the biological life cycle.<sup>92</sup> Arendt therefore claims:

Society is the form in which the fact of mutual dependence for the sake of life and nothing else assumes public significance and

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lends itself to statistical determination, and therefore to scientifically correct prediction, can hardly be explained by the liberal hypothesis of a natural ‘harmony of interests,’ the foundation of ‘classical’ economics; it was not Karl Marx but the liberal economists themselves who had to introduce the ‘communistic fiction,’ that is, to assume that there is one interest of society as a whole which with ‘an invisible hand’ guides the behavior of men and produces the harmony of their conflicting interests” (Ibid., 43-44).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>91</sup> Arendt therefore characterizes the social realm as “societies of laborers and jobholders,” since they “consider whatever they do primarily as a way to sustain their own lives and those of their families” (Ibid., 46).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 33.

where the activities connected with sheer survival are permitted to appear in public.<sup>93</sup>

Since survival dominates the ‘hybrid realm’ of the social, it demands conformity. Thereby, social interest eliminates the freedom characteristic of the public realm. As Arendt claims, “society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action, which formerly was excluded from the household.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, persons lose the freedom to speak and interact with each other for the sake of the *polis*, as they are driven by one and the same concern. She explains, “for society always demands that its members act as though they were members of one enormous family which has only one opinion and one interest.”<sup>95</sup> As a result, the social is not the realm where ‘the infinitely improbable’ is probable, but rather where “certain patterns of behavior”<sup>96</sup> are expected. Being united by one concern thus carries with it the expectation that others will *conform* to acting in the interest of the welfare of society at large. Indeed, this is why Arendt refers to conformism as the “no-man rule.”<sup>97</sup> Meaning, it is not one person or a select group of persons who rules society, but one interest.

Since self-interest pervades the private and public realms, the corrosive effect of the social is that one can no longer distinguish between them. Or put otherwise, one can no longer distinguish between ‘what is one’s own’ and ‘what is common.’ Thus, in an effort to preserve the integrity of the

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 40.

public realm, Arendt does not model common interest on the private interest of the family, but rather on what citizens share – the political world. As she says, “the term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it.”<sup>98</sup> Whereas the household constitutes private property, and is thus ‘what is one’s own,’ the public sphere is a shared space that citizens shape and preserve together. Therefore, as Canovan puts it, “the point of politics is not to further the private interests of citizens.”<sup>99</sup> Instead, Passerin d’Entrèves nicely observes:

The interests of the world are not the interests of the individuals: they are the interests of the public realm which we share as citizens and which we can pursue and enjoy only by going beyond our own self-interest.<sup>100</sup>

Accordingly, common interest and creating the political world are synonymous with each other. “These interests constitute,” as Arendt explains, “in the word’s most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together.”<sup>101</sup> This means that common interest *is* politics.

On the one hand, this shows that, in contrast to labor, speech and action do not create tangible products. Instead, political activities establish intangible relationships between persons. The space of appearances is thus to be understood as an immaterial network of human relationships

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>99</sup> Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” 626.

<sup>100</sup> Passerin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 149.

<sup>101</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182.

centered on speech and action. It is constituted by activities that are immaterial themselves, and thus do not yield, as Arendt has it, “tangible objects into which it could solidify.”<sup>102</sup> Political activities do not create any tangible “products”<sup>103</sup> because they go “on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter.”<sup>104</sup> Instead, they produce intangible bonds between persons that integrate them into a shared world.<sup>105</sup> This is what Arendt means when she says, “[p]olitics arises *between men*, and so quite *outside of man* ... Politics arises in what lies *between men* and is established as relationships.”<sup>106</sup>

On the other hand, this shows that Arendt operates with a much broader conception of politics than its traditional conception.<sup>107</sup> Firstly, politics typically encompasses the activities associated with professional politicians, such as lobbying, campaigning for political posts, or the activities associated with political institutions, such as lawmaking,

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>105</sup> As we will see in the following subsection, given the intangibility of human interactions, it follows that they, along with the political world, are fragile and contingent. We can therefore see why she so strongly stresses the importance of persistent speech and action. Since the products of speech and action are intangible human relationships, the space of appearances is fleeting and transitory. According to Arendt, “the products of action, such as events, deeds, and words, all of which are in themselves so transitory that they would hardly survive the hour or day they appeared in the world” (Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 12). Since they do not result in tangible or durable objects, the cost of the immateriality of human relationships is the risk of the disappearance of the political world.

<sup>106</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 95.

<sup>107</sup> Given her narrow definition of politics, Arendt has been widely criticized for leaving social concerns out of the public sphere. As Canovan explains, “[t]he most commonly noticed feature of her account is a negative one, namely that it is not focused on the socio-economic considerations that dominate familiar notions like ‘the public sector’, ‘public goods’, ‘public services’” (Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” 622). However, given the anti-political nature of the social realm, Arendt wishes to strictly separate political and social concerns.

representing the country's population, and international relations. Secondly, it is also typically associated with the political participation of citizens, such as voting, protesting, and supporting candidates running for office. However, for Arendt, politics is more general than the political roles of politicians and citizens in the narrow sense of the term. Instead, it simply consists in citizens relating to each other through speech and action for the sake of creating the political world. As she holds, "the political realm arises directly out of acting together, the 'sharing of words and deeds.'"<sup>108</sup> Or, as Topolski has it, "[t]he political is the disclosure of the world that lies between us; it exists intersubjectively."<sup>109</sup>

Arendt finds the following saying of the ancient Greeks reflective of her conception of politics:

'Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*': these watchwords became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere.<sup>110</sup>

Therefore, the political realm can emerge 'almost any time and anywhere,' that is, as long as speech and action are motivated by common interest. She says, "[t]he *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of people as it arises out of

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<sup>108</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198. Arendt cites Aristotle on the preceding page "*logon kai pragmaton koinonein*" (NE 1126b12; Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 197). Since Arendt does not indicate which translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* she uses, I have listed the W.D. Ross translation that I usually consult in the bibliography.

<sup>109</sup> Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality* (London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., 2015), 45.

<sup>110</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198.

speaking and acting together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose.”<sup>111</sup> At first, it sounds as though she attaches an end (*telos*) to political speech and action, insofar as they serve as means to create the space of appearances. However, Arendt does not wish to associate speech and action with a further end.

Attaching an end to political activities reduces them to means to further ends, which reduces the role of the citizen to the role of the *animal laborans*. Adopting a means-to-ends mentality would destroy the world, seeing as it would turn the political into the social realm. Persons would not enter the public realm with the objective of creating and maintaining politics, but would rather be driven by self-interest. By turning to Aristotle’s conception of *energeia* (actuality), Arendt illustrates that political activities are not used as means to accomplish a further end, insofar as they are merely engaged in *in order to* construct the political world. As Eli Zaretsky observes, Arendt operates with “a nonteleological conception of politics”<sup>112</sup> precisely because participating in political activities for their own sake brings the political world to fruition.

Referring to Aristotle, Arendt claims that actuality “lies altogether outside the category of means and ends” precisely because “the product is identical with the performing act itself.”<sup>113</sup> This is the case because

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Eli Zaretsky, “Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of the Public/Private Distinction,” *Hannah Arendt & the Meaning of Politics*, eds. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan, afterward by Martin Jay (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 209.

<sup>113</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 207.



actuality constitutes its own end, insofar as it is the activity that realizes potentiality. For Aristotle, potentiality is the capability of something to act or ‘to be acted on’ (*MP* 1046a16-17).<sup>114,115</sup> For example, wood has the potential to be shaped into a statue of Artemis (*MP* 1048a32).<sup>116,117</sup> Its end is thus to become the desired product.

For Aristotle, the realization of potentiality is not a means to an end, but is its own end. As he explains, “[f]or the action is the end, and the actuality is the action. Therefore even the *word* ‘actuality’ is derived from ‘action’, and points to [its] fulfillment” (*MP* 1050a21-22).<sup>118</sup> This means that the activity of carving the wood into a statue of Artemis constitutes its own end, insofar as the end is synonymous with bringing the product to fruition. Thus, what Arendt picks up on is that the activity of engaging in political activities is its own end. Similarly to the activity of woodcarving, participating in the creation of the political world is its own end, insofar as the end is synonymous with bringing the ‘product’ to fruition.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W.D. Ross, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, The Revised Oxford Translation, Volume I and II, ed. Jonathan Barnes (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>115</sup> There is another “state” of potentiality, i.e., “insusceptibility to change for the worse and to destruction by another thing or by the thing itself *qua* other, i.e. by a principle of change” (*MP* 1046a13-14). However, I will focus on the first ‘state’ of potentiality, since it is the one that Arendt has in mind.

<sup>116</sup> The example Aristotle provides himself is of Homer, however, I have adapted it in order to represent a female figure in Greek mythology.

<sup>117</sup> Aristotle comes up with the following analogy between actuality and potentiality, namely, “that which is building is to that which is capable of building” (*MP* 1048a35); or, *when* one is “actually” walking (*MP* 1047a26), as opposed to *that* one is “capable of walking” (*MP* 1047a22).

<sup>118</sup> See also when Aristotle says, “that for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of the end; and the actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired” (*MP* 1050a8-10).

<sup>119</sup> In reference to Aristotle, Arendt thus says, “he designated all activities that do not pursue an end (are *ateleis*) and leave no work behind (no *par’ autas erga*), but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 206).

‘Inserting’<sup>120</sup> ourselves into the world is thus “not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work.”<sup>121</sup> Instead, when citizens speak and act for its own sake, they bring about the political world.

The end or ‘product’ of political activities is thus “identical with the performing act itself.”<sup>122</sup> Arendt concludes,

in these instances of action and speech the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which becomes an *enthelecheia*, and the word is not what follows and extinguishes the process but is embedded in it; the performance is the work, is *energeia*.<sup>123</sup>

What Arendt homes in on is that participating in creating the space of appearances entails continuously speaking and interacting with others. This sustained activity Aristotle coins “*enthelecheia*” (*MP* 1050a22-25). Translated as ‘being-at-work-staying-itself,’ it denotes the continuous performance of an activity maintaining itself through change.

For instance, a tree actively maintains itself by absorbing nutrients and moisture from the soil, photosynthesizing, growing in such a way for its leaves to optimally take in sunlight, shedding its leaves in the fall and developing new ones in the spring. However, in undergoing the changes of the seasons, the tree does not become a new tree, even though eventually it might consist of different cells. But rather, it stays the same

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 206.

tree through these changes, and in fact, it can only remain the same tree precisely by undergoing these changes. For Arendt, it is the same when it comes to engaging in the political activities that constitute the political world, insofar as sustained speech and action creates the space of appearances, and thus ensures its continuity over time.<sup>124</sup>

Even though it is inevitable that different persons will constitute the political realm, the very fact that citizens continue to exercise their capacity for speech and action assures that it nevertheless remains one and the same world. She says,

men's life together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made 'products,' the deeds and stories which are their outcome, would become imperishable.<sup>125</sup>

While the public realm undergoes changes over time and generations, the sustained engagement of the political activities that constitute it guarantees that it 'remains-at-work-staying-itself.' In other words, continuously speaking and interacting with others grants the space of appearances a kind of permanence that transcends time and generations.<sup>126</sup> In the following sub-section, we will see why maintaining

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<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Villa points out that the "ongoing *activity* of politics ... takes place in a *public* realm whose very existence depends on the preservation of human plurality and a diversity of perspectives" (Villa, *Arendt*, 195). While Villa does not make the connection between *entelecheia* and the continuity of speech and action, he attributes it to "[d]ebate, deliberation, and persuasion" (Ibid.).

<sup>125</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 197-198.

<sup>126</sup> Assuring the continuity of human affairs equally depends on remembering memorable 'words and deeds.' Specifically, what ensures remembrance of the political world is the activity of storytelling. In particular, the task of the storyteller is to weave together a collective "storybook of mankind" (Ibid., 184) by determining which worldly events are worthy of being remembered. They thereby immortalize the political world,

the continuity of the public realm is Arendt's main priority. Since it is the space in which freedom can be realized, she prioritizes the public realm, and hence elevates the political activities of speech and action over other human activities.

## *2.2 Freedom & Unpredictability*

Maintaining the political realm is of utmost importance to Arendt precisely because it provides a public space in which persons become *free*. By continuously speaking and interacting with each other, citizens not only create and maintain the political world, but they also ensure the space in which they can realize their freedom. In this way, engaging in political activities and actualizing political freedom are synonymous with each other. For Arendt claims, "to *be* free and to act are the same."<sup>127</sup> Therefore, in contrast to the household, the sphere where one is *unfree*, she holds that "[f]reedom exists only in the unique intermediary space of politics."<sup>128</sup> While adopting the role of the citizen involves freeing oneself

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as they transfix worldly events into collective memory (Ibid., 169). As Arendt explains, "the whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember" (Ibid., 95). By telling the story of humanity, the storyteller thus keeps the political world alive. Furthermore, and as we will see in Chapter Two, what contributes to the durability of the political world is the limited permanence afforded by the human artifice. For Arendt continues by claiming that the sustained existence of the political world depends "second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things. Without remembrance and without the reification which remembrance needs for its own fulfillment and which makes it, indeed, as the Greeks held, the mother of all arts, the living activities of action, speech, and thought would lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been" (Ibid.). The permanence of the political world thus also depends on the artificial world. Due to the fleetingness of political activities, she holds that "they depend for their reality and materialization upon the same workmanship that builds the other things in the human artifice" (Ibid.).

<sup>127</sup> Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," *Between Past and Future*, introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 151.

<sup>128</sup> Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 95.

*from* necessity, Arendt does not only conceive of freedom in a negative sense.

Instead, she also conceives of it in a positive sense, that is, as the unimpeded ability to act. As Benhabib explains:

Liberation, at its most basic level, is human emancipation from conditions of necessity, which have their origin in the realm of necessity: the needs of the body and the urgency to satisfy them. Liberation also signifies the capacity to choose and to act according to one's personal wishes and desires.<sup>129,130</sup>

When citizens strike a new beginning in the world, on their own accord, they become *free* in the truest sense of the term. This is the case because Arendt defines freedom as the ability to introduce unlimited possibilities into the public realm. As she has it, “[t]he fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected of him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable.”<sup>131</sup> In other words, persons are *free* because they have infinite possibilities for speaking and interacting with each other. If freedom were only negatively understood, then it would encompass one possibility, that is, ridding oneself of the ‘needs and wants’ of life.

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<sup>129</sup> Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 159.

<sup>130</sup> This is what Arendt means when she says, “in order to be free, man must have liberated himself from the necessities of life. But the status of freedom did not follow automatically upon the act of liberation, the company of other men who were in the same state, and it needed a common public space to meet them – a political organized world, in other words, into which each of the free men could insert himself by word and deed” (Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 148).

<sup>131</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178.

However, political freedom also has a positive connotation, insofar as persons have the capability of creating a new beginning. What endows them with this capability is the fact that they are new beginnings themselves, insofar as every birth “is a new beginning.”<sup>132</sup> As Arendt explains:

With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before.<sup>133</sup>

Striking a new beginning in the world thus bears the resemblance of “a second birth.”<sup>134</sup> However, since acting anew comes with the possibility of engendering endless possibilities, citizens bring the entirely unexpected into the world. Every ‘word and deed’ thus introduces a new beginning with wholly unforeseeable consequences. As she claims, “[i]t is in the nature of beginning something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before.”<sup>135</sup>

In this sense, it seems that freedom has a negative connotation, insofar as it brings unpredictability and instability into the realm of human affairs. Arendt thus asserts that this is the cost associated with political freedom. She says,

the basic unreliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow, and out of the impossibility of foretelling the consequences of an act within a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act. Man’s inability to rely

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<sup>132</sup> Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, 6.

<sup>133</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 177.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

upon himself or to have complete faith in himself ... is the price human beings pay for freedom.<sup>136</sup>

The cost of freedom is thus the sheer unpredictability of action and its consequences. This is precisely why Arendt characterizes action as 'boundless.' She holds:

These consequences are boundless, because action, though it may proceed from nowhere, so to speak, acts into a medium where every reaction becomes a chain reaction and where every process is the cause of a new process.<sup>137</sup>

It is thus inevitable that every 'word and deed' carries an uncertainty with it, in terms of how it affects its author and the political community at large. As she claims, even "the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation."<sup>138</sup> Since every 'word and deed' is committed within the fabric of an already existing network of human relationships, it causes a ripple effect of unpredictable actions and reactions.

What complicates matters is that political activities rarely reach their goals, since citizens 'insert' themselves into a context where countless speakers and actors attempt to do the same. Arendt therefore maintains, "[i]t is because this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

achieves its purpose.”<sup>139</sup> Even though citizens are united by a shared goal, the continuity of the space of appearances can never be guaranteed because each citizen goes about shaping and contributing to it in their own way. However, Arendt accepts inevitable conflicts and the unpredictability of action precisely because it retains the possibility of realizing political freedom. While this is certainly not an absolute guarantee for the continuity of the political world, it nevertheless ensures the unexpectedness and unpredictability – or better, natality – that Arendt associates with political activities.

We saw previously that she links speech and action to the human condition of natality.<sup>140</sup> In particular, she says,

action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting.<sup>141</sup>

What action and natality thus have in common is that they both concern the capacity for striking a new beginning in the world. In this way, both carry unpredictability and uncertainty into the realm of human affairs. For she claims that “[t]he frailty ... of all matters pertaining to men’s living together, arises from the human condition of natality.”<sup>142</sup> However, it

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>140</sup> It is important to note that the other activities that constitute the *vita activa* are also related to natality. For Arendt, states, “[l]abor and work, as well as action, are also rooted in natality in so far as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to foresee and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers” (Ibid., 9). All human activities are related to natality because they either directly or indirectly shape the space of appearances.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 191.



seems that natality, the condition that contributes to instability and uncertainty, is its own vice and its own virtue.

While each ‘word and deed’ sparks unanticipated consequences and reactions, it is precisely this unstable environment that paves the way for the realization of infinite possibilities. As Topolski suggests,

the interhuman realm’s fragility and contingency is also part of its potency and appeal. Because of its unpredictability, anything is possible, reality can be changed for better or worse, the world can be transformed and as such each one of us can be transformed.<sup>143</sup>

While the continuity of the political community comes at a cost, its vulnerability paves the way for endlessly possible ways of beginning again. In this way, the condition of natality contributes to the limited durability of the space of appearances. Precisely because it provides the conditions under which citizens can realize their freedom. This is why Arendt holds that that “the faculty” of “beginning something a new” is “an ever-present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin.”<sup>144,145</sup> As mentioned, mortality is also a condition of human existence, insofar as our lifespan on this earth is limited. However, the guiding concern in speaking and interacting with others is to maintain the political world. This implies that what defines the human condition is not the fact that we will die, but the fact that we are always in a position to begin again.

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<sup>143</sup> Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, 105.

<sup>144</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 246.

<sup>145</sup> In fact, this is why Arendt likens every beginning to a miracle. Precisely because every ‘word and deed’ has the potential to commit the ‘infinitely improbable,’ it “looks like a miracle” (Ibid.).

It might sound paradoxical that, with every ‘word and deed,’ citizens simultaneously contribute to the unpredictability and continuity of the political realm. However, the only way to preserve politics is to consistently ‘insert’ oneself into the world, that is, to consistently enact political freedom. Arendt thus maintains:

Here, the remedy against the irreversibility and unpredictability of the process started by acting does not arise out of another and possibly higher faculty, but is one of the potentialities of action itself.<sup>146</sup>

Participating in political activities not only creates and sustains the space of appearances, but also ensures the conditions under which freedom can be realized. Making political freedom dependent on the unexpectedness of speech and action thus illuminates why she prizes political activities. Even though speaking and acting comes at a cost, a much greater cost is not acting at all.<sup>147</sup> If citizens do not persistently speak and interact with

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 236-237. In particular, promising and forgiving imbue the political world with stability. Since Arendt claims that they are forms of speech and action, it follows that the solution to the unpredictability is thus ‘one of the potentialities of action itself.’ While promises and forgiveness do not provide an absolute guarantee against the uncertainty and fragility of the world, they nevertheless contribute to a degree of permanence. As Arendt explains, “[t]he possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility – of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing – is the faculty of forgiving. The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises” (Ibid., 237). For an excellent account, see Marguerite La Caze, “The Miraculous Power of Forgiveness and the Promise,” *Action and Appearance: Ethics and the Politics of Writing in Hannah Arendt*, ed. Anna Yeatman, Phillip Hansen, Magdalena Zolkos, and Charles Barbour (New York: Continuum, 2011), 150-165; and Nicolas DeWarren, “Forgiveness and the Human Condition,” *Original Forgiveness: Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 43-75.

<sup>147</sup> Due to the unpredictability and ‘boundlessness’ of action, Arendt points out that one might be tempted to retain one’s sovereignty and freedom by not acting at all. She states, “[t]he only salvation from this kind of freedom seems to lie in non-acting, in abstention from the whole realm of human affairs as the only means to safeguard one’s sovereignty and integrity as a person” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 234). However, this temptation is based on the fallacious identification of freedom with sovereignty, that is,

each other, they lose the arena in which to become free. In the next subsection, we will see that the condition related to public activities exacerbates the divide between private and public activities, and hence between the private and public spheres.

### *2.3 Plurality: The Condition for Political Activities*

We have seen that one of the hallmarks of political participation is that it unfolds in the public realm with others, who are united by the common interest of creating and maintaining politics for its own sake. There is another component to speech and action that makes them *political* activities. The mere fact that one speaks and acts in the company of others is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of political speech and action. Instead, it also matters *what kind* of company one is in. While one certainly speaks and interacts with others in the household, it does not constitute political speech and action. Thus, what exacerbates the uncompromising divide between the private and public realms are the

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with “self-sufficiency and mastery” over one’s actions (Ibid.). Since action is inherently unpredictable, and dependent upon a plurality of perspectives, sovereignty does not have a place in Arendt’s conception of politics. As she has it, it “is contradictory to the very condition of plurality. No man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth” (Ibid.). For Arendt, freedom is non-sovereign precisely because persons do not have control over their actions, the disclosure of their personalities, let alone the consequences of their decisions. While her non-sovereign conception of freedom sounds paradoxical, it is quickly dispelled when we consider that it is the only way for citizens to preserve their political freedom, and indeed, their equality. As Villa explains, “[t]he apparent paradox of ‘non-sovereign freedom’ dissolves once we acknowledge that a citizen body is composed of diverse equals who have different perspectives – and hence different opinions – on issues of common concern” (Villa, *Arendt*, 195). Non-sovereign freedom thus sustains the condition of plurality that makes it possible for citizens to act, and hence to realize their freedom and equality. For Arendt defines equality as emerging in “a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 244). Thus, while it might be tempting to refrain from acting in order to retain freedom and mastery over one’s action, it rather signals an end to freedom, and hence the space in which it can appear. While participating in politics carries unpredictability and uncertainty with it, one precludes the possibility of realizing political freedom by not acting.

*conditions* necessary for the unfolding of political activities. When Arendt refers to ‘the company of others,’ she has in mind the condition of plurality, that is, the ‘innumerable’ and unique perspectives of others. As she says, the public sphere is “the common meeting ground of all,” which emerges from “the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives.”<sup>148</sup> Therefore, in order for speech and action to be political, they must simultaneously take place in front of and contribute to the unfolding of a plurality of perspectives.

Contrasting the public and private spheres in this way thus paints a pejorative picture of the household. Since the household lacks the condition of plurality, it therefore lacks all of the characteristics of the public realm. Arendt tells us, as “indicated in the word itself,”<sup>149</sup> “the privative trait of privacy” is synonymous with “the consciousness of being deprived of something essential in a life spent exclusively in the restricted sphere of the household.”<sup>150</sup> Viewed from the perspective of the public sphere, the private sphere is ‘privative’ precisely because the “[t]he privation of privacy lies in the absence of others.”<sup>151</sup> Since plurality is the condition that grants publicity and reality, it follows that the household is also ‘deprived’ of publicity and reality.

Certainly, Arendt does not mean that one is deprived of speech and action in the household. But rather, she means that one is deprived of the

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 58.

plurality of persons who make political interactions possible. As she claims, citing Aristotle,

everybody outside the *polis* – slaves and barbarians – was *aneu logou*, deprived, of course, not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other.<sup>152</sup>

While her depiction of the household as ‘privative’ is a reductive view of the family, her point is that speaking and interacting with each other in the household does not constitute *political* speech and action. This is the case because the company of one’s family is not representative of the plurality afforded by the company of ‘innumerable’ others. Since the family is motivated by the same concern, i.e., self-interest in order to meet the biological needs of life,<sup>153</sup> Arendt views the family as singular and subjective.

She therefore reduces the household to the sphere of subjectivity, which stands against the intersubjectivity of the public realm.<sup>154</sup> With

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>153</sup> She explains, “[t]he driving force was life itself – the penates, the household gods, were, according to Plutarch, ‘the gods who make us live and nourish our body’ – which, for its individual maintenance and its survival as the life of the species needs the company of others” (Ibid., 30; Arendt cites Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 51; cited from Coulanges, *op. cit.*, 96). Even though one ‘needs the company of others’ in order to meet the demands of life, she does not mean it in the sense of the company gained from the political community. Instead, the type of company associated with the private sphere is the family, who are united not by a shared concern for the common world, but rather by the necessities of life.

<sup>154</sup> While Arendt is critical of the modern subject, she carries over the same language. For her, the modern subject is synonymous with a highly atomized and world-alienated subject. This is the case because the modern subject arrives as truth-claims solely by referring to reason or “introspection into his sensual or cognitive apparatus” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 272). This reduces “objective reality into subjective states of mind, or rather, into subjective mental processes” (Ibid., 282). This is the case because reality, for Arendt, is intersubjectively achieved by a plurality of perspectives viewing

subjectivity, Arendt means one viewpoint, as she defines it as “the simple fact that each person occupies a place of his own.”<sup>155</sup> Since the family is motivated by the same concern, it follows that they are only an extension of one’s own perspective. As she claims, “even the richest and most satisfying family life can offer only the prolongation or multiplication of one’s own position.”<sup>156</sup> Since the household is ‘deprived’ of the plethora of perspectives that can only emerge in the world, it can never provide the conditions for political interactions.<sup>157</sup> Arendt states:

Every activity performed in public can attain an excellence never matched in privacy; for excellence, by definition, the presence of others is always required, and this presence needs the formality of the public, constituted by one’s peers, it cannot be the causal, familiar presence of one’s equals or inferiors.<sup>158</sup>

Political activities thus only arise against the backdrop of countless human relationships. Arendt thus defines plurality as the condition for the

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and verifying the existence of someone or something. Thus, while she adopts the same language, she uses the terms ‘subjectivity’ and ‘intersubjectivity’ in her own way.

<sup>155</sup> Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” 21.

<sup>156</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 49. When Arendt refers to ‘excellence,’ she means “*arete* as the Greeks, *virtus* as the Romans would have called it” (Ibid., 48-49). In this context, she means it in the sense of distinguishing oneself as unique, for she continues, it “has always been assigned to the public realm where one could excel, could distinguish oneself from all others” (Ibid., 49). Indeed, this is one of the reasons why Arendt’s conception of political activities has been described as ‘performative.’ Since political activities, and hence excellence or ‘virtuosity,’ must unfold in front of a plurality of views, that is, in front of an ‘audience,’ Arendt often compares it to the performing arts. For example, in reference to freedom, she says, “[i]ts meaning is best rendered by ‘virtuosity,’ that is, an excellence we attribute to the performing arts ... where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product that outlasts the activity that brought it into existence and becomes independent of it” (Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 151; see p.152). For accounts of performative interpretations of political activities, see Dana Villa’s “Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action,” *Political Theory* Vol. 20, no. 2 (May, 1992), 274-308; and Bonnie Honig, “The Politics of Agonism: A Critical Response to ‘Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Politics Action’ by Dana R. Villa,” *Political Theory* Vol. 21, No. 3 (Aug., 1993): 528-533.

possibility of the emergence of the political world. It is “the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.”<sup>159</sup>

Her point is that the political world is not constituted by one perspective, but rather by unlimited perspectives, which inevitably give rise to countless *differences*. Unlike the household, therefore:

Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men. Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences.<sup>160</sup>

Although the public realm inevitably reveals countless and potentially conflicting differences between citizens, the fact that they emerge in one and the same world ensures that citizens will always have one common denominator. As Niall Keane aptly observes,

the public realm, or the space of real visibility, becomes necessarily a disclosed common world. Or better, it becomes the concrete disclosure of what is common between citizens of the world, mainly because its objects, facts, and events are seen in their multiplicity and in their often-contradictory appearances against the backdrop of one and the same world.<sup>161</sup>

Therefore, it is only because everyone inhabits and looks upon one and the same world that their differences can appear in the first place. As Arendt says, “differences of position and the resulting variety of

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<sup>159</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7. Interestingly, Arendt later describes plurality as “the law of the earth” in *The Life of the Mind* (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 19). However, I do not believe she changes her understanding of plurality as the undeniable ‘fact’ that ‘different’ persons ‘inhabit’ the political world.

<sup>160</sup> Arendt, “Introduction into Politics,” 93.

<sup>161</sup> Niall Keane, “Polemos, Plurality, Logos: Hannah Arendt’s Phenomenological Reading of the Greeks,” *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* Vol. 26, no. 1 (Fall 2021): 210.

perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object,”<sup>162</sup> i.e., the political world.

Specifically, differences between persons arise because they inhabit a perspective on the political world that is uniquely their own. Assuming different spatial locations thus lies at the core of Arendt’s conception of plurality. She says:

For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects.<sup>163</sup>

On the one hand, this goes to show that one’s viewpoint is irreducible to that of another, insofar as it cannot be inhabited by someone else. Since “everybody sees and hears from a different position,”<sup>164</sup> persons are distinct and irreplaceable. On the other hand, as Sophie Loidolt shows, assuming different spatial locations suggests that plurality is neither reducible to simply having a particular vantage point among many, nor the sum total of qualities that various persons possess.<sup>165</sup> That is to say that plurality is not something that can be understood in numerical terms, whether that is the sum total of persons who constitute the political realm, nor the sum total of the physical attributes that differentiate them.

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<sup>162</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57-58.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 57. While Arendt uses the term, ‘the common world,’ she rather means ‘the space of appearances.’

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Sophie Loidolt, „Hannah Arendts Phänomenologie der Pluralität: Sozialontologische, politische und ethische Aspekte,” *HannahArendt.net*, Ausgabe 1, Band 9 (November, 2018): <https://www.hannaharendt.net/index.php/han/article/view/390/608>.



Instead, in agreement with Loidolt, plurality is more of an activity than a ‘fact’ that the world is inhabited by a certain number of distinct persons.<sup>166</sup> In this way, the condition of plurality is a worldly phenomenon, and thus constitutes, as Loidolt has it, “something that we have to take up and do.”<sup>167</sup> While each person sees the world from a different vantage point, it is only in the act of speaking and acting that we can distinguish ourselves as unique. Plurality is therefore an activity that is actualized through speech and action *when* persons inhabit their unique location in the world. This is why Loidolt describes plurality as having an “enactive quality.”<sup>168</sup> We saw that, for Arendt, sustained participation in political activities creates and maintains the political realm. Plurality is actualized in the same way: it is *enacted* when citizens speak and interact with each other. Precisely because Arendt links the emergence of distinctness to partaking in political activities.

This is why Arendt holds that speech and action have “revelatory character.”<sup>169</sup> The idea is, when I speak, I distinguish myself from others because I put forward my own, unique perspective on the world. As she maintains, “[i]n speaking and acting, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance

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<sup>166</sup> Sophie Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality: Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 51. Bernstein holds a similar conception of plurality, as he claims, “[p]lurality is not so much a permanent state of being as an achievement realized only when individuals act” (Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 208; cited by Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 13).

<sup>167</sup> Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>169</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178.

in the human world.”<sup>170,171</sup> In voicing my unique perspective on the world, I become individuated, set apart from others, and reveal myself before the plethora of unique individuals who make up the political community.<sup>172</sup> By expressing my unique personality, or what Arendt calls ‘the who,’ I thereby actively contribute to the emergence of plurality in the world.

Since the disclosure of the who is actualized through speech and action, it follows that the personal is a political phenomenon, as opposed to a private one. Since one’s personality can only truly appear in public, Arendt therefore believes that the political world has a deeper meaning. As she states, “this personal element in a man can only appear where a public space exists; that is the deeper significance of the public realm, which extends far beyond what we ordinarily mean by political life.”<sup>173</sup> Thus, what is at stake in the political realm is not only creating a shared space where persons can interact, and hence where they can actualize their freedom. But also, it is only in the political realm where persons can become *who* they are. This means that the personal – or what we typically

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>171</sup> Drawing on the ancient Greek *polis*, Arendt thus asserts that “[t]he public realm ... was reserved for individuality; it was the only place where men could show who they really and inexchangeably were” (Ibid., 41).

<sup>172</sup> Since the public realm is thus the realm of distinction and individuation, Arendt’s conception of politics has been read as *agonistic*, which she clearly carries over from the ancient Greeks (see Villa, *Arendt*, 143-144). As she explains, “the public realm itself, the *polis*, was permeated by a fiercely agonal spirit, where everybody had constantly to distinguish himself from others, to show through unique deeds or achievements that he was the best of all (*aíen aristeueín*)” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 41). Arendt’s conception of politics is agonistic in the sense that, while it is the sphere of freedom, distinction, and equality, it is also the sphere of conflict, difference, and competition. The *agonal* character of public discourse will be broached in more detail in Chapter Five.

<sup>173</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio,” *Men in Dark Times*, *Men in Dark Times* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 73. I would like to thank Niall Keane for bringing this speech to my attention.

associate with what is sheltered from the public – is not private at all, but only made possible in and by the political world.

It therefore follows that persons cannot disclose their unique personalities in the private sphere. This is the case because Arendt conceives of appearance as an intersubjectively constituted, and hence worldly, phenomenon. Specifically, appearance is made possible by the publicity afforded by a plurality of perspectives. Therefore, Arendt defines publicity as countless perspectives all viewing the same, worldly object from as many sides as possible. As she says, “everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.”<sup>174</sup> In this way, the ‘innumerable’ perspectives that emerge in the political realm provide the conditions under which persons and objects can publicly *appear* or become visible to each other. Indeed, this is why Arendt refers to the political realm as *the space of appearances*. As she has it:

It is the space of appearances in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.<sup>175</sup>

In fact, this is why Arendt often compares the publicity afforded by the space of appearances as a light that illuminates everything that appears in it. For example, she explains, “it is the function of the public realm to throw a light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in

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<sup>174</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

which they can show in deed and word, for better and worse, who they are and what they can do.”<sup>176</sup> This goes to show that the personal is public and political precisely because the ability to disclose one’s unique personality rests on being ‘seen and heard’ from all sides.

Arendt therefore does not conceive of the who as an internally established phenomenon. This is the case because one can only see oneself from one point of view, namely, one’s own. What Arendt means is that my perspective on myself is limited because I cannot see myself from all sides. This means that the actualization of the who in the fullest sense is only achievable in the world. She compares the who to the *daimon* that sits on one’s shoulders and is “thus visible only to those he encounters.”<sup>177</sup>

The metaphor of the *daimon* here is very fitting: I only ever perceive a part of my personality when I try to look at the *daimon* sitting on my shoulder. In contrast, one’s personality is best seen by others because only the political community can view someone from a plurality of perspectives.<sup>178</sup> This leads Arendt to conclude that others know us better than we know ourselves: “it is more likely that the ‘who,’ which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person

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<sup>176</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Preface,” *Men in Dark Times*, viii.

<sup>177</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 180.

<sup>178</sup> In fact, this is why Arendt maintains that the appearance of our personality is out of our control. Since appearance is wholly dependent on others, she tells us, “nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word” (Ibid., 180). However, she seems to take a more balanced approach later in *The Life of the Mind*, as she insinuates that the disclosure of our personalities and opinions are somewhat in our control. For she claims, “men also *present* themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they *wish* to appear, what in their opinion is fit to be seen and what is not. This element of deliberate choice in what to show and what to hide seems specifically human. *Up to a point* we can choose how to appear to others” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 34).

himself.”<sup>179</sup> Others know us better than we know ourselves precisely because, as Loidolt explains, “[a]pppearance, by its very essence, is not something private, but instead shines in the world.”<sup>180</sup>

Since appearance rests on a plurality of persons all viewing the same object, it goes to show that Arendt inverts the categories of personal-subjective and impersonal-objective. As she insists, we should not conflate the “personal with subjective, objective with factual or impersonal.”<sup>181</sup> For her, the personal, that is, the emergence of the who, is not subjective, but is rather intersubjectively achieved with others in the political world. Therefore, the ‘objective’ is not ‘impersonal’ precisely because the type of objectivity that Arendt has in mind is really the intersubjective validation gained from the ‘innumerable’ perspectives of others. In fact, the intersubjective validity of appearances is consonant with her desire to save appearances from their denigration to subjectivity, which she traces back to Plato.<sup>182</sup>

In his pursuit of the truth, Plato not only “opposed” “the life of the philosopher” to “the life of the citizen,” but he also “opposed the truth” to “mere opinion.”<sup>183</sup> Since Plato prioritized the eternal and unchanging

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<sup>179</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179.

<sup>180</sup> Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 69.

<sup>181</sup> Arendt, “Karl Jaspers: A Laudatio,” 72.

<sup>182</sup> Will see in Chapter Four that Arendt’s attempt to save opinion from subjectivity also has implications for her conception of judgment. For instance, Beiner makes this connection when he says, “Arendt’s intention is fairly obvious: to concentrate attention on the faculty of judgment is to rescue opinion from the disrepute into which it has fallen since Plato” (Ronald Beiner, “Interpretive Essay,” *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 108).

<sup>183</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” *Between Past and Future*, 297.

nature of the truth (*aletheia*) over “the citizens’ ever-changing opinions about human affairs,”<sup>184</sup> he reduced opinion (*dokei moi*) to a mere “illusion.”<sup>185</sup> In contrast, Arendt gives opinion, or how something appears to me, greater validity by defining it as something that must be intersubjectively constituted. As she maintains:

The subjectivity of the it-seems-to-me is remedied by the fact that the same object also appears to others though its mode of appearance may be different. (It is the inter-subjectivity of the world, rather than similarity of physical appearance, that convinces men that they belong to the same species. Though each single object appears in a different perspective to each individual, the context in which it appears is the same for the whole species.<sup>186</sup>

Meaning, opinion is not subjective, but objective, precisely because it emerges from and is verified by a plurality of perspectives. ‘How something appears to me’ is thus not an illusion, but rather constitutes objective reality. For it rests on the assurance that others “see what we see and hear what we hear.”<sup>187</sup> In this way, how something appears to me is synonymous with how it appears to the world.<sup>188</sup>

Therefore, plurality also assures the condition for the establishment of reality. Precisely because persons and objects only become *real* once they have been verified by the perspectives of countless others. As Arendt maintains:

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 50.

<sup>187</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50.

<sup>188</sup> Arendt makes this most clear when she claims, “[s]eeming – the it-seems-to-me, *dokei moi* – is the mode, perhaps the only possible one, in which an appearing world is acknowledged and perceived. To appear means to seem to others” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 21).

Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.<sup>189</sup>

Appearances and reality are thus synonymous with each other, seeing as they must be established and conferred by a plurality of views. As she explains, “appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality.”<sup>190</sup> In this sense, ‘appearance constitutes reality’ because reality is only guaranteed by a variety of positions taken on the same object. She explains:

Only in such a manifold can one and the same topic appear in its full reality, whereby what must be borne in mind is that every topic has so many sides and can appear in as many perspectives as there are people to discuss it. Since for the Greeks the public political space is common to all (*koinon*), the space where the citizens assemble, it is the realm in which all things can first be recognized in their many-sidedness.<sup>191</sup>

Reality is thus what persons have in common, insofar as they establish it together. Therefore, with appearance, Arendt does not mean ‘how something appears to me’ in a merely subjective sense. Since appearances are public phenomena, they are objective, insofar as they are intersubjectively afforded and enriched by a plurality of persons living in the same world.

Arendt’s strict division between the private and public realms leads her to extremely harsh conclusions in terms of the kind of life that can be gained

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<sup>189</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>191</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 167.

in the household. Since the private realm is deprived of a plurality of perspectives, it necessarily follows that it is deprived of the conditions that pave the way for publicity and reality. In contrast, Canovan has adopted a more charitable interpretation. Canovan suggests, “since politics is something that needs a worldly location and can only happen in a public space, then if you are not present in such a space you are simply not engaged in politics.”<sup>192,193</sup> Thus, the implication is, when one inhabits the private realm, one does not inhabit the role of the citizen. Instead, one merely engages in private or household activities. This is only partially true, insofar as the role of the *animal laborans* and the citizen are separable. However, since the private realm lacks the condition of plurality, it *prevents* persons from adopting the role of the citizen.

This has more drastic implications for the private realm. Persons cannot assume the role of the citizen in privacy precisely because they are ‘deprived’ of the presence of others. Being deprived of the presence of

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<sup>192</sup> Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” 635.

<sup>193</sup> Benhabib takes a different approach, insofar as she claims that political action is, in fact, possible in the private realm. She believes that child-rearing is a “world-building” activity (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 69), similarly to the work of the *homo faber*. As mentioned, the task of the *homo faber* is to construct the human artifice, the physical space of tangible use-objects, which makes it possible for citizens to interact with each other. Benhabib thus draws a parallel between child-rearing and work precisely because parents prepare their children for the world. She explains, “[t]his activity, in turn, bears more the marks of ‘world-protection, world-preservation, and world-repair,’ which Arendt normally associated with work, than of the cyclical necessity characteristic of labor. For in raising a child, one is also transmitting to that child through every word and gesture, every sound and action, a world” (Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 135). While it is true that parents raise their children to be ‘fit for the world,’ (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 51), Benhabib’s reading is a stretch, given Arendt’s extremely reductive view of the family. Since Arendt reduces the family to subjectivity, she would be forced to admit that the family cannot adequately prepare children for the world, seeing as they lack the plurality of perspectives that emerges in it.



others deprives persons of reality and humanity. Arendt clearly states that the private realm is deprived of reality. She says:

This [public] space does not always exist, and although all men are capable of deed and word, most of them ... do not live in it ... To be deprived of it means to be deprived of reality, which, humanly and politically speaking, is the same as appearance. To men the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all; 'for what appears to all, this we call Being,' and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our own but without reality.<sup>194</sup>

This is a necessary conclusion, seeing as she sharply contrasts the subjectivity of privacy with the intersubjectivity of publicity. Since appearance and reality depend on the perspectives of 'innumerable' others, it follows that one neither appears as a distinct individual, nor has a sense of objective reality, in the company of the family.

Furthermore, she claims that never appearing in public deprives persons of their humanity. If the political world disappears, then persons lose the space where they can become human. Arendt claims:

To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes with being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an 'objective' relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things.<sup>195</sup>

This is also a necessary conclusion precisely because, for Arendt, leading a political life means leading a *human* life. Being human thus means to

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<sup>194</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199. Arendt cites Aristotle (*NE* 1172b36 ff.).

<sup>195</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 58.

live “among men (*inter homines esse*).”<sup>196</sup> This is the case because speaking with others about things concerning our shared world gives rise to our humanity. Similarly to plurality, therefore, humanity is a worldly phenomenon that we actively participate in *when* we participate in political activities. As Arendt puts it, humanity arises from an “irreplaceable in-between which ... form[s] between this individual and his fellow men.”<sup>197</sup>

This ‘in-between’ is a crucial aspect of our humanity because it constructs a shared world in which our humanity can *appear*. Persons are only fully human if they are visible, meaning if they belong to a political community in which they can appear before others.<sup>198</sup> Since being in the presence of others realizes humanity, it therefore follows that “[a] life without speech and action ... is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.”<sup>199</sup> If the political world collapses, persons lose the space where they can realize their humanity. As a result, Arendt says, “[w]e actually live in a world in which human beings as such have ceased to exist.”<sup>200</sup> Due to Arendt’s strict demarcations between the private and public realms, she thus commits herself to making harsh conclusions regarding the type of life that can be

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>197</sup> Hannah Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts about Lessing,” *Men in Dark Times*, 4-5.

<sup>198</sup> Most notably, Arendt elaborates on this point in “We Refugees” (Hannah Arendt, “We Refugees,” *Menorah Journal*, no. 1 (January 1943): 69-77).

<sup>199</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176. See also when Arendt says, “[a] man who lived only a private life, who like the slave was not permitted to enter the public realm, or like the barbarian had chosen not to establish such a realm, was not fully human” (Ibid., 38).

<sup>200</sup> Arendt, “We Refugees,” 76.

gained in the private realm. In an effort to preserve the political world, she ends up degrading the household to the locus of self-interest, subjectivity, unfreedom, where one is deprived of publicity, plurality, and reality. And if persons never have the opportunity to appear in public, they lose their humanity.

### Conclusion

It comes to no surprise that Arendt's private-public distinction has been read as uncompromisingly stark. She does not do herself any favors to avoid this reading, seeing as her commitment to drawing hard and fast demarcations leads her to invert the hierarchy between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*, and to establish a hierarchy within the *vita activa* itself. As a result, Arendt views all mental and private activities from the viewpoint of the political world. Thereby, she denigrates the activities that either do not directly contribute to establishing the political world, or that stand in stark contrast to it. On the one hand, since mental activities require withdrawal from the public realm, they receive a lower rank to the human activities that take place in the midst of human affairs. On the other hand, since the human activity of labor is guided by the self-interest of survival, it not only opposes politics. But it actively destroys the political world when it becomes the driving concern of the public realm. Thus, in an attempt to protect the continuity of the political realm, Arendt constructs a rigid divide between the private and public realms.

However, I do not believe that she wishes to maintain such a sharp division between these two realms. In Chapter Two, I will show that there

is another side of the private realm that does not sharply oppose the public realm, namely, what Arendt calls, “the non-privative characteristic of privacy.”<sup>201</sup> While her description remains brief and obscure, it stands to reason that this side of privacy is not deprived of the presence of others. Therefore, the aim of Chapter Two is to situate the non-privative realm within Arendt’s thought. As indicated by its name, the ‘non-privative sphere’ is not entirely ‘privative.’ This leads me to believe that it must be the realm of solitude. Since she defines solitude as ‘being in one’s own company,’<sup>202</sup> one is not entirely deprived of the presence of others. On this basis, I wish to show that the following solitary activities take place in it: the work of the *homo faber* and the Socratic two-in-one. My claim is that these activities take place outside of the public realm, but are not opposed to it. Instead, they constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for its emergence.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>202</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 98.

## Chapter Two

### The Non-Privative Realm

*This habit of making distinctions is not popular in the modern world, where there is a kind of verbal blur surrounding most discourse. And if Hannah Arendt arouses hostility, one reason is because the possibility of making distinctions is not available to the ordinary reader. But to go back to the distinctions themselves – I would say that each one within this liberated area, within this free space – each distinction was like a little house. And, let us say, fame is living in its little house with its architecture, and reputation is living in another. So that all this space created by her is actually furnished.*

– Mary McCarthy (1972)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show that Arendt's separation of the private and public realms is not as stark as it seems. The chapter consists of two parts. The first part of the analysis develops an 'Arendtian phenomenology' of privacy. By following Arendt's own distinctions, I will provide a descriptive account of an underappreciated aspect of the private realm. Since her description of this second side of privacy is brief and obscure, it is understandable why it has been overlooked within the secondary literature. However, she makes an effort to distinguish between "the privative trait of privacy"<sup>2</sup> and "the non-privative characteristic of privacy."<sup>3</sup> My claim is that the private realm consists of two parts: the privative household and the non-privative space of withdrawal. I will show that only the former opposes the political realm, and that the latter

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<sup>1</sup> Mary McCarthy, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, ed. Melvyn A. Hill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 337.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 38; 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 71.

is directed toward it. Uncovering the non-privative sphere<sup>4</sup> thus shows an inter-relationship between the private and public realms without compromising Arendt's strict distinctions.

Although she did not work this out herself, it is consistent with her thought to locate in non-privacy the activities that can neither take place in the privative household nor in the public sphere. These activities are the work of the *homo faber* and two forms of representative thinking, namely, the Socratic two-in-one and enlarged mentality. The second part of the analysis shows the world-orientedness and "political implications"<sup>5</sup> of the Socratic two-in-one. Enlarged mentality will be explored in Chapters Three and Four.<sup>6</sup> Locating work and the two-in-one in non-privacy allows me to show that the political world is not only created by the political activities of speech and action. Instead, both non-privative and political activities constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the generation and stabilization of the political realm.

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<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of brevity, I have shortened 'the non-privative characteristic of privacy,' to the 'non-privative' sphere or the 'non-privative' realm; and I have named corresponding activities as 'non-privative' activities. The same applies to 'the privative trait of privacy,' which I will refer to as the 'privative' sphere or the 'privative' realm; and corresponding activities as 'privative' activities.

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 239.

<sup>6</sup> Working out the two-in-one sets precedent for categorizing enlarged mentality as an unpolitical and non-privative ability, and for justifying Arendt's appropriation of it as a means for political decision-making.

## Part I

### 1. The Non-Privative Realm

#### *1.1 An 'Arendtian Phenomenology' of the Private*

Many have worried about Arendt's strict distinction between the private and public realms.<sup>7</sup> Some commentators have tried to account for an inter-relation between these two realms by way of the social. For example, Benhabib shows that common interest can include social interest,<sup>8</sup> and Pitkin amends Arendt's conception of politics to encompass matters of social justice.<sup>9</sup> These approaches require rejecting Arendt's phenomenological essentialism. As Benhabib points out, Arendt's commitment to her rigid distinctions makes the line between the social and public sphere "untenable."<sup>10</sup> Her separation of the private, public, and social realms leads her to draw curious, if not outrageous, conclusions.<sup>11</sup> The most controversial, and indeed the most criticized, is that political and social concerns are mutually exclusive.

This is well illustrated by the question Albrecht Wellmer poses to Arendt at a 1972 conference on her work. He asks the pointed question:

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<sup>7</sup> Benhabib (2003); Canovan (1985); Bernasconi (1996); Bernstein (1986); Pitkin (1981).

<sup>8</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought: The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 138ff.

<sup>9</sup> Hanna Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Aug., 1981): 338-342.

<sup>10</sup> Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought*, 138.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt's essay, "Reflections on Little Rock" is considered an example of the shocking conclusions she reaches by maintaining such stark divisions between these three realms. It led her to claim that desegregation in American schools is not a political but a social concern precisely because "it is not the social custom of segregation that is unconstitutional, but *its legal enforcement*" (Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 202).

I would ask you to give one example in our time of a social problem which is not at the same time a political problem. Take anything: like education, or health, or urban problems, even the simple problem of living standards. It seems to me that even the social problems in our society are unavoidably political problems. But if this is true, then, of course, it would also be true that a distinction between the social and the political in our society is impossible to draw.<sup>12</sup>

The problem with strictly separating the public from the social realm is that political problems and social problems inevitably overlap. Adding to Wellmer's examples, how can women's rights, identity politics, and combating racial discrimination not constitute political concerns? However, from Arendt's perspective, such concerns should be kept out of politics because they are grounded in private interest.

While Arendt's strict separation of these three realms certainly is problematic, she nevertheless holds fast to it.<sup>13</sup> Her concern is, if these

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<sup>12</sup> Albrecht Wellmer, "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt," 318. McCarthy, Bernstein, along with other participants share Wellmer's sentiment. In particular, Bernstein seems to be dissatisfied with the two answers that Arendt provides. Firstly, that what is deemed public, and hence political, fluctuates over time (Ibid., 316). Secondly, that all social and political questions have "a double face" (Ibid., 318). Arendt means, what distinguishes the social from the political is that the former is self-evident, whereas the latter is debatable (Ibid., 317). She makes this clear in her response to Wellmer's question: "Let's take the housing problem. The social problem is adequate housing. But the question is whether this adequate housing means integration or not is *certainly* a political question. With every one of these questions there is a double face. And one of these faces should not be subject to debate. There shouldn't be any debate about the question that everybody should have decent housing" (Ibid., 318).

<sup>13</sup> Her unwavering commitment to these rigid divisions is not only evinced by her unwillingness to recognize that it leads to absurd conclusions, as demonstrated at the 1972 conference. But also by her unwillingness to retract the controversial statements espoused in "Reflections on Little Rock." That is, apart from the disclaimer she attached to the essay, in which she stated: "[s]ince what I wrote may shock good people and be misused by bad ones, I should like to make it clear that as a Jew I take my sympathy for the cause of the Negroes as for all oppressed and underprivileged people for granted and should appreciate it if the reader did likewise" (Hannah Arendt, "Preliminary Remarks," "Reflections on Little Rock," *Dissent* 6/1 (Winter 1959): 46). And apart from a written reply to Ralph Ellison in which she expressed that she unduly projected her own experiences as a Jewish refugee onto the experiences of African Americans (Arendt to Ellison, 29 July 1965, Library of Congress; cited by Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah*



distinctions are not in place, private interests threaten the integrity of the political world. This leads me to believe that accounting for the interdependence between these two realms by way of the social is not in keeping with Arendt's thought. There is no need to reject her phenomenological essentialism. A connection between the private and public realms can be accounted for by following through on Arendt's phenomenological essentialism. However, the problem with providing such an account is that she does not offer a robust or systematic account of privacy. Instead, we saw in the previous chapter that she has the tendency to prioritize the public over the private. Thus, Arendt mainly portrays the private realm from the perspective of the public realm.

Adopting Arendt's own perspective on privacy leads Loidolt to depict the private realm as "a secondary space with respect to the primary appearing and therefore common world."<sup>14</sup> Loidolt thus observes, "[m]uch of Arendt's own treatment of the realm of the private points in this direction – especially her reading of taking it as a predominantly 'privative' state."<sup>15</sup> If we take our standpoint on privacy from the viewpoint of the public, Loidolt's question seems to be a rhetorical one: "[c]an we thus speak of a 'phenomenology of the private'?"<sup>16</sup> However, even though Arendt tends to cast the private realm in a pejorative light and devotes

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*Arendt: For Love of the World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004), 315-317).

<sup>14</sup> Sophie Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality: Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 135.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

considerably more time to developing the public realm, it does not mean that the former is secondary to the latter.

It only means that developing a phenomenology of the private proves to be a more difficult task. This is what Loidolt suggests when she remarks, “[t]his does not mean that I consider it *impossible* to develop a phenomenology of the private – by starting, e.g. from the phenomenon of shame, from world-opening functions, or from phenomena in need of ‘darkness.’”<sup>17</sup> This is precisely where I wish to take my starting point. These are the three pillars of the private realm.<sup>18</sup> However, my objective is not to construct a phenomenology of the private in the strict sense of the term, as Loidolt employs it. Instead, by adopting Arendt’s own quasi-phenomenological method, I wish to provide a descriptive account of private activities from the viewpoint of privacy.

In the spirit of Arendt’s thought, “[w]hat I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than”<sup>19</sup> to consider the public realm “from the viewpoint of privacy rather than of the body politic.”<sup>20</sup> Shifting our perspective will illuminate the importance of certain private activities in shaping and sustaining the public realm. Developing an ‘Arendtian phenomenology’ of privacy thus involves applying the categories she enlists to describe the public realm to the private realm. Parallel to Chapter One, I will proceed by detailing the *condition* under which

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 138; emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> I would like to thank Lilian Alweiss for helping me phrase it this way.

<sup>19</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 72.

private activities unfold, indicating their proper *spatial location* within privacy, assigning their *attitudinal disposition*, and designating their *relation* to the public sphere. In doing so, my objective is to construct a rich account of privacy. It will show that not all private activities are kept outside of the public realm because they threaten its integrity. But rather, it will show that certain private activities must unfold outside of the public realm in order to constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions for its emergence.

In the following, I will first sketch the pillar of darkness and the pillar of shame, as they are connected. I will sketch the third pillar of the “world-building”<sup>21</sup> functions of non-privative activities in Section 1.4: *The Work of the Homo Faber*. Darkness provides the *condition* for the unfolding of private activities. Viewed from the perspective of the public sphere, the darkness of privacy has a negative connotation. It is conceived of as the absence of others, and hence as lacking the conditions that make appearance, visibility, the disclosure of the *who*, and freedom possible. Darkness is thus a privation of ‘the glaring light of the public.’ However, viewed from the perspective of privacy, darkness has a positive connotation. It shields the private realm from the light of the public, which provides the condition for the possibility of engaging in private activities.

As Arendt explains:

The distinction between the private and public realms, seen from the viewpoint of privacy rather than of the body politic, equals the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 69.

distinction between things that should be shown and things that should be hidden.<sup>22</sup>

Whereas certain activities must take place in public in order to be *political* activities, other activities must take place outside of the public eye in order to be *private* activities. Thus, the function of privacy is not only to protect the public realm from private interest, but also to protect private activities from the public.

Distinguishing between what should be open to public view and what should be shielded from it upholds the strict division between the private and public realms. However, it does not necessarily follow that all private activities should be hidden because they threaten the integrity of the public realm. But rather, it suggests that the public realm threatens the integrity of private activities. As Arendt claims, “[t]he only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, I propose that the private realm has the dual function of shielding two different types of private activities from the public eye, each of which correspond to a different *spatial location* within the private realm.

On the one hand, the privative side of privacy serves as the realm of the household, which performs two negative tasks. The first negative task is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

protecting the public realm from private interest. As detailed in Chapter One, the household is the locus of labor, that is, where the individual and the family sustain the ‘needs and wants’ of life. Labor should be hidden from the public realm, otherwise it degrades the public into the social realm. In this case, the darkness of the household does not constitute the necessary condition for engaging in labor, but rather constitutes a necessary condition for protecting the public realm. While labor can exist in the light of the public, it denatures political interactions.

It becomes clear that the first negative task of the household is connected with its second negative task. Namely, to hide those private activities that are connected to shame from the public eye. Labor is thus connected to the second pillar of privacy. This is the case because Arendt associates shame with the biological processes of life.<sup>24</sup> She explains,

it is striking that from the beginning of history to our own time it has always been the bodily part of human existence that needed to be hidden in privacy, all things connected with the necessity of the life process itself.<sup>25</sup>

The naturalness of the body is thus attached to shame, insofar as opening it up to the scrutiny of the public makes one vulnerable. Indeed, she points out that it has usually been the case that, “[h]idden away were the laborers who ‘with their bodies minister to the [bodily] needs of life,’ and the women who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the

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<sup>24</sup> Manu Samnotra has teased out positive consequences of shame by showing that it can have a productive influence on political activities. See Manu Samnotra, “‘Sensitive to Shame’: Hannah Arendt on Becoming Worldly,” *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* Vol. 21, No. 3 (September 2014): 338-350).

<sup>25</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 72.

species.”<sup>26</sup> It therefore follows that the proper *spatial location* for activities associated with shame is the pejorative darkness afforded by the privative aspect of privacy.

Otherwise, when shame creeps into the public sphere, it extinguishes the light of the public, insofar as it leads the political community to adopt one and the same interest. The case of the French Revolution is perhaps Arendt’s most salient example of this phenomenon. She does not view the French Revolution as a political success because it was not motivated by common interest for the political community. Since it was motivated by compassion for the plight of the poor, Arendt degrades the French Revolution to a social phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Rather than being “united by objective bonds in a common cause,”<sup>28</sup> the revolutionaries were led by “the happiness of the many.”<sup>29</sup> That is, they acted out of “the capacity to suffer with the ‘immense class of the poor.’”<sup>30</sup> By introducing the suffering of others into the public realm, the revolutionaries introduced the private concern of necessity into it.

This leads Arendt to the conclusion that the compassion for the marginalized led to the downfall of the French Revolution. She asserts:

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Arendt cites Aristotle (*Pol* 1254b25). Since Arendt does not indicate which translation of the *Politics* she uses, I have listed the B. Jowett translation that I usually consult in the bibliography.

<sup>27</sup> Arendt’s conception of pity as it relates to the French Revolution will be broached in Chapter Four.

<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1990), 74.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

When they appeared on the scene of politics, necessity appeared with them, and the result was that the power of the old regime became impotent and the new republic was stillborn; freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself.<sup>31</sup>

The motivation that guides the revolutionaries thus extinguishes genuine political freedom because freedom is viewed in terms of private interest. In other words, the aim of the French Revolution became the obtainment of freedom *from* necessity, not freedom *to* participate in human affairs, i.e., the unimpeded ability to commit the ‘infinitely improbable.’

As a result, Arendt observes that the introduction of necessity also led to the introduction of the private phenomenon of shame into the public arena. She equates the appearance of the marginalized with the appearance of shame. Arendt explains, “this multitude, appearing for the first time in broad daylight, was actually the multitude of the poor and the downtrodden, who every century before had hidden in darkness of shame.”<sup>32</sup> If shameful, private activities creep into the public sphere, they replace the light gained from publicity with darkness. Even when the marginalized enter the public sphere, “they remain excluded from the light of the public realm where excellence can shine; they stand in darkness wherever they go.”<sup>33</sup> Since shame necessarily is linked to the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69. In fact, Arendt gets this idea from John Adams, as she explains, “[a]s John Adams saw it: ‘The poor man’s conscience is clear; yet he is ashamed ... He feels himself out of the sight of others, groping in the dark. Mankind takes no notice of him. He rambles and wanders unheeded. In the midst of a crowd, at church, in the market ... he is in as much obscurity as he would be in a garret or a cellar. He is not disapproved, censured, or reproached; *he is only not seen* ... To be wholly overlooked, and to know it, are intolerable. If Crusoe on his island had the library of Alexandria, and a certainty that he should never again see the fact of man, would he ever open a volume?’” (Ibid.

bodily processes of life, it follows that it needs to be hidden from public view in order to preserve the integrity of political interactions and political movements.

On the other hand, the private realm also seems to have the positive task of protecting private activities from the public eye, which are not attached to shame. As Arendt claims, “it is by no means true that only the necessary, the futile, and the shameful have their proper place in the private realm.”<sup>34</sup> Instead, there are other private activities that must unfold in the darkness of privacy simply because they cannot take place in the glaring light of the public. As she maintains, “[t]he most elemental meaning of the two realms indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all.”<sup>35</sup> It therefore follows that the darkness afforded by the private realm

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Arendt cites John Adams, *Discourses on Davila, Works*, (Boston, 1851), vol. VI, 239-240). She continues, “the conviction that darkness rather than want is the curse of poverty, is extremely rare in the literature of the modern age” (Arendt, *On Revolution*, 69).

<sup>34</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. More specifically, Arendt has the phenomena of love and goodness in mind, which must be kept outside of the world in order for them to ‘exist.’ She explains, “[w]e shall see that there are very relevant matters which can survive only in the realm of the private. For instance, love, in distinction from friendship, is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public” (Ibid., 51). On the one hand, love should only exist in the private realm because it is anti-political, insofar as it eradicates the necessary distance for political interactions. Arendt therefore claims, “[l]ove, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others” (Ibid., 242). It draws persons too closely to one another, which prevents them from impartially acting for the sake of the world. This leads her to conclude, “[l]ove, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces” (Ibid.). This leads me to believe that love belongs in the privative side of privacy, seeing as the public realm must remain protected from it. On the other hand, goodness can only exist in the private realm because the public appearance of a good deed denatures its very quality of goodness. As Arendt holds, “[o]nly goodness must go into absolute hiding and flee all appearance if it is not to be destroyed” (Ibid., 75), otherwise it becomes “useful,” as opposed to “being done for nothing but goodness’ sake” (Ibid., 74). At the same time, she also implies that goodness, like love, is anti-political when she says, “[g]oodness, therefore, as a consistent way of life, is not only impossible within



has a productive function. Whereas speech and action require actualized plurality and publicity in order to be political activities, certain private activities require darkness in order to come into existence. Specifically, I wish to locate this productive form of darkness in the non-privative side of privacy. It provides a quiet space where persons can withdraw from the noisiness and chaos of human affairs, as well as from the demands of the family.

### *1.2 The 'Sanctity' of Non-Privacy*

In this sub-section, I wish to provide a descriptive account of non-privacy. Since Arendt's account is brief and schematic, I will also consult her German translation of *The Human Condition*. It offers a bit more insight into the productive function of darkness. I will start my analysis by exploring the two characteristics of non-privacy. The first trait, as Arendt explains, are "private possessions,"<sup>36</sup> that is, the material things that belong to individuals, not to the common world. The second trait, and the one that is of interest, is the physical confines of privacy where one seeks refuge from the public realm. Arendt states:

The second outstanding non-privative characteristic of privacy is that the four walls of one's private property offer the only reliable hiding place from the common public world, not only from everything that goes on in it but also from its very publicity, from being seen and being heard.<sup>37</sup>

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the confines of the public realm, it is even destructive of it" (Ibid., 77). Perhaps what leads her to this conclusion is that goodness turns into a matter of utility in public, which precludes speaking and acting for its own sake. This must be what Arendt alludes to when she concludes, "goodness that comes out of hiding and assumes a public role is no longer good, but corrupt in its own terms and will carry its own corruption wherever it goes" (Ibid.). While it is true that love and goodness can only exist in privacy, I wish to leave them out of my analysis, since I am interested in the activities that take place in private, yet contribute to the emergence of the world.

<sup>36</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 70.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 71.

The darkness of ‘the four walls’ of one’s home provides a quite space where one can retreat from the world.

This is confirmed in Arendt’s German translation of *The Human Condition*. She makes clear that the darkness afforded by non-privacy serves the positive function of protecting private activities from the light of the public. As she puts it:

Das zweite, wesentlich nicht-privative Merkmal des Privaten hat mit seiner *Verborgenheit* zu tun, damit, daß die eigenen vier Wände der einzige Ort sind, an den wir uns von der Welt zurückziehen können, nicht nur von dem, was in ihr ständig vorgeht, sondern von ihrer Öffentlichkeit, von dem Gesehen- und Gehörtwerden.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas the English version attributes the second trait of non-privacy simply to ‘the four walls of one’s home,’ the German attributes it to the concealment or seclusion (*Verborgenheit*) gained within those four walls. This suggests that the darkness of the private realm is not secondary to the publicity of the public realm, but rather that both are equally important.

While neither Canovan nor Roger Berkowitz explicitly name the non-privative sphere, they both strike on the root of what it provides, for Arendt. Canovan maintains:

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<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa oder Vom tätigen Leben* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960), 68; emphasis added. In order to distinguish between the English and German versions, I will cite the former with its English title, and the latter with its German counterpart.

Although her political thought has a very strong public emphasis, she claimed that a fully human life must include both private and public aspects. Each of us in some respects is a private individual, with private preoccupations that may include not only our material needs, our families, our careers, but also our personal development and the state of our souls. Ideally, this private life should be safeguarded by private property in the sense of a ‘privately owned place to hide in’, as she puts it.<sup>39</sup>

Berkowitz claims, “[w]hat is often ignored by the single-minded focus on the boundary of Arendtian politics is her equally emphatic call for the protection of a private realm as a sphere of dignity.”<sup>40</sup> Although Arendt prioritizes the public over the private realm, she nevertheless gives us enough indication that she equally values the kind of private life afforded by the non-privative realm.

The significance of having a physical location to withdraw from the world becomes clear in her scattered remarks on the ‘sacredness’ of privacy. This suggests that the non-privative side of privacy must be synonymous with the “sanctity”<sup>41</sup> she attributes to the private realm. In *The Human Condition*, she states:

The sacredness of this privacy was like the sacredness of the hidden, namely, of birth and death, the beginning and end of the mortals who, like all living creatures, grow out of and return to the darkness of an underworld. The non-privative trait of the household realm originally lay in its being the realm of birth and death which must be hidden from the public realm because it

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<sup>39</sup> Margaret Canovan, “Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm,” *History of Political Thought* Vol, 6., No. 3 (Winter 1985): 620. Canovan cites Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71. Indeed, it is curious that Canovan overlooks the non-privative sphere, since Arendt explicitly mentions it on the very page Canovan cites.

<sup>40</sup> Roger Berkowitz, “Solitude and the Activity of Thinking,” *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, ed. Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 239.

<sup>41</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Public Rights and Private Interests: In Response to Charles Frankel,” *Small Comforts for Hard Times: Humanists on Public Policy*, ed. Michael J. Mooney and Florian Stuber (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 108.

harbors the things hidden from human eyes and impenetrable to human knowledge.<sup>42</sup>

While she does not refer to the non-privative sphere in “Public Rights and Private Interests,” it must be the side of privacy that she has in mind. What is more, she uses the same terms and mentions the same characteristics as she does in *The Human Condition*. Arendt reiterates that “the sanctity of the private sphere”<sup>43</sup> affords us “protect[ion] from the glaring lights of the public realm.”<sup>44</sup> There is another rare occasion when Arendt casts the private realm in a positive light. In *On Revolution*, she acknowledges that “[e]xclusion from politics should not be derogatory,”<sup>45</sup> that is, when it comes in the form of deliberate “self-exclusion.”<sup>46</sup> Arendt defines it not as “arbitrary discrimination,” but as something that “would in fact give substance and reality to one of the most important negative liberties we have enjoyed since the end of the ancient world, namely, freedom from politics.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, from the viewpoint of privacy, freedom *from* politics is “sacrosanct.”<sup>48</sup>

Although these are scattered remarks across her texts, it does not diminish the importance of non-privacy. Its significance comes to light when its existence is endangered. She observes, “it is only natural that the non-privative traits of privacy should appear most clearly when men are

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<sup>42</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 62-63.

<sup>43</sup> Arendt, “Public Rights and Private Interests,” 108.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 279.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Arendt, “Public Rights and Private Interests,” 108.

threatened with deprivation of it.”<sup>49</sup> What puts the non-privative sphere at risk of disappearance are “the revolutionary measures of socialism or communism,” seeing as they contribute to the “‘withering away’ of the private realm in general and of private property in particular.”<sup>50</sup> The abolition of private property eliminates the two traits of the non-privative sphere, insofar as it turns private possessions and private property into publicly owned or common goods. From the perspective of privacy, the value of having private possessions and a hiding place is unquestionable.

Arendt makes this clear when she says:

The difference between what we have in common and what we own privately is first that our private possessions, which we use and consume daily, are much more urgently needed than any part of the common world; without property, as Locke pointed out, ‘the common is of no use.’<sup>51</sup>

Losing the two traits of non-privacy is dangerous because the productive condition of darkness is subsumed into the light of the public. As she explains, “[t]he greatest threat here, however, is not the abolition of private ownership of wealth but the abolition of private property in the sense of a tangible, worldly place of one’s own.”<sup>52,53</sup> From the viewpoint

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<sup>49</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. Arendt cites Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, sec. 27.

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 70.

<sup>53</sup> While Arendt seems to suggest that the non-privative sphere is ‘worldly,’ she in fact, means that it is ‘worldly,’ insofar as it constitutes a part of the human artifice. This becomes evident in the German translation where she adds to the previous block quote that private property constitutes ‘a small piece of the world,’ i.e., the common world. She claims, “[d]er Unterschied zwischen dem, was uns gemeinsam, und dem, was uns zu eigen ist, ist erstens ein Unterschied der Dringlichkeit; kein Teil der uns gemeinsamen Welt wird so dringend und vordringlich von uns benötigt wie *das kleine Stück Welt*, das uns gehört zum täglichen Gebrauch und Verbrauch. Ohne Eigentum, wie Locke sagte,

of privacy, having a physical location to withdraw from the world is just as valuable as actively participating in human affairs.<sup>54</sup> This is the case because persons lose the spatial location and the productive condition of darkness under which non-privative activities can unfold. Although Arendt does not make this explicit, it stands to reason that non-privative activities take place in solitude. In the following, I will show that the non-privative realm is the spatial location where persons can assume the *attitudinal disposition* of solitude.

### 1.3 Solitude

Withdrawing from the world generally has been associated with solitude. However, no one has located it in the non-privative sphere. According to Arendt's own definitions, solitude requires its own space within the confines of privacy. Solitude is not only gained from withdrawing from the world, but also from the family. This is the case because it requires reflection,<sup>55</sup> which cannot be sparked in the presence of others, whether that is in the limited company of the family or in the presence of

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können wir mit dem Gemeinsamen nichts anfangen, es ist „of no use“ (Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 67; emphasis added).

<sup>54</sup> This is confirmed when she maintains, “we are in a far better position to realize the consequences for human existence when both the public and private spheres of life are gone, the public because it has become a function of the private and the private because it has become the only common concern left” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 69).

<sup>55</sup> I have chosen the term ‘reflection’ or ‘reflective’ to describe such activities for two reasons. First, it is more consonant with Arendt’s definition of mental activities as ‘reflexive’ or ‘self-reflective.’ Secondly, it is more consistent with her distinction between reflection and introspection. As we will see in Section 2: *2.2 Representative Thinking*, reflection in the form of representative thinking is always plural and intersubjective, and therefore directed toward the world. In contrast, introspection is always singular and subjective, and therefore ‘worldless’ (see Hannah Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 49). It does not concern things of the world, but rather includes: “introspection into his sensual or cognitive apparatus, into his consciousness, into psychological and logical processes” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 272).

‘innumerable’ others. Non-privacy thus provides the spatial conditions for withdrawal, which allows one to assume the *attitudinal disposition* of solitude. It therefore follows that the non-privative realm has the special function of protecting non-privative activities from the public realm *and* from the household.

While the privative and non-privative traits of privacy share the same physical location and the condition of darkness, what distinguishes them is that they pave the way for assuming different attitudinal dispositions. Even though Arendt does not explicitly ascribe solitude to the non-privative sphere, it is in keeping with her sharp distinction between isolation and solitude.<sup>56</sup> Given her extremely reductive view of the family, it follows that the household is an isolating space.<sup>57</sup> The household is the realm of isolation because it is marked by subjectivity. Since the family is united by one and the same concern, they are not representative of the plurality and intersubjectivity of the public sphere. Arendt explains, “[i]t is only in loneliness that I feel *deprived* of human company, and it is only in the acute awareness of such deprivation that men ever exist really in

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<sup>56</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 100.

<sup>57</sup> Arendt also makes clear that one can be isolated in the public realm. She explains, “[b]ecause this one who I now am is without company, I may reach out for the company of others – people, books, music – and if they fail me or if I am unable to establish contact with them, I am overcome by boredom and loneliness. For this I do not have to be alone: I can be very bored and lonely in the midst of a crowd, but not in actual solitude, that is, in my own company, or together with a friend, in the sense of another self” (Ibid., 98). Indeed, this can be a consequence of the “mass phenomenon of loneliness” (Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 59), that is, when both the private and public realms are subject to extinction, whether by the rise of the social realm, totalitarianism, or as we have just seen, the rise of communism and socialism. As Arendt continues, “mass society not only destroys the public but the private as well, deprives men not only of their place in the world but of their private home, where they once felt sheltered against the world and where, at any rate, even those excluded from the world could find a substitute in the warmth and hearth of the limited reality of family life” (Ibid.).

the singular.”<sup>58</sup> It goes to show that isolation is an *anti-political* disposition, insofar as its subjectivity runs counter to and destroys the political realm.

The household does not provide the proper condition for persons to assume the attitudinal disposition of solitude. This is the case because isolation and solitude are mutually exclusive. Since Arendt defines solitude as ‘being in one’s own company,’<sup>59</sup> it cannot be gained in the presence of the family. This becomes clear when she says:

I call this existential state in which I keep myself company ‘solitude’ to distinguish it from ‘loneliness,’ where I am also alone but now deserted not only by human company but also by the possible company of myself.<sup>60</sup>

Maintaining a spatial divide within privacy is crucial for the actualization of solitude, as it cannot be gained in the presence of others, whether that is the family or the political world.

Whereas some private possessions may be shared with family members, one’s private hiding place cannot overlap with communal areas in the home. In contrast, the space where one goes to retreat from the world and from the family is necessarily distinct from the household. Arendt clarifies this in the German translation of *The Human Condition*. We already saw that the English version reads as follows:

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<sup>58</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 74.

<sup>59</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 98.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*



The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.<sup>61</sup>

Whereas the German translation reads:

Die einzig wirksame Art und Weise, die Dunkelheit dessen zu gewährleisten, was vor dem Licht der Öffentlichkeit verborgen bleiben muß, ist Privateigentum, *eine Stätte, zu der niemand Zutritt hat, und wo man zugleich geborgen und verborgen ist.*<sup>62</sup>

What she adds to the German translation is that in order for private property to provide the darkness for non-privative activities, it must remain a place that no one else has access to.

We can therefore imagine that the second trait of the non-privative sphere encompasses one's bedroom, office, or personal space within the home. Certainly, family members can occupy these spaces with us, but while they remain in our company, we can never be in our own. For the simple fact that the demands of the family fracture the productive darkness of non-privacy. The company of others, and even the limited company of the family, actively prevents solitude because it involves turning inward.

On this basis, I wish to locate those activities in the non-privative sphere that require reflection. As noted in Chapter One, reflection requires withdrawing from the world, which explains why mental activities are

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<sup>61</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71.

<sup>62</sup> Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 68; emphasis added. It is interesting that Arendt again adds the element of concealment to non-privacy in her German translation when she clarifies that it is the space where "one simultaneously is secure and concealed" (Ibid.; my translation).

relegated to the private realm. As Beiner explains, “the *vita contemplativa* [is] a sphere of human life which Arendt conceived to be, by definition, solitary, exercised in withdrawal from the world and from other men.”<sup>63</sup> Since reflection also cannot take place in the presence of the family, it is consistent with Arendt’s thought to locate these activities within the non-privative sphere. The non-privative activities I wish to detail in this chapter are the work of the *homo faber* and representative thinking (i.e., the Socratic two-in-one).

What makes these activities distinctive is that they do not take place in public, yet constitute one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for its emergence. This is why the third pillar of non-privacy is world-building. On the one hand, the work of the *homo faber* constructs the human artifice, i.e., the physical space in which political encounters can take place. On the other hand, representative thinking underscores speech and action with thoughtfulness. This is precisely why the non-privative sphere is ‘sacrosanct,’ for Arendt. If the non-privative realm is eradicated, then the public realm also disappears. I will start my analysis with the *homo faber* because it sets precedent for showing that the two-in-one is also a world-building activity.

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<sup>63</sup> Ronald Beiner, “Judging in a World of Appearances: A Commentary on Hannah Arendt’s Unwritten Finale,” *History of Political Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1980): 130.

#### 1.4 *The Work of the Homo Faber*

The world-building function of work is generally recognized in the secondary literature, seeing as the task of the *homo faber* is to construct the human artifice. As noted in Chapter One, the public realm consists of the tangible world of the human artifice and the intangible world of politics. Arendt thus observes, “[t]he public realm, the space within the world which men need in order to appear at all, is therefore more specifically ‘the work of man.’”<sup>64</sup> As we will see shortly, the human artifice therefore provides the physical conditions for the emergence of politics. This is why others have recognized the equal importance of the human artifice as the political activities of speech and action in creating the public sphere. Canovan echoes this when she explains:

At the heart of [Arendt’s] analysis of the human condition is the vital importance for civilized existence of a durable human world, built upon the earth to shield us against natural processes and provide a stable setting for our mortal lives.<sup>65</sup>

As Passerin d’Entrèves emphasizes:

Both dimensions are essential to the practice of citizenship, the former providing the spaces where it can flourish, the latter providing the background from which public spaces of action and deliberation can arise.<sup>66</sup>

Although the significance of work has been acknowledged, it has not been located in the non-privative sphere.

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<sup>64</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 208.

<sup>65</sup> Margaret Canovan, “Introduction,” *The Human Condition*, xiii.

<sup>66</sup> Maurizio Passerin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

Due to the common misconception that the entirety of the private realm consists of the household, it has led many to incorrectly locate work in the household. For example, since Andrew Norris accepts Arendt's "rigid distinction between the private and public realms,"<sup>67</sup> he reduces the entirety of privacy to the private realm. Despite his awareness that "the workers provide a realm in which political action and its remembrance are possible,"<sup>68</sup> he nevertheless situates the *homo faber* in the anti-political household.<sup>69</sup> Passarin d'Entrèves makes a similar mistake. We saw in Chapter One that he holds:

The household is the sphere of satisfaction of material needs by means of labor *and* work carried out in private under the rule of necessity; the *polis* is the sphere of freedom where equality reigns and where citizens act with a view to excellence and distinction, with the aim of achieving a measure of immortality by glorious deeds and memorable words.<sup>70</sup>

What adds to this confusion is that Arendt applies her own definitions inconsistently. For example, she locates work in isolation when she states, "isolation from others is a necessary prerequisite" for "the activity of work."<sup>71</sup> It would seem as though work takes place in the isolation of the household.

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," *Polity* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 169.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Passarin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 35; emphasis added.

<sup>71</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 212. Arendt reiterates that the *homo faber* lives in isolation when she claims, "[a]ction, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act" (*Ibid.*, 188).

Based on Arendt's own distinction between isolation and solitude, work cannot take place in the isolation of the household. Since work requires reflection, the fabrication of use-objects must unfold in the solitude of non-privacy. Otherwise, the all-consuming needs of life and the demands of the family prevent the *homo faber* from focusing on the idea or blueprint that guides the fabrication process. As Arendt explains:

The actual work of fabrication is performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed. This model can be an image beheld by the eye of the mind or a blueprint in which the image has already found a tentative materialization through work.<sup>72</sup>

The family thus detracts from the *homo faber's* ability to reflect on the mental image they seek to bring to fruition. Although they are alone, their work does not unfold in isolation. This is the case because, in solitude, the *homo faber* can “rely upon his thoughts to keep him company.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 76. While being in the company of one's own thoughts is consistent with Arendt's definition of solitude, the context in which she makes this claim illuminates another inconsistent application of solitude and isolation. This is the case because she attributes solitude to the contemplative life of the philosopher. Arendt maintains: “[t]o be in solitude means to be with one's self, and thinking, therefore, though it may be the most solitary of all activities, is never altogether without a partner and without company” (Ibid.). While this is consonant with her definition of solitude, it cannot be attributed to the philosopher, seeing as they pursue the truth. She thus inconsistently concludes, “yet solitude can become the authentic way of life in the figure of the philosopher, whereas the much more general experience of loneliness is so contradictory to the human condition of plurality” (Ibid.). This inconsistency spans throughout her works. She later describes the solitude of the philosopher in *The Life of the Mind*. For instance, Arendt contends, “[f]or while, for whatever reason, a man indulges in sheer thinking, and no matter on what subject, he lives completely in the singular, that is, in complete solitude, as though not men but Man inhabited the earth” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 47). She continues, “[w]ithdrawal from the ‘beastliness of the multitude’ into the company of the ‘very few’ but also into the absolute solitude of the One has been the most outstanding feature of the philosopher's life ever since Parmenides and Plato discovered that for those ‘very few,’ the *sophoi*, the ‘life of thinking’ that knows neither joy nor grief is the most divine of all, and *nous*, thought itself, is ‘the king of heaven and earth.’” (Ibid.; Arendt cites Plato, *Philebus* (67b, 52b; and 33b, 28c). Since Arendt does not indicate which translation of the *Philebus* she uses, I have listed the Dorothea Frede translation that I usually consult in the bibliography.

While the *homo faber* is not necessarily in their own company, they are nevertheless “alone with the ‘idea,’ the mental image of the thing to be.”<sup>74</sup> Benhabib perhaps comes the closest to my interpretation of work, as she maintains that it is a “world-building capacity,”<sup>75</sup> which “although often carried out in solitude, must display its product in public.”<sup>76</sup> Being in the company of their ideas thus suggests that the solitary existence of the *homo faber* is not truly ‘privative.’<sup>77</sup>

The activities that take place in each side of privacy take on a different *relation* to the public sphere. Whereas the privative side of privacy is marked by isolation and is therefore anti-political, the non-privative side of privacy is marked by solitude and is therefore *unpolitical*. Thus, what makes non-privative activities distinctive is that they take place outside of the world, yet contribute to its emergence. This becomes clear when Arendt tells us, “[w]orkmanship, therefore, may be an unpolitical way of life, but it certainly is not an antipolitical one.”<sup>78</sup> She thus seems to suggest that the category of unpolitical activities has a positive connotation. Even though the *homo faber* must withdraw from the public sphere, they nevertheless contribute to its emergence. It follows that work is not anti-political, seeing as it constitutes one of the building blocks of

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<sup>74</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 161.

<sup>75</sup> Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought*, 132.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>77</sup> The only other persons the *homo faber* comes into contact with are their assistants. However, this type of ‘company’ is merely an extension of the same interest of utility. As we will see shortly, since a means-to-ends mentality guides the fabrication of use-objects, the *homo faber* remains unaware of their political task in fashioning the human artifice. Therefore, it stands to reason that their assistants do not afford the kind of company that reflects a plurality of perspectives.

<sup>78</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 212.

the public realm. As Arendt says, “the world only comes into existence through the activity of the *homo faber*.”<sup>79</sup> This goes to show that the reason why work must take place outside of public view is not because it threatens the integrity of the public realm. Instead, work must be shielded from public view for the same reason it must be shielded from the family. Namely, the *homo faber* can only concentrate on the fabrication of use-objects in the productive form of darkness afforded by non-privacy.

Accordingly, work’s relation to the political world distinguishes the solitude of the *homo faber* from the isolation of the *animal laborans*. From the vantage point of privacy, the task of the *homo faber* is thus world-oriented, whereas the task of the *animal laborans* is self-oriented. On the one hand, labor is only ‘related’ to the public sphere, insofar as it prepares persons for political participation by meeting the demands of life. On the other hand, work is more closely related to the public sphere, insofar as it provides the physical conditions for the possibility of political interactions. This becomes clear when Arendt contrasts the unpolitical nature of work with the anti-political nature of labor. She explains:

Yet this precisely is the case of laboring, an activity in which man is neither together with the world nor with other people, but alone with his body, facing the naked necessity to keep himself alive. To be sure, he too lives in the presence of and together with others, but this togetherness has none of the distinctive marks of true plurality.<sup>80,81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>81</sup> To add confusion, she groups labor and work together under the category of unpolitical activities. She states: “[b]oth, therefore, are strictly speaking, unpolitical, and will incline to denounce action and speech and idleness, idle busybody-ness and idle talk, and generally will judge public activities in terms of their usefulness to supposedly higher ends – to make the world more useful and more beautiful in the case of *homo faber*, to

In contrast to the isolation of the *animal laborans*, what makes the solitude of the *homo faber* distinctive is that they are not entirely cut off from the world.

By fabricating the use-objects that fashion the human artifice, the *homo faber* maintains a significantly closer connection to the public realm than the *animal laborans*. Arendt holds:

The activity of work ... although it may not be able to establish an autonomous public realm in which men *qua* men appear, still is connected with this space of appearances in many ways; at the very least, it remains related to the tangible world of things it produced.<sup>82</sup>

This notwithstanding, it would seem that the *homo faber* adopts a similar attitude to the *animal laborans*, insofar as both work and labor are accompanied by a means-to-ends mentality. As we have seen, the *animal laborans* creates consumer products for the sole purpose of consumption. In a similar vein, the *homo faber* creates use-objects that are conventionally useful, insofar as they help persons ‘go about their daily lives.’ This means that they perform their work according to the standard of utility. Arendt explains, “[d]uring the work process, everything is judged in terms of suitability and usefulness for the desired end, and for nothing else.”<sup>83</sup> The example that she likes to use is a table. It is a product of work, as it is fabricated in order to serve a particular function or end,

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make life easier and longer in the case of the *animal laborans*” (Ibid., 208). However, it is more consistent with Arendt’s own thought to consider labor as anti-political.

<sup>82</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 212.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 153.



namely, to facilitate eating and sharing meals. Thus, the *homo faber* creates use-objects with one view in mind, namely, their immediate usefulness for this or that end.

The absorption in the instrumentality of work is reinforced by the fact that the *homo faber* remains unaware of their political task. Similarly to the cyclical process of life, the *homo faber* gets stuck in a “chain”<sup>84</sup> of viewing objects as means to ends, which can serve as further means to other ends. Since they are consumed by a means-to-ends mentality, they remain unaware of their contribution to the public realm. This implies that the *homo faber* is not consciously concerned with constructing the human artifice in order to support the political realm. Instead, Arendt claims that the *homo faber* views the public realm “as worthless as the employed material, a mere means to further ends.”<sup>85</sup>

Although the *homo faber* has a political task, their perspective on the political world prevents them from adopting the role of the citizen.<sup>86</sup> Since they cannot see beyond the instrumentality of their products, they remain unaware of their political significance. However, this does not mean that work is not anti-political. Precisely because use-objects constitute one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the public realm. Although

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>86</sup> In fact, Arendt maintains that the *homo faber* never enters into the political realm. Since they adopt a means-to-ends mentality, when they step into the public sphere, they view it in terms of the exchange market (Ibid., 163). They enter the exchange market, not the public realm, because they assume the role of the tradesman, who simply looks to exchange their products for other goods.

the *homo faber* remains uninvolved in politics, their work nevertheless furnishes the physical conditions for the possibility politics. It therefore follows that the unpolitical life of the *homo faber* is not at all opposed to politics. In contrast to consumer products, use-objects do not only exist to fulfill the ‘needs and wants’ of life, but they can also serve a political purpose.

This does not mean that use-objects are *political* in themselves. But rather, in agreement with Rowena Azada, use-objects function “as the catalysts of political action.”<sup>87</sup> A table is not political in itself. However, since it constitutes the human artifice, it can be implemented to organize political interactions. In this way, use-objects structure and enable human affairs by ‘relating and separating’ persons. As Arendt explains:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak.<sup>88</sup>

The human artifice is the physical space in which persons can come together in order to share and take part in creating the political world. It provides a physical mediating space where citizens can assemble and interact with each other.

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<sup>87</sup> Rowena Anthea B. Azada, “Hannah Arendt: The Challenge of World-Building,” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* Vol. 9, no. 1 (2005): 6.

<sup>88</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52.

Use-objects can be seen as constituting the physical space for persons to engage in politics, and hence for appearance. As Azada claims:

Of crucial importance, then, to political action is the fabrication both of the material world, and of speech-discourses that express a heterogeneity of perspectives, for from the ground of these fabricated materials will another world be coaxed into existence.<sup>89</sup>

Appearance thus does not only depend on the plurality of ‘innumerable’ perspectives that emerge in the world, but it also depends on the solitary work of the *homo faber*. Without the human artifice, the political world would not exist.

What affirms the political significance of the *homo faber* is that the durability of their use-objects grants the human artifice the kind of permanence that transcends and unites generations. The way that the *homo faber* remains ‘related’ to politics is that the durability of their products not only enables political encounters, but also stabilizes the intangible world. As Arendt states, the products of work “give the human artifice the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature which is man.”<sup>90</sup> What makes use-objects fitting building blocks of the human artifice is that they outlast their immediate use. For instance, a table remains with or without human contact. It may break, but only after a certain amount of time. Thus, surviving human contact allows use-objects to gain “an independence of their own.”<sup>91</sup> It constitutes their durability, i.e., their ability to “exist as a

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<sup>89</sup> Azada, “Hannah Arendt: The Challenge of World-Building,” 6.

<sup>90</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

thing and endure in the world as a distinct entity.”<sup>92</sup> Although use-objects endure, they are still subject to the wear and tear of human interactions and the corrosiveness of time. This is why Arendt clarifies that “[t]he durability of the human artifice is not absolute.”<sup>93</sup>

Even though use-objects have a limited lifespan, they supersede their immediate use when they become “part and parcel”<sup>94</sup> of the human artifice. The products of work not only mediate political interactions, but also transcend and unite generations in one and the same world. While individual use-objects inevitably will decay or be replaced, and while individual citizens inevitably will come and go, the common world will always remain the same. To quote Arendt at length:

Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world, and no public realm, is possible ... the common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly to the political world, it seems that the common world maintains itself through change. All the while, the durability of use-objects imbues the human artifice with a kind of permanence that withstands the corrosiveness of time and fluctuating generations.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 55.

It becomes clear that the human artifice provides one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the establishment of objectivity. Since the common world remains one and the same through change, it ensures that citizens will always share at least one common denominator. As Arendt observes,

the things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life, and their objectivity lies in the fact that ... men, their every-changing nature notwithstanding, can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world.<sup>96</sup>

Despite undergoing changes, the fact that the human artifice remains one and the same tangible world gives citizens the assurance that they always engage with others in the same context.<sup>97</sup> The continuity and permanence of the human artifice thus assists in establishing the reality of the public realm. This goes to show that the unpolitical life of the *homo faber* constitutes a vital task in terms of enabling and securing the physical conditions for the emergence and continuity of the political community. Without the work of the *homo faber*, the political world would not exist.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 137. More specifically, Arendt has nature in mind, since the function of the human artifice also protects persons and the political realm from its “overwhelming elementary force” (Ibid.).

<sup>97</sup> At the same time, Arendt makes clear that the human artifice would not be a physical world properly speaking without being created, put into place, and being used by human beings. If the human artifice were not inhabited and used by persons, it would not exist as a meaningful space. She explains, since “human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence” (Ibid., 9). The idea is, without the human beings that use it, the human artifice would not be a cohesive arrangement of use-objects that organize human interactions. It becomes evident that human beings also give the human artifice its meaning. Without them, use-objects would not serve a purpose, whether conventional or political.

## Part II

### 2. Preparation for Politics

#### 2.1 *Representative Thinking*

Now that we have seen that work is a world-building activity, we can turn to the other activity I wish to locate in non-privacy, namely, representative thinking. The world-orientedness and solitary nature of representative thinking has been acknowledged, but no one has located it in the non-privative sphere. For instance, Topolski claims that it “is politically significant and yet not political itself, as it happens outside the space of action.”<sup>98</sup> Berkowitz perhaps comes the closest to my interpretation of the productive function of non-privacy without calling it by its name. He maintains:

The private, Arendt insists, is not necessarily the realm of loneliness that is opposed to politics and action. Nor is the private an economic realm concerned with the pursuit of individual interests. Instead, the private can be a space of solitude that is the necessary prerequisite for the activity of thinking.<sup>99</sup>

The general consensus thus reflects that Arendt characterizes thinking as a solitary activity. Whereas she conflates her own distinction between isolation and solitude when it comes to work, she consistently ascribes solitude to the activity of thinking. She states, “[s]olitude and its corresponding activity, which is thinking.”<sup>100</sup> It therefore stands to reason that it unfolds in the non-privative sphere.

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<sup>98</sup> Anya Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality* (London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, Ltd., 2015), 88.

<sup>99</sup> Berkowitz, “Solitude and the Activity of Thinking,” 239.

<sup>100</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 98.

However, the problem is that Arendt does not always distinguish between different types of thinking. While she is clear that thinking takes place in solitude, she tends to refer to ‘representative thinking’ simply as ‘thinking.’ Naturally, this has led to some confusion in the secondary literature. For instance, Bryan Garsten uses ‘representative thinking’ as a blanket term,<sup>101</sup> whereas Linda Zerilli limits it to enlarged mentality.<sup>102</sup> Glossing over the nuances of Arendt’s different iterations of thinking thus obscures which tasks they each perform, and thereby their proper *relation* to the political world. In order to bring clarity to her distinctions, I propose that Arendt operates with three forms of thinking. (i) Thinking in its most basic sense can be understood as consciousness. The task of consciousness is to activate two forms of representative thinking: (ii) the Socratic two-in-one and (iii) enlarged mentality. I will limit my analysis to the first two forms of thinking in this chapter.

Consciousness provides the conditions for the possibility of representative thinking. For Arendt, consciousness simply means having awareness of one’s thoughts, as she equates it with “self-awareness.”<sup>103</sup> We can therefore associate it with the stream of consciousness that follows what one thinks, says, or does. As she claims, “[w]hat we usually call ‘consciousness,’ [is] the fact that I am aware of myself.”<sup>104</sup> This type of thinking is singular and subjective, since it merely amounts to the

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<sup>101</sup> Bryan Garsten, “The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly* Vol. 74, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1071-1108.

<sup>102</sup> Linda Zerilli, “‘We Feel Our Freedom’: Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt,” *Political Theory* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Apr., 2005): 158-188.

<sup>103</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 98.

<sup>104</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 19.

cognitive state of awareness, of being *one* person who is aware of their own thoughts. However, what makes consciousness distinctive is that it provides the conditions for the possibility of representative thinking.

Although Arendt distinguishes between consciousness and ‘thinking’ below, she has a specific form of representative thinking in mind. She explains:

Consciousness is not the same as thinking; acts of consciousness have in common with sense experience the fact that they are ‘intentional’ and therefore *cognitive* acts, whereas the thinking ego does not think something but *about* something, and this act is dialectical: it proceeds in the form of a silent dialogue. Without consciousness in the sense of self-awareness, thinking would not be possible.<sup>105</sup>

This shows that consciousness activates representative thinking, specifically, the Socratic two-in-one. This is the case because Arendt defines the two-in-one as the “soundless dialogue (*eme emauto*) between me and myself.”<sup>106</sup> Harkening to Socrates’ notion of the soul’s dialogue with itself,<sup>107</sup> one’s inner dialogue is not singular, but it is ‘split’<sup>108</sup> into two. She says,

even though I am one, I am not simply one, I have a self and I am related to this self as my own self . . . I talk to myself, I am not *only* aware of myself – and in this sense, though I am one, I am two-in-one.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>106</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 184.

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus* (189e-190a); *Sophist* (263e).

<sup>108</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 106.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 90; emphasis added.



This occurs, as she has it, by “actualiz[ing] ... the difference given in consciousness.”<sup>110</sup> It means that I no longer ‘think something,’ in the sense that I am aware that I have thoughts. But rather, I begin to ‘think *about* something,’ in the sense that I ruminate on a question or a problem *with* myself. The ‘difference’ that is inserted into consciousness is therefore *myself*. In other words, when I turn inward, I have the ability to lead an internal dialogue with myself as though with another person.<sup>111</sup>

It stands to reason that representative thinking takes place within the confines of non-privacy because the two-in-one entails being in one’s own company. While leading an internal dialogue requires being alone, it is distinct from isolation because it guarantees the company of oneself.

To quote Arendt at length:

The mode of existence present in this silent dialogue of myself and myself, I now shall call *solitude*. Hence, solitude is more than, and different from, other modes of being alone, particularly and most importantly loneliness and isolation. Solitude means that though alone, I am together with somebody (myself, that is). It means that I am two-in-one, whereas loneliness as well as isolation do not know this kind of schism, this inner dichotomy in which I can ask questions of myself and receive answers.<sup>112</sup>

The solitariness requisite for representative thinking is not pejorative because one keeps oneself company. Whereas the *homo faber* must work in solitude in order to concentrate on the idea of their desired use-object, the two-in-one can only be activated when we can focus on the ‘difference in consciousness.’

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<sup>110</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 185.

<sup>111</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 90.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

This is why Arendt claims that “[t]he idiomatic ‘stop and think’ is indeed entirely right. Whenever we think, we stop whatever else we may have been doing.”<sup>113</sup> When we are interrupted by the needs of the family or by the demands of the political community, we lose our internal conversation partner. As a result, our internal dialogue reverts back to the singular and subjective stream of consciousness. She maintains:

If somebody addresses me, I must now talk to him, and not to myself, and in talking to him, I change. I become one, possessing of course self-awareness, that is, consciousness, but no longer fully and articulately in possession of myself.<sup>114</sup>

Being interrupted thus shifts our concentration away from ourselves and toward others, the political world, or the ‘needs and wants’ of life. When the ‘difference’ inserted into consciousness disappears, we become ‘one’ again. This goes to show that consciousness does not necessarily need the shelter of non-privacy, as it can accompany one throughout all sorts of activities. Arendt defines consciousness as the fact “that whatever I do I am at the same time somehow aware of doing it.”<sup>115</sup> Since consciousness is singular self-awareness, it can follow the process of laboring, talking to others in the public sphere, or engaging with the family.

In contrast, representative thinking requires a quiet space where one can withdraw from the world and from the household. Otherwise, any kind of distraction precludes the ability to focus on one’s internal conversation

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>115</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 92.

partner. Since the two-in-one emerges from an ‘inner schism’ or ‘dichotomy,’ it is the moment when thinking stops being subjective and singular, and starts being intersubjective and plural, and hence ‘representative’ of the world. As paradoxical as it sounds, this shows that the darkness of non-privacy is the very condition that activates the condition of plurality in the interiority of the mind. Arendt explains:

Human consciousness suggests that difference and otherness, which are the outstanding characteristics of the world of appearances as it is given by man as his habitat among a plurality of things, are the very conditions for the existence of man’s ego as well. For this ego, the I-am-I, experiences difference in identity precisely when it is not related to the things that appear but only to itself.<sup>116</sup>

The condition that makes political encounters possible is internalized, which makes the two-in-one ‘representative’ of the plurality and intersubjectivity of the world. As Topolski observes, “[t]his is in fact a reversal of the paradox of the political. Rather than being particularity within plurality, thinking is plurality within the particularity of the self.”<sup>117</sup>

Granted, internal plurality will never be as vibrant and bright as actualized plurality in the world. Arendt clarifies that the two-in-one is limited to a duality when she states, “even in the singularity or duality of thinking processes, plurality is somehow germinally present insofar as I can think only by splitting up into two although I am one.”<sup>118</sup> The plurality evinced

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>117</sup> Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, 89.

<sup>118</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 106.

by the two-in-one is limited to the relation one has with oneself. Since it is reductive of actualized plurality, it follows that representative thinking can never give rise to the kind of reality and objectivity afforded by the ‘innumerable’ perspectives of others. To complete Arendt’s initial definition of consciousness: “[w]hat we usually call ‘consciousness,’ the fact that I am aware of myself and therefore in a sense can appear to myself, would never suffice to guarantee reality.”<sup>119</sup> Reality cannot be constituted by the mind alone precisely because it is constituted by the ‘innumerable’ and unique perspectives that make up and arise in the political world.

Although reality cannot be constituted by the mind alone, it does not mean that persons altogether lose touch with reality in privacy. It goes to show that Arendt’s conception of privacy is not as anemic as it would seem. According to her own distinctions, only the privative side of privacy is devoid of reality, plurality, intersubjectivity, and appearance. The ‘germinal’ plurality afforded by the Socratic two-in-one suggests that non-privacy affords a minimal sense of reality, plurality, intersubjectivity. This is the case because sparking the ‘difference’ within oneself engenders plurality and intersubjectivity already at the subjective level of one’s own thought process. As Arendt has it, “[m]en not only exist in the plural as do all earthly beings, but have an indication of this plurality within themselves.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 19.

<sup>120</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Socrates,” *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 22.

Similarly to the human activity of work, representative thinking withdraws from the public sphere, yet remains in touch with it. Arendt makes this clear when she says:

All thinking, strictly speaking, is done in solitude and is a dialogue between me and myself; but this dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellow-men because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought.<sup>121</sup>

The Socratic two-in-one thus assures that one's train of thought remains 'related' to the world, insofar as it mirrors worldly plurality and intersubjectivity.

Arendt is clear that, as long as this 'inner dichotomy' exists, plurality can never be eradicated from one's mind. She maintains:

This is also the reason why the plurality of men can never entirely be abolished ... even if I were to live entirely by myself, I would, as long as I am alive, live in the condition of plurality. I have to put up with myself, and nowhere does this I-with-myself show more clearly than in pure thought, which is always a dialogue between the two-in-one.<sup>122</sup>

Solitary thinking is never isolated or cut off from the world because one internally replicates the very activity that creates and sustains it. Since non-privacy enables and maintains a minimal or 'germinal' sense of plurality, it follows that it paves the way for a minimal sense of self, reality, and humanity. We should therefore not understand these

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<sup>121</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York and London: Penguin Random House, 2017), 625-626.

<sup>122</sup> Arendt, "Socrates," 20.

phenomena as purely worldly activities. Instead, we should view them as ‘representative’ when they are confined to the interiority of the mind, and as ‘actualized’ when they are brought to fruition in the world.

This becomes clear when Arendt makes room for a ‘germinal’ sense of self and reality by way of the Socratic two-in-one. As detailed in Chapter One, the disclosure of the who and the actualization of reality only fully emerge in the world. This is the case because appearance is intersubjectively constituted by the ‘innumerable’ perspectives of others. However, by retreating into non-privacy, one neither completely loses one’s sense of self, nor entirely loses touch with reality. This follows because persons still appear to themselves when they lead an internal dialogue. Arendt confirms this when she states:

The self is the only person from whom I cannot depart, whom I cannot leave, with whom I am welded together ... and that means that I not only appear to others but that I also appear to myself.<sup>123</sup>

A minimal sense of self is thus made possible within the confines of non-privacy because our internal conversation partner ensures that we see ourselves from another perspective. Just as one talks to oneself as though to another person, one appears before oneself as though before another person. Arendt confirms this when she states, “I who think never cease to be an appearance among appearances, no matter how successfully I may have withdrawn from them mentally.”<sup>124</sup> On this basis, it follows that the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 21. She explicitly refers to conscience, which emerges from the Socratic two-in-one. Conscience will be broached in Section 2: 2.3 *Conscience*.

<sup>124</sup> Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, 29.

two-in-one provides a limited sense of reality. While it is not as robust as the reality afforded by actualized plurality, it is not entirely devoid of reality because it is ‘represented’ in the interiority of the mind. The darkness afforded by non-privacy thus makes a ‘germinal’ sense of self and reality possible.

Furthermore, Arendt suggests that the Socratic two-in-one ensures that persons retain their humanity, even when the world has disappeared. Since the ‘germinal’ plurality of the two-in-one is representative of its actualized counterpart, it follows that persons contain humanity within themselves. That is, in the form of a dialogue. She explains,

while engaged in the dialogue of solitude, in which I am strictly by myself, I am not altogether separated from that plurality which is the world of men and which we call, in its most general sense, humanity. This humanity, or rather this plurality, is indicated already in the fact that I am two-in-one.<sup>125,126</sup>

Leading a dialogue with oneself thus ensures that humanity can never really be lost. Even though speaking and interacting with others actualizes humanity, it seems that the two-in-one gives rise to an internalized sense of humanity. It is not by any means as real or tangible as its actualized counterpart, but it is just as important. Even if persons can no longer appear in public, maintaining an internal dialogue with themselves ensures that they retain their humanity.

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<sup>125</sup> Arendt, “Socrates,” 22.

<sup>126</sup> She reiterates, “only in this humanized form does consciousness then become the outstanding characteristic of somebody who is a man and neither a god nor an animal ... the Socratic two-in-one heals the solitariness of thought; its inherent duality points to the infinite plurality which is the law of the earth” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 187).

Furthermore, Arendt insinuates that the two-in-one provides the conditions for the possibility of the disclosure of the who in the world. She says, “[w]hat we usually call a person or a personality, as distinguished from a mere human being or a nobody, actually grows out of this root-striking process of thinking.”<sup>127</sup> This suggests that the ‘germinal’ sense of self gained from the two-in-one provides ‘roots’ from which the who can grow, and hence fully appear in the world. As we will see in the next sub-section, the two-in-one provides ‘depth’ to our lives in the form of *thoughtfulness*. This follows because Arendt links thoughtfulness to fostering a clear conscience, which is the ‘by-product’ of leading a transparent dialogue with oneself. Thus, the kind of ‘depth’ obtained in non-privacy is moral salience or integrity.

## 2.2 Conscience

In this sub-section, I wish to show that the ‘depth’ acquired in non-privacy is gained from leading a transparent, internal conversation with oneself. Since conscience is a by-product’ of the two-in-one, it follows that it provides persons with ‘roots’ that anchor them to their integrity and self-transparency. In other words, the two-in-one underscores actions with thoughtfulness, which prevents them from becoming ‘shallow.’ This squares with Arendt’s claim that the second characteristic of non-privacy prevents shallowness. To quote her at length:

A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the

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<sup>127</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 100.



quality of rising into sight from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense. The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.<sup>128,129</sup>

As we will see shortly, thinking becomes shallow when persons no longer engage with their internal conversation partner. It therefore follows that this ‘darker ground,’ which provides ‘depth’ to our lives, is nothing other than the Socratic two-in-one. Arendt confirms my suspicion when she attributes this depth to a ‘non-subjective sense.’ Precisely because non-subjective means *intersubjective*.<sup>130</sup>

We can therefore rule out Benhabib’s interpretation of the non-privative sphere as the sphere of intimacy. Benhabib’s account is one of the few that recognizes Arendt’s distinction between the privative and non-privative spheres.<sup>131</sup> She thus attempts to further the interdependency

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<sup>128</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71.

<sup>129</sup> It is interesting that Arendt again adds the element of concealment to non-privacy in her German translation. For she states: “Wir kennen alle die eigentümliche Verflachung, die ein nur in der Öffentlichkeit verbrachtes Leben unweigerlich mit sich führt. Gerade weil es sich ständig in der Sichtbarkeit hält, verliert es die Fähigkeit, aus einem dunkleren Untergrund in die Helle der Welt aufzusteigen; es büßt die Dunkelheit und *Verborgtheit* ein, die dem Leben in einem sehr realen, nicht-subjektiven Sinn seine jeweils verschiedene Tiefe geben. Die einzig wirksame Art und Weise, die Dunkelheit dessen zu gewährleisten, was vor dem Licht der Öffentlichkeit verborgen bleiben muß, ist Privateigentum, eine Stätte, zu der niemand Zutritt hat, und wo man zugleich geborgen und verborgen ist” (Arendt, *Vita Activa*, 68; emphasis added).

<sup>130</sup> This is affirmed when Arendt attributes to Kant’s notion of *sensus communis* (common sense) that “there was something nonsubjective in what seems to be the most private and subjective sense” (Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67). Ronald Beiner even points to this when he explains, “[c]ommon sense means sharing a nonsubjective and ‘objective’ (object-laden) world with others” (Ronald Beiner, “Interpretive Essay,” *Lectures*, 104). This goes to show that nonsubjective means intersubjective, seeing as Arendt equates intersubjectivity with objectivity. We will see in Chapter Four that it is precisely the intersubjectivity sparked by Kant’s conception of enlarged mentality that lends itself to political decision-making.

<sup>131</sup> While Christopher Lasch recognizes both characteristics of non-privacy, he mentions them in passing (Christopher Lasch, “Introduction,” *Samalgundi: On Hannah Arendt* No. 60 (Spring-Summer 1983): vii).

between the private and public spheres by arguing that intimacy provides this ‘depth’ to our lives. As Benhabib explains, “Arendt teaches us that without a measure of personal intimacy, nurturing, and privacy, ‘shielded from the public eye,’ there can be no vibrant, fulfilling public life.”<sup>132</sup> According to Benhabib, intimacy thus prepares persons for political participation by substantiating their sense of self. This can only be gained by internally reflecting on and ‘nurturing’ private emotions. She thus asserts that non-privacy:

provides the self with a center, a shelter, with a place in which to unfold capacities, dreams, and memories, to nurture the wounds of the ego, and to lend to it that depth of feeling that, as Arendt puts it, allows it to ‘[rise] into sight from some darker ground.’<sup>133</sup>

While Benhabib correctly acknowledges the productive darkness made possible by non-privacy, she accounts for the interdependency between the private and public spheres in the wrong way. First, she incorrectly locates intimacy in the non-privative sphere; and second, she falsely depicts intimacy as world-oriented.

Arendt denies that non-privacy is the sphere of intimacy when she claims:

In order to understand the danger to human existence from the elimination of the private realm, for which the intimate is not a very reliable substitute, it may be best to consider those non-privative traits of privacy which are other than, and independent of, the discovery of intimacy.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought*, 232.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>134</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 70.

This leads into the second point: intimacy cannot provide ‘depth,’ and hence prepare persons for political participation, precisely because it is subjective. This is the case because Arendt defines intimacy as “subjective emotions and private feelings;”<sup>135</sup> and as “the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses.”<sup>136</sup> Intimacy is thus synonymous with one’s emotional state, feelings, and sensations. It is therefore not world-oriented, but “unworldly”<sup>137</sup> and anti-political precisely because it draws persons away from the world. Arendt confirms this when she explains, “intimacy seems a flight from the whole outer world into the inner subjectivity of the individual, which formerly had been sheltered and protected by the private realm.”<sup>138</sup>

The intensity of subjective feelings and emotions actively precludes the obtainment of any sort of ‘depth.’ The intensity of internal emotions and sensations excludes the ability to partake in other activities, whether mental or human. The example Arendt gives is “great bodily pain,”<sup>139</sup> which throws the individual back on themselves “to the point of blotting out all other experiences.”<sup>140</sup> Intimacy thus robs persons of the possibility to ‘split’ themselves into two, let alone prepare themselves for political participation. It therefore follows that the overwhelming nature of feelings and sensations cannot underscore our sense of self with ‘depth.’

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 69. More specifically, Arendt refers to “the modern discovery of intimacy” (Ibid.), the function of which is to guarantee a shelter from the social realm and from the political realm (Ibid., 38), which must be none other than the non-privative sphere.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

This leads Arendt to claim precisely the opposite of Benhabib. In reference to pain, she holds:

Not only is it perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit for public appearance, it actually deprives us of our feeling of reality to such an extent that we can forget it more quickly than anything else.<sup>141</sup>

This goes to show that intimacy is anti-political and unworldly because it is marked by utter subjectivity, which precludes the very possibility of political interactions.

Since intimacy is incapable of affording a minimal sense of reality, it cuts persons off from the political world. As Arendt continues:

There seems to be no bridge from the most radical subjectivity, in which I am no longer ‘recognizable,’ to the outer world of life. Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience between life as ‘being among men’ (*inter homines esse*) and death, is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all.<sup>142</sup>

While Arendt’s account of non-privacy is brief and obscure, this leads me to believe that it is more consistent with her thought to locate the Socratic two-in-one in non-privacy. Therefore, what prepares persons for the world is not intimacy, but rather representative thinking. Precisely because thoughtfulness imbues one’s actions with the kind of ‘depth’ that prevents the shallowness of thoughtlessness.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

In particular, Arendt links the two-in-one to *conscience*, which grants ‘depth’ to our actions in the form of moral salience or integrity. As we saw previously, *consciousness* provides the conditions for the emergence of the Socratic two-in-one. In turn, *conscience* is a ‘by-product’ or a “side effect”<sup>143</sup> of sustaining a transparent internal dialogue. As she holds, “thinking, the two-in-one of the soundless dialogue, actualizes the difference within our identity as given in consciousness and thereby results in conscience as its by-product.”<sup>144</sup> Since conscience is a by-product of thinking, it follows that Arendt considers morality as a by-product of thinking. It is the result of thoughtfulness, that is, “having constant intercourse, of being on speaking terms with myself.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, she does not construct a substantial conception of morality, let alone a moral theory. In agreement with George Kateb, Arendt develops a “Socratic morality,”<sup>146</sup> insofar as she understands morality as upholding a transparent internal dialogue.

Thus, the kind of ‘depth’ conscience attributes to our actions is that it underscores them with salient and consistent reflection. In this sense, Arendt follows Socrates, insofar as the function of conscience is to prevent persons from acting contrary to their beliefs. The ‘depth’ obtained

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<sup>143</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>146</sup> George Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” *Social Research* Vol. 74, No. 3 (Fall 2007): 830. More specifically, Kateb claims that Arendt operates with five distinct conceptions of morality. According to Kateb, “Arendt takes up in varying extent five versions of morality: mores, Socratic morality, God’s commandments, the teachings of Jesus, and the morality of authentic politics” (*Ibid.*, 818).

in non-privacy is thus the ability to ‘live with oneself,’<sup>147</sup> which rests on avoiding self-contradictions. As she observes, “in the case of Socrates,” “conscience threatens you ... with self-contradiction.”<sup>148</sup> Conscience is therefore an internal phenomenon that rests on and fosters inner consistency or integrity.<sup>149</sup> “The distinctive role of conscience in moral life,”<sup>150</sup> as Peter Fuss tells us, is thus to acquire an internal moral obligation. As Fuss continues:

Namely, it establishes in the moral agent a felt need or disposition to act in accordance with his knowledge or belief, giving him a sense of personal integrity when he does so as best as he can, and a corresponding sense of inner failure, frustration, or guilt when, through some fault of his own, he fails to do so.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 78.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> More specifically, Arendt develops a Socratic interpretation of Kant’s principle of universalizability, which is designated by the first formulation of the moral law (the law of universality). It states: “I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law” (4:402; Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993)). It means that actions are only moral, and hence permissible, if they can hold for oneself and for others. Arendt thus reads the law of universality as denoting a law of non-contradiction, which is nothing other than the Socratic principle of ‘being in agreement with oneself.’ Indeed, what she adds to “Thinking and Moral Considerations” in *The Life of the Mind* is her explicit connection between the two. Arendt maintains, “it is to this rather simple consideration of the importance of agreement between you and yourself that Kant’s Categorical Imperative appeals. Underlying the imperative, “Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time *will* that it should become a universal law,” is the command “Do not contradict yourself.” A murderer or a thief cannot will that ‘Thou shalt kill’ and “Though shalt steal” be general laws, since he naturally fears for his own life and property. If you make an exception for yourself, you have contradicted yourself” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 188; see also Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 69; 77). However, she notes that Kant’s moral law is “much stricter” (Ibid., 108) because it does not admit of any exceptions. In contrast, the Socratic two-in-one could allow for exceptions, seeing as living with oneself does not rest on the principle of universalizability. But rather on an internal consistency that is subject to change over time, and from person to person. For a Socratic reading of Kant’s moral law and his enlarged mentality, see Amando Basurto’s “Hannah Arendt’s Kantian Socrates: Moral and Political Judging,” *Teoria politica Annali VI*, no. 6 (2016): 315-334.

<sup>150</sup> Peter Fuss, “Conscience,” *Ethics* Vol. 74, No. 2 (Jan., 1964): 116. Fuss claims that his conception of conscience can be used to explain “the most baffling phenomena of recent times: to moral dispositions of the Nazi war criminals, and, in particular, those of Adolf Eichmann” (Ibid., 119). However, it is rather the case that Fuss’ theory is indebted to Arendt’s conception of conscience, which illuminates Eichmann’s perverted conscience.

<sup>151</sup> Fuss, “Conscience,” 116.

The motivation to maintain a clear conscience is the fear that I have to reckon with myself when I come home. According to Arendt, “[w]hat makes man fear this conscience is the anticipation of the presence of a witness who awaits him only *if* and when he goes home.”<sup>152</sup> The fact that we inevitably must confront our internal conversation partner thus ensures that we square our actions with our beliefs.

Maintaining a clear conscience entails that ‘the two who carry on’ the conversation remain honest with each other. Thus, avoiding self-contradictions fosters a friendly or harmonious relationship with oneself. She says, “[f]or Socrates, this two-in-one meant simply that if you want to think you must see to it that the two who carry on the thinking dialogue be in good shape, that the partners be friends.”<sup>153</sup> Assuring inner harmony therefore keeps the activity of thinking open, which circumvents the phenomenon of thoughtlessness. As Arendt has it, “conscience means no more than this being at peace with myself which is the condition *sine qua non* of thinking.”<sup>154</sup> Otherwise, making constant self-contradictions fractures the two-in-one, which prevents salient reflection. This is the case because committing a wrong makes solitude unbearable. To elucidate her point, Arendt asks, “[w]ho would want to be the friend of and have to live together with a murderer? Not even a murderer. What kind of dialogue

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<sup>152</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 187.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 185. Or, as Arendt also says, “this other self, *allos authos*, was rightly defined by Aristotle as the friend” (Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 98).

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

would you lead with him?”<sup>155</sup> Acting against our own convictions thus extinguishes our ability to think because we avoid having to face ourselves.

Thinking thus becomes shallow because one cannot question the deeds one has done, let alone where one’s convictions lie. Arendt claims, in this case, one is not “able or willing to give account of what he says or does; nor will he mind committing any crime, since he can be sure that it will be forgotten the next moment.”<sup>156</sup> Not maintaining internal integrity can lead to immorality because persons have no qualms about making self-contradictions. They have lost the person whom they always come home to, who is always there to call their deeds into question. This is the distinction Arendt notes between Socrates and Hippias. She explains that at the conclusion of the *Hippias Major*:

Socrates tells Hippias, who has proved to be an especially empty-headed partner, ‘how blissfully fortunate’ he is compared with himself who, when he goes home, is awaited by a very obnoxious fellow ‘who always cross-examines [him].’<sup>157</sup>

Whereas Socrates ‘splits’ himself into two the moment he retreats into solitude, Hippias “remains one; although he certainly does not lose consciousness, he also will do nothing to actualize the difference within himself.”<sup>158</sup> Losing or neglecting one’s internal conversation partner is the moment that solitude turns into loneliness. Arendt says that this

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<sup>155</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 185.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-186.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.



transition occurs “when all by myself I am deserted by my own self.”<sup>159</sup> One’s thought process thus becomes shallow because it turns into an unchecked, unbalanced, and *unreflective* mode of thinking.

For Arendt, this constitutes the shallowness of thoughtlessness precisely because thinking, that is, in the form of representative thinking, has come to an end. She therefore holds, “since thought is the silent dialogue carried on between me and myself, I must be careful to keep the integrity of this partner intact; for otherwise I shall surely lose the capacity for thought altogether.”<sup>160</sup> In fact, this is precisely her diagnosis of Adolf Eichmann, whose inability to think sparked Arendt’s interest in the relationship between conscience and moral decision-making in the first place.<sup>161</sup> Not without inciting considerable controversy,<sup>162</sup> she diagnoses Eichmann’s motive neither as “diabolical” nor as “demonic,”<sup>163</sup> but rather as shallow.

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<sup>159</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 626.

<sup>160</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 240-241.

<sup>161</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 160.

<sup>162</sup> Not only was Arendt ostracized by her friends and the intellectual community, as Amos Elon observes, “[a] kind of excommunication seemed to have been imposed on the author by the Jewish establishment in America” (Amos Elon, “Introduction,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books 2006), vii). At its core, the controversy was incited by two claims, as Elon explains, “it was claimed that Arendt had ‘exonerated Eichmann’ but ‘condemned the Jews’” (Ibid, ix). Firstly, her account of Eichmann as unthinkingly committing crimes against humanity was taken as an excuse for his actions and as an alleviation of his responsibility. Secondly, her assertion that “the Jewish leaders” aided “in the destruction of their own people” was taken as Arendt’s insistence that the Jewish people as a whole were complicit in the Holocaust (Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 115). For a detailed account of the Eichmann controversy, see Young-Bruhl, “Chapter 8: *Cura Posterior: Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1961-1965),” *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 328-378).

<sup>163</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Postscript,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 287.

Thus, what struck her about this high-ranking Nazi official is that he “had no motives at all”<sup>164</sup> in committing crimes against humanity.<sup>165</sup> In fact, Eichmann claimed that he “never harbored any ill feelings against his victims.”<sup>166</sup> Instead, he assumed the role of “the perfect bureaucrat”<sup>167</sup> who merely wished “to remain a law-abiding citizen of the Third Reich.”<sup>168</sup> Since his task consisted of administering and organizing the deportation of Jews to concentration camps, he committed crimes against humanity from behind his desk. Yet Eichmann remained thoroughly convinced that, “[w]ith the killing of Jews I had nothing to do. I never killed a Jew, or a non-Jew, for that matter – I never killed any human being.”<sup>169</sup>

According to Arendt, the shallowness of his deeds is the result of thoughtlessness, from which she coined the phrase, ‘the banality of evil.’ As she claims, “[i]t was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period.”<sup>170</sup> What Arendt does not mean with the banality of evil is that evil is banal or commonplace in the sense that there is “an ‘Eichmann in every one of us.’”<sup>171</sup> Instead, she means that the greatest evil can be committed by losing the most fundamental ability that

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>165</sup> For an alternate account of Eichmann, see Bettina Stangneth’s *Eichmann Before Jerusalem: The Unexamined Life of a Mass Murderer*, trans. Alfred A. Knopf (New York and Toronto: Random House LLC, 2014).

<sup>166</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 28.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>170</sup> Arendt, “Postscript,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 287.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 285.

human beings are capable of, that is, the very ability to think. This leads Arendt to conclude that, “[h]e *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*.”<sup>172</sup> Instead of reflecting on the new moral and legal code of the Nazi regime, Eichmann habitually adopted the word of the state as his own conscience.

Arendt therefore sharply distinguishes her notion of conscience from its traditional meaning. Whereas her notion of conscience emerges from one’s internal thought process, Eichmann’s conscience emerged from adopting external standards of conduct as his own. In this latter sense, she thus claims that morality, “in the original meaning of the word, as a set of *mores*, customs and manners which could be exchanged for another set with hardly more trouble than it would take to change the table manners of an individual or a people.”<sup>173</sup> Habitually adopting the existing standards and norms of a given community thus hollows out the thinking process. Indeed, Arendt goes so far as to say that, in such cases, a good or guilty conscience “indicate conformity and nonconformity, they don’t indicate morality.”<sup>174</sup> Instead of thinking about whether or not the existing moral code conflicts with one’s own beliefs, persons simply become “swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in.”<sup>175</sup> The danger in conceiving of morality, and hence a good conscience, in terms of conformism is that one loses the ability to think, and hence the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>173</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 50.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>175</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

Eichmann's conscience was perverted or inauthentic because it did not arise from conversing with his internal conversation partner, but rather from adopting the new 'law of the land.' He had no compunctions about accepting the new moral and legal code of the Hitler regime, which made mass murder morally and legally acceptable. In this way, Eichmann "simply exchanged one system of values against another."<sup>176</sup> Arendt explains:

the voice of conscience tells everybody 'Thou shalt not kill,' even though man's natural desires and inclinations may at times be murderous, so the law of Hitler's land demanded that the voice of conscience tell everybody: 'Thou shalt kill,' although the organizers of the massacres knew full well that murder is against the normal desires and inclinations of most people.<sup>177</sup>

Since his conscience simply reflected the new moral code, it speaks against what the conscience of any self-reflective individual would conclude – that murder is wrong. Thus, by becoming a dutiful, 'law-abiding' member of society, Eichmann unthinkingly distorted his

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<sup>176</sup> Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," *Responsibility and Judgment*, 44.

<sup>177</sup> Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 148.

conscience to reflect the reigning laws and norms.<sup>178,179</sup> For, Arendt, what should circumvent blind conformism, and therefore keep one's conscience in check, is entertaining one's internal conversation partner. Upholding a clear conscience ensures that the activity of thinking keeps itself open, and thus imbues actions with thoughtfulness. In the next subsection, we will see that maintaining inner consistency indirectly prepares persons for political participation, insofar as it prevents immorality.

### *2.3 The 'Political Implications' of the Socratic Two-in-One*

The Socratic two-in-one has the potential to indirectly promote and sustain the political world precisely because its task is to prevent immorality. Leading an internal dialogue with oneself stabilizes the political realm by underscoring speech and action with thoughtfulness. It indirectly prepares persons for political participation because it prevents the shallowness of thoughtlessness. I agree with Berkowitz when he maintains, "it is solitude that nurtures and fosters thoughtfulness and thus

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<sup>178</sup> In fact, Eichmann based the supposed salience of his conscience on Kant's moral law. During his trial, he referred to the first formulation of the categorical imperative: "the principle of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws" (Ibid., 134). However, since Eichmann adopted the 'law of the land' as the laws of his own conscience, he confused Kantian morality (or autonomy of the will) with Kantian immorality (or heteronomy of the will). For Kant, morality is achieved by universalizing personal maxims that can hold for oneself and for others. However, it is established by giving these laws to ourselves, as opposed to abiding by the laws of others. Arendt therefore concludes that Eichmann perverted the first formulation of the moral law to the following: "[a]ct as if the principle of your actions were the same as that of the legislator of the law of the land" (Ibid.). For a more nuanced but not unproblematic account of Eichmann's interpretation of Kant, see Carsten Bagge Luusten and Rasmus Ugilt, "Eichmann's Kant," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* Vol. 21., No. 3 (2007): 166-180.

<sup>179</sup> This is reinforced by Eichmann's admittance of having a guilty conscience, and needing to come clean, when he acted against the orders of the state. Arendt reports that Eichmann "had 'confessed his sins' to his superiors," namely, that "he had helped a half-Jewish cousin, and a Jewish couple in Vienna for whom his uncle had intervened" (Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 135). She thus concludes that a guilty conscience can "just as well be aroused by the opposite: once killing or whatever the 'new morality' demands has become habit and is accepted by everyone, the same man will feel guilty if he does not conform" (Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 107).

prepares individuals for the possibility of political action.”<sup>180</sup> We should therefore understand the Socratic two-in-one as an unpolitical ability, seeing as it directed toward the world, even though it takes place outside of it.

Therefore, I disagree with Kateb that Arendt’s Socratic conception of morality is “insidiously harmful to genuine politics,” and is “fundamentally hostile to the world-centered, world-loving spirit of authentic politics.”<sup>181</sup> He assumes this position because “Arendt indicates that Socratic morality has only ‘negative’ qualities: it is abstention from participation in acts of evil.”<sup>182</sup> This leads Kateb to limit her “Socratic morality” to “resistance to evil.”<sup>183</sup> This observation is correct, seeing as Arendt holds that thinking cannot offer positive instructions for moral decision-making. She explains that conscience merely tells us, “‘This I *can’t* do,’ rather than, ‘This I *ought* not to do.’”<sup>184</sup> Meaning, one chooses *not* to abide by the existing moral code, as opposed to replacing it with positive prescriptions for moral conduct. As Elizabeth Minnich points out, “our ability and need to think make it possible for us to prepare for moral action and yet give us no positive guidance on what to do.”<sup>185</sup> Activating the two-in-one thus *prevents* immorality, but it does not *prescribe* propositions for moral conduct.

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<sup>180</sup> Berkowitz, “Solitude and the Activity of Thinking,” 239.

<sup>181</sup> Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” 850.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 837.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 821.

<sup>184</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 78; see also *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>185</sup> Elizabeth Minnich, “To Judge in Freedom: Hannah Arendt on the Relation of Thinking and Morality,” *Hannah Arendt: Thinking, Judging, Freedom*, ed. Clive S. Kessler (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 139.

Rather than offering set guidelines for moral decision-making, the very activity of thinking perpetuates a continuous process of reformulation and revision of beliefs and conclusions. This is the case because Arendt characterizes the process of thinking as inherently ‘windy’ and ‘self-destructive.’<sup>186</sup> Constantly questioning the moral code and our own beliefs neither yields any results nor fixed opinions regarding right and wrong. Thinking “does not create values, it will not find out, once and for all, what ‘the good’ is, and it does not confirm but rather dissolves accepted rules of conduct.”<sup>187</sup> Instead, it is a ‘resultless’ and ‘useless’ activity precisely because it destroys its own conclusions.<sup>188</sup> Arendt thus compares the two-in-one to the veil of Penelope. She says, “the business of thinking is like the veil of Penelope: it undoes every morning what it had finished the night before.”<sup>189</sup> She brings to the fore that thinking is windy in the sense that it gives rise to certain results, e.g., thoughts, concepts, values, or judgments, and subsequently reshapes and revises them.

In this way, thinking “unfreezes” or ‘puts into motion’ any conclusions or end results one has reached.<sup>190</sup> This leads Kateb to conclude:

the very activity of thinking, which may develop conscience and hence help to inoculate a person against wrongdoing and

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<sup>186</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 166; 176.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>188</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 170.

<sup>189</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 166.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

complicity with evil, may also move in the opposite direction by tending to erode moral certainty.<sup>191</sup>

It is true that the constant ‘purging’ of all standards and opinions leaves us in a perpetual state of perplexity, wonder, and uncertainty. The Socratic two-in-one thus has the negative function of ‘emptying’ us of our beliefs, opinions. Arendt therefore claims, “you remain in a way empty after thinking. And this is what I also meant when I said that there are no dangerous thoughts – thinking itself is dangerous enough.”<sup>192</sup> Thinking is dangerous because its purpose is to destroy and deny rather than to build and affirm moral conduct. She thus points out that “conventions, the rules and standards by which we usually live, don’t show up too well under examination.”<sup>193</sup> However, the inevitable destruction and ‘purging’ of beliefs assures that we are left questioning ourselves and the existing codes of conduct. While the two-in-one does not yield any fixed results or positive prescriptions for action, it always forces us back on ourselves and resists the temptation of simply adhering to the reigning moral code.

Kateb is right to claim that morality only kicks in in the form of resistance to immorality. As Arendt maintains, “the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting on whatever happens to come to pass” merely “‘conditions’ men against evildoing.”<sup>194</sup> It therefore follows that

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<sup>191</sup> Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” 819.

<sup>192</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Remarks,” *Thinking Without a Banister: Essays in Understanding 1953-1975: Hannah Arendt*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2018), 502; see also Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 177.

<sup>193</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 104; cited by Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” 819.

<sup>194</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 160.



it applies to extreme situations when existing standards do not induce salient moral reflection.<sup>195</sup> This is why she concludes that conscience “remains a marginal affair for society at large except in emergencies. For thinking as such does society little good.”<sup>196</sup> Kateb’s claim that Arendt’s Socratic morality is not world-oriented is supported by the fact that its standard is one’s own relationship to oneself, and not one’s relationship to the world. Arendt makes this clear when she says, “but this, as we know now, will only say, I can’t and I won’t. Since it is related to one’s own self, no impulse to act can be expected from it.”<sup>197</sup> This explains why others, such as Passerin d’Entrèves, depict Arendt’s conception of “morality of conscience” as “too subjective.”<sup>198</sup> For Arendt appeals to two Socratic dictums in order to elucidate what it means ‘to live with ourselves.’ That is, “it is better to suffer than to do wrong;”<sup>199</sup> and “it is better to be at odds with multitudes than, *being one*, to be at odds with yourself, namely, to contradict yourself.”<sup>200</sup>

It would seem as though the Socratic dictums are purely subjective guidelines, insofar as they place one’s relation to oneself in the middle of moral reflection. Arendt appears to confirm this:

Morality concerns the individual in his singularity. The criterion of right and wrong, the answer to the question, what ought I to do? depends in the last analysis neither on habits and customs, which I share with those around me, nor on a command of either divine or human origin, but on what I decide with regard to myself. In

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<sup>195</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 101.

<sup>196</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

<sup>197</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 108.

<sup>198</sup> Passerin d’Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 94.

<sup>199</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 72.

<sup>200</sup> Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 37.

other words, I cannot do certain things, because having done them I shall no longer be able to live with myself.<sup>201</sup>

The primary concern is upholding the integrity of one's conscience over upholding the integrity of the political community. In reference to the first Socratic dictum, she admits it "is a subjective statement, meaning, it is better *for me* to suffer wrong than to do wrong."<sup>202</sup> In other words, for the sake of one's relation to oneself, it is better to suffer wrong than to commit wrong. This is the case because refraining from committing immoral actions avoids contradicting oneself. Even though one might feel hurt or vulnerable, she says, "you can remain the friend of the sufferer."<sup>203</sup> Committing injustice ruptures inner harmony, whereas suffering injustice keeps it intact, which furthers the activity of thinking.

The subjectivity of being in "agreement with oneself"<sup>204</sup> is reinforced by the second Socratic dictum, namely, that it is 'better to be at odds with the world than with oneself.' Inner harmony thus takes precedence over 'harmonizing' our relationship to the world. This follows because one is not forced to live with others in the way that one is forced to live with oneself. We can choose to abandon the world, but we cannot choose to abandon the other person whom we come home to. Arendt explains:

If I disagree with other people, I can walk away; but I cannot walk away from myself, and therefore I better first try to be in

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<sup>201</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 97.

<sup>202</sup> Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 182; see also Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 111.

<sup>203</sup> Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 185.

<sup>204</sup> Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 19.

agreement with myself before I take all others into consideration.<sup>205</sup>

While this might sound extreme, what she means is that we do not have to live with the decisions that others make, whether or not we agree with them. However, since “I can never get rid of”<sup>206</sup> my internal conversation partner, it is impossible not to live with the decisions I have made. If being in harmony with the world causes inner disharmony, it is better to disagree with the world than with oneself.

From the perspective of the political world, the two Socratic dictums certainly indicate the priority of the self over the world. As Arendt maintains, “[p]olitically speaking – that is, from the viewpoint of the community or of the world we live in – it is irresponsible; its standard is the self and not the world, neither its improvement nor change.”<sup>207</sup> However, Kateb’s observation is incorrect, insofar as Arendt’s Socratic morality does not exclude the possibility of indirectly contributing to the continuity of the political world. Instead, it achieves precisely what Kateb claims it lacks, that is, in order for morality to meet “the needs of authentic politics,”<sup>208</sup> it should “facilitate and stabilize the life of speech and action.”<sup>209</sup> Arendt gives us indication to conclude that the Socratic

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<sup>205</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 90.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>208</sup> Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” 850.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 851. According to Kateb, the only account of morality that Arendt provides, which meets the demands of ‘authentic politics,’ is the faculty of promising and forgiving (*Ibid.*). Certainly, Kateb rightfully points out that promising and forgiving “facilitate and stabilize the life of speech and action” (*Ibid.*). As I explained in a footnote in Chapter One, promising and forgiving are the only ‘remedies’ for the unpredictability and uncertainty of the political world (Chapter One, Section 2: 2.2 *Freedom & Unpredictability*, fn.145). Arendt claims that “[t]hese moral precepts” of the world

dictums are indirectly world-oriented. While thoughtlessness certainly impedes one's ability to live with oneself, it also impedes one's ability to live with others.

Since the duality contained within the two-in-one upholds our connection to the world, it follows that losing our conversation partner causes us to lose contact with the world. For Arendt asserts:

In this situation, man loses trust in himself as the partner of his thoughts and that elementary confidence in the world which is necessary to make experiences at all. Self and world, capacity for thought and experience are lost at the same time.<sup>210</sup>

This shows that the Socratic two-in-one has 'political implications,' even though it is an unpolitical ability. That is, it prevents persons from losing the ability to think, which prevents them from losing contact with the political world. This connection can only be indirect, as we saw in the previous chapter that thinking and acting are mutually exclusive.

The sharp contrast that Arendt draws between reflective and public activities leads Sherry Gray to overlook the 'political implications' of the Socratic two-in-one. Gray claims "[t]hat it is not political" because "thinking, despite its nature as sheer activity, is not action, and action

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(Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 246) stabilize human affairs, insofar as they provide "islands of security" "in the ocean of uncertainty" (Ibid., 237). This is the case because holding ourselves to our promises and reversing our deeds by asking for forgiveness offers some reliability and continuity to human affairs. While I agree with Kateb in this regard, I disagree that the Socratic-two-in-one does not have a similar stabilizing effect on the world.

<sup>210</sup> Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 626-627.

above all defines the realm of plurality.”<sup>211</sup> In fact, Gray goes so far as to conclude that “the withdrawal from the world and into solitude required by this activity ... makes thinking curiously at odds with living our lives among men.”<sup>212</sup>

Although the two-in-one is activated in the confines of non-privacy, it is not opposed to politics. Arendt confirms that it is an unpolitical ability when she states, “Socrates’ midwifery ... is political by implication.”<sup>213</sup> *When* persons refuse to abide by the existing moral code is the moment the two-in-one indirectly contributes to the stability of the political world.<sup>214</sup> Resisting the temptation to habitually adopt the moral code transforms itself into a form of political action. As Arendt explains:

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<sup>211</sup> Sherry Gray, “Hannah Arendt and the Solitariness of Thinking,” *Philosophy Today* Vol. 25, no. 2 (Summer 1981): 126. However, Gray curiously holds that “conscience” is “[t]he only way in which Arendt allows thinking to act into the world” (Ibid., 128). While Gray appears to suggest what I will assert in the following, she in fact, claims precisely the opposite. She falsely links conscience to judgment when she continues: “Arendt follows Heidegger in the belief that ‘thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act,’ but judgment, the capacity to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, which is different from but not unrelated to thinking, may prevent ‘unconscionable’ action. This link between invisible mental life and ‘sharing-the-world-with-others’ Arendt did not develop” (Ibid.). Gray thus implies that conscience is the result of judgment, which is what enables persons to ‘insert’ themselves into the world. We will see in Chapter Five that enlarged mentality, which is distinct from the two-in-one, gives persons the ability to directly ‘insert’ themselves into the world.

<sup>212</sup> Gray, “Hannah Arendt and the Solitariness of Thinking,” 127.

<sup>213</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

<sup>214</sup> My claim that Arendt’s Socratic morality promotes and stabilizes politics has further-reaching implications for interpreting the relationship between morality and politics in Arendt’s political thought. Since her conception of morality is fundamentally self-centered, as opposed to world-centered, others have sought to develop a conception of morality that emerges from politics (see Topolski, *Arendt, Levinas and a Politics of Relationality*, 2015; Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 2018). Or, as we have just seen, Arendt’s account of promises and forgiveness leads Kateb to claim that she develops “a morality that is internal to politics, that grows out of the nature and needs of authentic politics” (Kateb, “Existential Values in Arendt’s Treatment of Evil and Morality,” 850; see also George Kateb, “Political Action: Its Nature and Advantages,” *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, ed. Dana Villa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)). In contrast, my account of the indirect relationship between the Socratic two-in-one and the public realm goes to show that morality neither arises from nor emerges within the *polis*, but rather that it stabilizes politics from within the non-privative sphere.

When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everyone else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action.<sup>215</sup>

While resisting immorality does not necessarily involve actively ‘inserting’ ourselves into the world (although it certainly can), the point is that it constitutes political action *when* persons take a stance against someone or something. In fact, Arendt asserts that this is precisely when moral decision-making “ceases to be a marginal affair in political matters.”<sup>216</sup> When conscience is translated into the act of refusing to follow along, it indirectly furthers the continuity of the political world. Precisely because one’s ‘words and deeds’ do not only affect one’s ability to live with oneself, but also affect the political community at large.

While the standard for moral decision-making certainly is guided by the self, internal harmony is therefore not mutually exclusive with maintaining the harmony of the world. This is the case because our actions become objective when they affect the political community. Arendt makes this clear when she claims:

If, however, we were to look at the propositions from the viewpoint of the world, as distinguished from the two gentlemen, we would have to say what counts is that a wrong has been committed; it is irrelevant who is better off, the wrongdoer or the wrong-sufferer. As citizens, we must prevent wrongdoing since the world we all share, wrongdoer, wrong-sufferer, and spectator, is at stake. The City has been wronged.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 188.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

If someone commits a wrong, whether or not they can live with themselves, the point is that they also violate the fabric of the shared world. If conscience were a purely subjective phenomenon, only dependent on the internal harmony of the actor, then Arendt's critique of Eichmann would not hold. She is clearly disturbed by the fact that Eichmann could live with committing crimes against humanity, but not with helping his Jewish friends and family.

It cannot be the case that conscience rests on the ability to live with oneself, regardless of how one's actions affect the world. As Arendt suggests:

In the case of a crime, the subjective states of mind of those involved are irrelevant – the one who suffered may be willing to forgive, the one who did may be entirely unlikely to do it again – because the community as a whole has been violated.<sup>218</sup>

Her point must be that resisting immorality is the morally superior alternative to unthinkingly following along – for oneself *and* for the political world. She seems to take the sheer subjectivity of the first Socratic dictum back when she states: “I took the Socratic proposition ‘It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong’ as an example of a philosophical statement that concerns human conduct, and hence has political implications.”<sup>219</sup> Perhaps it could be clarified to more adequately reflect what she really means. Namely, can I live with myself if my actions harm the world?

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 239.

This reformulation of this Socratic dictum is implicit in the parallel she draws between maintaining inner harmony and worldly harmony. “What Socrates discovered,” Arendt tells us, “is that we can have intercourse with ourselves, as well as with others, and that the two kinds of intercourse are somehow related.”<sup>220</sup> The manner in which internal and worldly discourse are related is that being able to live with oneself should mirror how we live with others in the world. She says so much when she claims:

What Socrates was driving at ... is that living together with others begins with living together with oneself. Socrates' teaching meant: only he who knows how to live with himself is fit to live with others.<sup>221,222</sup>

Arendt must mean that preventing immorality is not only guided by reducing or avoiding internal disharmony and suffering, but also by reducing or avoiding worldly disharmony and suffering. It goes to show that her Socratic morality is not at all hostile to politics, but rather indirectly furthers and stabilizes the realm of human affairs. This follows because maintaining a clear conscience indirectly prepares persons for political participation, insofar as their ‘words and deeds’ should always be guided by refusal to contribute to worldly suffering. We can therefore see that the Socratic two-in-one plays an equal role as the genuine

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<sup>220</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 188-189.

<sup>221</sup> Arendt, “Socrates,” 21.

<sup>222</sup> She also relies on Socrates to show that our ability to saliently discern between right and wrong reflects ‘the company we keep’ (Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 145-146). This certainly reinforces my claim that the ability to maintain a harmonious relationship with oneself should mirror one’s relationship with the world.



political activities of speech and action in constituting and furthering the integrity of the public realm.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Arendt does not wish to maintain a sharp divide between the private and public spheres. By developing an ‘Arendtian phenomenology’ of privacy, I demonstrated that her phenomenological essentialism does not need to be rejected in order to account for an inter-relationship between these two spheres. Carving out the non-privative side of privacy allowed me to make the case that both unpolitical and political activities equally contribute to the emergence and stabilization of human affairs. On the one hand, the work of the *homo faber* creates the human artifice, the physical space that provides the conditions for the emergence and durability of the political world. On the other hand, the Socratic two-in-one indirectly prepares persons for political participation by underscoring their words and deeds with thoughtfulness.

In Chapter Three, I will argue that it is more consistent with Arendt’s thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective activity. In order to make my case, I will argue against two claims in the secondary literature. On the one hand, Arendt’s categorization of enlarged mentality as a political ability has led to the common misconception that she

conceives of it as a public phenomenon.<sup>223</sup> On the other hand, Arendt's claim has led many to unfairly accuse her of misappropriating reflective judgment. Beiner, Annelies Degryse, Norris, and Majid Yar argue that Arendt 'empiricizes' or 'detranscendentalizes' reflective judgment.<sup>224</sup> In contrast, I will argue that Arendt does not empiricize reflective judgment precisely because she understands enlarged mentality as a reflective ability. This leads me to the conclusion that Arendt stays truer to Kant than it seems. My analysis will also show that enlarged mentality comprises the second form of representative thinking in which one entertains perspectives apart from one's own. This sets the groundwork for justifying the political potential Arendt attributes to enlarged mentality.

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<sup>223</sup> Lisa Disch (1993); Bernard Flynn (1988); Passerin d'Entrèves (1994); Pitkin (1981); and Iris Marion Young, (2001) are examples of proponents of this view.

<sup>224</sup> Beiner (1992; 2001); Annelies Degryse (2011); Norris (1996); Majid Yar (2000).

## Chapter Three

### Misreading Arendt

*Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past – but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages.*

– Hannah Arendt (1970)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show that it is more consistent with Arendt's own thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective activity. The problem is that she designates reflective judgment as a "political ability,"<sup>2</sup> which "fits us into a community,"<sup>3</sup> i.e., the political community as she conceives it. This claim has caused several misunderstandings within the secondary literature. On the one hand, it has led to the common misconception that Arendt conceives of enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon. Lisa Disch, Bernard Flynn, Passerin d'Entrèves, Pitkin, and Iris Marion Young are examples of proponents of this view.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Arendt's claim has led many to unfairly accuse her of misappropriating reflective judgment. Beiner, Annelies Degryse, Norris, and Majid Yar argue that Arendt 'empiricizes' or 'detranscendentalizes'

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Walter Benjamin," *Men in Dark Times* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70.

<sup>4</sup> Lisa Disch (1993); Flynn (1988); Passerin d'Entrèves (1994); Pitkin (1981); and Iris Marion Young, (2001).

reflective judgment.<sup>5,6</sup> For Kant, enlarged mentality is made possible by the *a priori* principle of *sensus communis* (common sense). Enlarged mentality thus consists of an imaginative debate between oneself and the possible perspectives of others. It does not entail publicly discussing aesthetic judgments with others. This leads Arendt's critics to conclude that she makes an unjustified leap from hypothetical to public discourse.

In contrast, I will show that Arendt does not fall prey to either of these criticisms. First, Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that she does not misconstrue Kant's enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon. This leads me to believe that her critics are the ones who make an unjustified leap from hypothetical to public debate by misreading Arendt. Second, if we read Arendt more consistently with her own thought, it becomes clear that she also views enlarged mentality as a reflective ability. It is therefore more consistent with her own thought to classify enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability. While Arendt also considers enlarged mentality as a reflective activity, I will demonstrate that she deviates from Kant in two ways. However, my analysis will show that Arendt comes closer to Kant than her critics give her credit for.

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<sup>5</sup> Beiner (1992; 2001); Annelies Degryse (2011); Norris (1996); Majid Yar (2000).

<sup>6</sup> 'Detranscendentalizing' and 'empiricizing' mean the same thing. As we will see, it means appropriating a transcendental principle as an empirical or worldly phenomenon. Therefore, I will use these terms synonymously.

## 1. Arendt's 'Empiricization' of Kant's Enlarged Mentality

### *1.1 Arendt Mistakes Possible with Public Debate*

Arendt certainly gives credence to the common misconception that she reads enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> There are two main reasons that support this view. First, Arendt declares that reflective judgment as a political ability. This suggests that it unfolds in the political world, just as the political activities of speech and action. She holds,

the capacity to judge is a specifically political ability in exactly the sense denoted by Kant, namely, the ability to see things not only from one's own point of view but in the perspective of all those who happen to be present; even that judgment may be one of the fundamental abilities of man as a political being insofar as it enables him to orient himself in the public realm, the common world.<sup>8</sup>

Second, Arendt implies that 'thinking in the place of others'<sup>9</sup> requires being in their immediate presence. She affirms this when she explains:

And this enlarged way of thinking ... needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all. As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgment, to be valid, depends on the presence of others.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> While many suggest that Arendt construes enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon, it is important to note that a few others, such as Annelies Degryse (2011), Kateb (2001), Matthew Weidenfeld (2012), and Linda Zerilli (2004; 2005) recognize that Arendt views it as an imaginative exercise. However, Degryse and Zerilli nevertheless take issue with Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment. Kateb is a proponent of the view that Arendt aestheticizes politics, which will be addressed in Chapter Five (George Kateb (2001)). And Weidenfeld's claim that reflective judgment cannot cope with the publicity and worldliness of political judgment will be broached in Chapter Six (Weidenfeld (2012)).

<sup>8</sup> Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Arendt thus does not do herself any favors to avoid the common misconception that she construes enlarged mentality as a public phenomenon. Passerin d'Entrèves reflects this view when he observes:

She maintained that this enlarged way of thinking could only be acquired in public, in the actual or anticipated dialogue with the standpoints and perspectives of others. Political opinions, she claimed, can never be formed in private; rather, they are formed, tested, and enlarged with a public context of argumentation and debate.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, reading Arendt in this way supports the view that she 'empiricizes' or 'detranscendentalizes' reflective judgment.

Beiner has sparked the trend in the secondary literature that Arendt misappropriates reflective judgment by 'detranscendentalizing' it.<sup>12</sup> Degryse, Norris, and Yar take up Beiner's claim in different ways.<sup>13</sup> However, their common denominator is that Arendt empiricizes reflective judgment by mistaking the transcendental conditions that make reflective judgment possible for the worldly conditions that make public debate

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<sup>11</sup> Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Beiner "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures*, 133-135. He reiterates this view almost twenty years later (Ronald Beiner, "Rereading Hannah Arendt's Kant Lectures," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 96).

<sup>13</sup> Beiner maintains that Arendt makes an unjustified leap from the hypothetical to the public contestation of judgments (Beiner "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures*, 133). Yar argues that Arendt conflates the theoretical perspectives that enlarge one's mentality with the actual perspectives of others that emerge in the world (Majid Yar, "From Actor to Spectator, Hannah Arendt's 'Two Theories' of Political Judgment," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26 (2000): 21). Degryse and Norris both contend that Arendt empiricizes *sensus communis*, but in different ways. On the one hand, Degryse maintains that Arendt thinks that *sensus communis* not only accounts for our 'mental interdependence,' but also for our 'communal interdependence' in a political sense (Annelies Degryse, "*Sensus communis* as a foundation for men as political beings: Arendt's reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37(3) (2011): 353). On the other hand, Norris believes that Arendt misconstrues the 'universal communicability' of aesthetic judgments with worldly communicability (Andrew Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," *Polity* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 186-188).

possible. If enlarged mentality requires the presence of others, as Arendt claims, then the condition that makes it possible is the plurality that emerges in the political world. She thus appears to break with Kant because he sets the *a priori* principle of *sensus communis* (common sense) as the conditions for the possibility of an enlarged mentality.<sup>14</sup>

Since common sense is an *a priori* principle, the ability to make judgments of taste does not rest on encountering the perspectives of others in the world. Instead, Kant holds that it sets the transcendental conditions for the possibility of making aesthetic judgments. He makes this clear when he asks, “[h]ow are judgments of taste possible?” (5:288). And when he answers, “[s]o this problem concerns the *a priori* principles that the power of judgment [uses when it makes] *aesthetic* judgments” (5:288). *Sensus communis* makes the formulation of aesthetic judgments possible, insofar as it ensures the universal possession of the same cognitive faculties in every subject (5:292). Specifically, aesthetic judgments are shaped by the cognitive faculties of the imagination and the understanding (5:292). For Kant, since everyone shares the same mental faculties, we can “presuppose” that everyone can make aesthetic judgments (5:239).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> When Kant refers to *sensus communis* in the context of taste, he specifies that it is *sensus communis aestheticus*, not *sensus communis logicus* (5:295; fn. 24). Whereas the former makes the formulation of aesthetic judgments possible, the latter makes the formulation of determinate judgments possible. *Sensus communis logicus* thus pertains to ‘common understanding’ (5:238). The difference between determinate and reflective judgments will be detailed in the following two sub-sections.

<sup>15</sup> Kant does not explain in the *Third Critique* why we can ‘presuppose’ the universality of the same cognitive conditions in every subject. Precisely because he has already provided an explanation in the *First Critique* by disproving skepticism. Werner Pluhar thus refers to the “Preface” (B Version) of the *First Critique* for an answer to this question. Pluhar points out, “[h]e does not argue for that premise in the deduction,

Common sense is thus a ‘shared sense’ (5:293), only insofar as it assures that everyone has the cognitive faculties necessary for making judgments of taste. This leads Degryse and Norris to the conclusion that Arendt detranscendentalizes *sensus communis*.<sup>16</sup> According to Degryse, Arendt misinterprets the ‘mental interdependence’ made possible by common sense as the ‘communal interdependence’ made possible by the political community.<sup>17</sup> Degryse’s claim is not far-fetched, seeing as Arendt frequently implies that common sense is an outgrowth of political participation. For example, in her *Lectures*, she asserts that the formulation of aesthetic judgments involves being “a member of a community, guided by one’s community sense, one’s *sensus*

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because he has already done so elsewhere: provided merely that (in accordance with the first *Critique*) we reject skepticism, we can assume that our ordinary (empirical) cognitions and judgments are universally communicable (Ak. 238-39); in other words, we can assume that what we call ‘common understanding’ (not the *sensus communis* but what we *ordinarily* call ‘common sense,’ viz., sound judgment in everyday matters) is indeed ‘common,’ i.e., shared by everyone, and hence can assume that the cognitive powers presupposed by this common understanding are shared universally as well (Ak. 292-93)” (Pluhar, “Translator’s Introduction,” *Critique of Judgment*, lx). Kant’s rejection of skepticism and his proof that *sensus communis* underlies our ability to make and communicate aesthetic judgments can be briefly summarized accordingly. If our cognitions and judgments were limited to the subjective conditions of our own minds, we could neither be certain that they refer to sensible objects, nor be able to communicate them with others. Kant echoes this in a footnote in the “Deduction of Judgments of Taste:” “in all people the subjective conditions of this power [of judgment] are the same as concerns the relation required for cognition as such between the cognitive powers that are activated in the power of judgment; and this must be true, for otherwise people could not communicate their presentations to one another, indeed they could not even communicate cognition” (See (5:290; fn.15). Since we can make and communicate structured, unified cognitions and judgments about sense-objects, we can “presuppose” that everyone has the same cognitive faculties (5:239; see also 5:238).

<sup>16</sup> Loidolt also believes that Arendt empiricizes Kant’s *sensus communis* (Loidolt, *Phenomenology of Plurality*, 218).

<sup>17</sup> Degryse, “*Sensus communis* as a foundation for men as political beings,” 353. Indeed, Yar makes a similar point when he contends that Arendt interprets “Kant literally where he speaks metaphorically with regard to the communality exhibited by the faculty of judgment” (Yar, “From Actor to Spectator,” 21). Beiner and Jennifer Nedlisky echo this when they claim that Arendt mistakes theoretical with actual debate by “basing judgment in actual community” (Beiner and Nedlisky, “Introduction,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, xi).



*communis*.”<sup>18</sup> And in “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” she rhetorically asks, “[h]ow can anyone judge according to a common sense as he contemplates the object according to his private sense?”<sup>19</sup> And claims that Kant would answer this question by explaining “that the community among men produces common sense. The validity of common sense grows out of the intercourse with people.”<sup>20</sup> Arendt thus implies that *sensus communis* is a worldly phenomenon.

However, Arendt is aware of the fact that common sense is a cognitive structure of the mind. In *The Human Condition*, she criticizes “the whole modern age,”<sup>21</sup> and Descartes in particular, for conceiving of common sense as a cognitive principle, instead of a worldly one. Although Arendt does not explicitly mention Kant, she should certainly have been aware that he falls prey to the same criticism.<sup>22</sup> She explains,

common sense, which had once been the one by which all other senses, with their intimately private sensations, were fitted into the common world, just as vision fitted man into the visual world, now became an inner faculty without any world relationship. This sense now was called common merely because it happened to be common to all. What men now have in common is not the world but the structure of their minds, and this they cannot have in

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<sup>18</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 75. She reiterates this when she says, “when one judges, one judges as a member of a community” (Ibid., 72).

<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 141.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 283; fn. 44.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, Arendt’s personal notes on Kant’s *Third Critique* begin in August 1957 (Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Zweiter Band (1950-1973)*, hrsg. von Ursula Ludz und Ingeborg Nordmann (München/Berlin: Piper Verlag, 2016), 890). Her notes thus start the year before *The Human Condition* was published in 1978, which goes to show that she should have been aware that her criticism of the moderns also applies to Kant. In fact, Arendt’s familiarity with Kant’s *First Critique* (and hence with *sensus communis logicus*) dates back to her teenage years. Elizabeth Young-Bruehl reports that Arendt read the *First Critique* at the age of 16 (Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, 36).

common, strictly speaking; their faculty of reasoning can only happen to be the same in everybody.<sup>23</sup>

This goes to show that Arendt is critical of locating common sense in the mind, as opposed to in the political community. Otherwise, it leads to the destruction of the political world. If persons only have their cognitive faculties in common, it makes the need to speak and interact with each other redundant. We can see this very clearly in Kant's case: if the ability to shape reflective judgments rests on the same cognitive faculties in every subject, there is no need to encounter the unique judgments of others in the world.

In fact, since *sensus communis* is an *a priori* principle, he explicitly excludes the possibility of it emerging in the world. He says:

Only under the presupposition, therefore, that there is a common sense (by which, however we [also] do not mean an *outer sense*, but mean the effect arising from the free play of our cognitive powers) – only under the presupposition of such a common sense, I maintain, can judgments of taste be made (5:238).<sup>24</sup>

Aesthetic judgments thus do not emerge in the world, but rather from the cognitive process of harmony of the imagination and the understanding (5:286). As we will see, Kant refers to it as a 'harmony' or 'free play'

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<sup>23</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 283. She continues in a footnote, "[t]his transformation of common sense into an inner sense is characteristic of the whole modern age; in the German language it is indicated by the difference between the older German word *Gemeinsinn* and the more recent expression *gesunder Menschenverstand* which replaced it" (Ibid., fn.44). Although Arendt does not call out Kant by name, these are precisely the same terms he uses to describe *sensus communis*.

<sup>24</sup> Emphasis added. Kant could be referring to space here, which we will see, is an "outer sense" (A22/B37). In the above passage, Kant distinguishes aesthetic from determinate judgments (5:237-238). However, since space alone does not establish determinate judgments, it leads me to believe that Kant does not mean to contrast *sensus communis* with space.

precisely because the imagination is not subject to the determinate concepts of the understanding (5:240). Indeed, this is the very cognitive process that makes it possible to entertain the perspectives of others.

In order to understand how Kant thinks *sensus communis* makes enlarged mentality possible, it is first necessary to understand what he means with determinate concepts. Precisely because the application of determinate concepts determines the relationship between the imagination and the understanding. Kant defines determinate concepts as universal “rules” or “laws” that provide the conditions for the possibility of the cognition of objects (A126).<sup>25</sup> He refers to determinate concepts as “the pure concepts of the understanding” (A79/B105) or simply as the “categories” (A80/B105). When the understanding employs determinate concepts, it does not yield aesthetic judgments, but rather cognitive judgments.<sup>26</sup> In the case of cognitive judgments, the imagination is not free precisely because it is subject to the determinate concepts of the understanding.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, I will first detail Kant’s account of the formulation of cognitive

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<sup>25</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). All citations from the *First Critique* will be made from the Guyer and Wood translation.

<sup>26</sup> For Kant, there are two kinds of determinate judgments: cognitive and moral. However, I will limit my analysis to cognitive judgments, as opposed to comparing reflective to moral judgments. For the contrast between the cognitive faculties, and thus the validity of judgments, is best exemplified by contrasting cognitive with reflective judgments. Even if we were to compare reflective with moral judgments, we would reach the same conclusion as to why Arendt thinks reflective judgments provide a model for the formulation of political judgments. In fact, she rejects Kant’s moral philosophy, since moral judgments, like cognitive judgments, espouse universal validity, which she equates with ‘the truth’ (Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts on Lessing,” *Men in Dark Times*, 27; and Arendt, *Lectures*, 15.). Neither cognitive nor moral judgments can serve as a model for political judgments because their validity is achieved by way of universal rules, and not by way of enlarging our mentality.

<sup>27</sup> In this case, Kant calls the relationship between the imagination and the understanding “an objective harmony – where the presentation is referred to a determinate concept of an object” (5:241).

judgments. This will allow me subsequently to show what makes the formulation of aesthetic judgments distinctive.

### *1.2 Determinate Concepts*

When the understanding employs determinate concepts, it does not shape aesthetic judgments, but rather cognitive ones. Whereas reflective judgments establish aesthetic qualities of objects, cognitive judgments establish objective features of objects.<sup>28</sup> For example, an aesthetic judgment states, ‘This tulip is beautiful,’ whereas a cognitive judgment states, ‘This is a tulip.’ Whereas the former is established by the harmony of the cognitive powers, the latter is established by three acts of synthesis. Namely, a synthesis “of the apprehension of the representations, as modifications of the mind in intuition; of the reproduction of them in the imagination; and of their recognition in the concept” (A97).<sup>29</sup> A different cognitive structure of the mind is responsible for each act of synthesis. Sensibility is responsible for the synthesis of apprehension; the imagination for the synthesis of reproduction; and the understanding for the synthesis of recognition (A115).

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to keep in mind that Kant is talking about the appearances of objects, not ‘things in themselves’ (see (A89-90/B122)). In other words, cognitive judgments express *how* empirical objects appear to us, not *what* they are in themselves. As he says, “appearances are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations” (A101). While it seems that Arendt works with a similar conception of appearances, insofar as opinions or judgments express ‘how things appear to me,’ she uses it in an entirely different sense than Kant does. Firstly, and as we will see in Chapter Four, judgments are always intersubjectively achieved. Namely, through the two forms of representative thinking and by contesting our judgments with others in the world. Secondly, and as we have seen in Chapter One, appearance in the public sense of the term is intersubjectively achieved by others living in a shared world.

<sup>29</sup> I have removed the bold font from several citations from the *First Critique*, so that it does not distract the reader.

Each moment of synthesis structures and unifies the ‘manifold’ of ‘raw and unstructured’ (A77/B103) intuitions gained from sense-perception.<sup>30</sup> For Kant, the ‘manifold of intuition’ consists of disparate and disconnected empirical sense-impressions of objects (A20/B34). The synthesis of apprehension is the first moment of synthesis, which is carried out by sensibility. Sensibility consists of two *a priori* forms of intuition, i.e., space and time (A19/B33). The function of the pure forms of intuition is not only to receive sense-impressions, but also to structure and shape them into “one representation” (A99). Specifically, their task is to temporally and spatially structure the manifold of intuition.

On the one hand, time, as “inner sense” (A33),<sup>31</sup> orders the manifold of intuition in the “temporal sequence” (A33/B50) of “simultaneity” and “succession” (A30/B46). It “determines the relation of representations in our inner state” (A33), insofar as one intuition comes before or after the other in our minds. On the other hand, space, as “outer sense,” orders the manifold of intuition in terms of the spatial relations of things and persons external to us (A22/B37). Meaning, it determines the “form, magnitude, and relation” (A22/B37) of objects that reside in a different place than us.<sup>32</sup> In this way, space and time organize the manifold of intuitions into

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<sup>30</sup> This means that properties of objects do not inhere in the objects themselves. Instead, the possibility for the cognition of objects is the product of the *a priori* structures of the mind.

<sup>31</sup> Time is *a priori*, insofar as it is “prior to the objects” (A33/B49), because we cannot experience representations without time (A31/B46). Time is therefore “a necessary representation that grounds all intuitions” (A31/B46). This means that time does not exist *outside* of us, but rather is constructed *within* us. As Kant states, “time is nothing other than the subjective condition under which all intuitions can take place in us” (A33). Time is thus the “the condition of the possibility of appearances” (A24/B39).

<sup>32</sup> However, space is a product of the mind, insofar as it “cannot be obtained from the relations of outer appearance through experience, but this outer experience is itself first

single representations of objects in terms of their temporal and spatial relations.

Perceiving objects in terms of their temporal relations is also dependent on the imagination. This leads into the second moment of synthesis, the synthesis of reproduction. Both the synthesis of apprehension and the synthesis of reproduction are necessary to bring temporal order to intuitions. As Kant says, “[t]he synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction” (A102). The imagination has a “reproductive” task, insofar as it combines the representations gained from sensibility into an image (A121). The imagination creates an image of the object by associating representations with each other, so that previous ones can be connected to later ones. As Kant has it, “I must necessarily first grasp one of these manifold representations after another in my thoughts” (A102). If the imagination did not associate representations, then we would neither be able to distinguish between different representations of objects, nor their temporal relations to each other, let alone ‘cognize’ objects. As Kant tells us, “there would in turn be no determinate connection but merely unruly heaps of them, and no cognition at all would arise” (A121). By associating representations of objects with each other, the imagination turns them into an image, which can be ‘exhibited’ to the understanding (A79/B104).

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possible only through this representation” (A23/B38). This is the case because we cannot possibly think of objects without space (A24/B39). Space is therefore not an empirical property of objects, but rather an *a priori* structure of the mind. Therefore, similarly to time, space is “the condition of the possibility of appearances” (A24/B39).

The imagination is not free because its task is to combine and associate representations in a way that corresponds to the determinate concepts of the understanding (A124). Werner Pluhar explains in greater detail:

If this intuition is to match a concept, we must have an active power or ability to structure the particular features of that intuition in accordance with the structure of the concept; this power is what Kant calls out ‘imagination.’ The imagination ‘apprehends’ (takes up) what is given in intuition and the puts together or ‘combines’ this diversity (or ‘manifold’) so that it matches the concept. In this way the imagination ‘exhibits’ (*darstellen*, traditionally rendered as ‘to present’) the concept, i.e., provides it with a matching or ‘corresponding’ intuition.<sup>33</sup>

The imagination becomes subject to the laws of the understanding because it associates representations in a way that enables the understanding to employ the appropriate concept. This leads into the third and final act of synthesis, the synthesis of recognition, which is carried out by the understanding.

The cognition of objects is achieved when the understanding synthesizes the unified manifold of intuition under the appropriate concept (A105).<sup>34</sup>

Whereas intuitions of objects are gained from sense-perception, determinate concepts are *a priori*, insofar as they are already existing

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<sup>33</sup> Werner Pluhar, “Translator’s Introduction,” *Critique of Judgment*, xxxv.

<sup>34</sup> It remains a question as to which faculty is, in fact, responsible for this activity of synthesis, which makes it possible to ‘cognize’ objects. As Ginsborg explains, Kant “is notoriously unclear” in the *First Critique* “on the way in which imagination and understanding contribute to cognition” (Hannah Ginsborg, “Lawfulness without a Law: Kant on the Free Play of Imagination and Understanding,” *Philosophical Topics* Vol. 25, No. 1 Aesthetics (Spring 1997): 39). Ginsborg therefore points out that “synthesis is described both as an ‘act of the understanding’ and as a ‘mere result of the imagination’” (Ibid.); see (A78/B103). While this certainly is a valid question, answering it exceeds the scope of this project. The purpose of delving into the functions of the imagination and the understanding is merely to shed light on the difference between the formulation of reflective and cognitive judgments.

structures of the understanding.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, the categories are universal or determinate rules, which make the cognition of the properties of worldly objects possible (A95).<sup>36</sup> As Kant explains, determinate concepts:

come from the understanding itself *a priori*, and are not borrowed from experience, but rather must provide the appearances with their lawfulness and by that very means make experience possible (A126).

By subsuming or grouping representations under the corresponding category (A79/B104),<sup>37</sup> the understanding yields objective properties of objects (A95/B129).

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<sup>35</sup> Kant proves this in the “Transcendental Deduction” in the *First Critique*. To put it succinctly, the categories are *a priori* structures of the mind, seeing as without them, we would not be able to cognize objects (see A93/B125-126). Otherwise, “a swarm of appearances [would] fill up our soul without experience ever being able to arise from it” (A111). Without the categories, “all relation of cognition to objects would also disappear” (A111), which means that our representations of objects would neither become unified into cognitions of objects, nor that our representations would refer to objects in the world. For an excellent account of the “Transcendental Deduction,” see Paul Guyer, “The Deduction of the Categories: The Metaphysical and Transcendental Deductions,” *The Cambridge Companion to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> In total, there are twelve categories (A80/B106). Kant groups three categories under each of the four headings: 1. Of Quantity: Unity, Plurality, and Totality; 2. Of Quality: Reality, Negation, and Limitation; 3. Of Relation: Of Inference and Subsistence, Of Causality and Dependence, Of Community; and 4. Of Modality: Possibility – Impossibility, Existence – Non-existence, Necessity – Contingency (A80/B106).

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, this is the moment that Kant claims we become aware of the activity of synthesis (A105), and that we recognize the synthesis as *ours* (A103). This is why he calls it the synthesis of *recognition*. We become conscious of it, insofar as we recognize that all representations belong to one and the same consciousness (A122), which is *mine*. Kant defines consciousness as “pure apperception” (A116) or “the transcendental unity of apperception” (A118), which refers to “the thoroughgoing identity of ourselves with regard to all representations that can ever belong to our cognition, as a necessary condition of the possibility of all representations” (A116). On the one hand, this goes to show that we become aware of ourselves when we synthesize possible objects of experience. On the other hand, it leads Kant to conclude that the transcendental unity of apperception underlies all possible cognition (A105). Thus, the three moments of synthesis are made possible by “one consciousness that unifies the manifold that has been successively intuited, and then also reproduces, into one representation” (A103). Otherwise, we could neither ‘cognize’ objects, nor recognize that the representations of objects belong to us. For an excellent account, see Lilian Alweiss, “Kant’s Not so ‘Logical’ Subject,” *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* XXI (2014): 87-105.



For example, the category of unity allows me to ‘cognize’ the tulip on my desk as one, unitary object. The understanding synthesizes previously united representations, such as ‘pinkness,’ ‘green,’ ‘stem,’ and ‘leaf’ as belonging under the same category, insofar as they are properties that belong to the same object. In this way, the understanding makes it possible for me to perceive the tulip as a unitary object, as opposed to disordered sense-impressions not belonging to anything. I can therefore make the cognitive judgment, ‘This is a tulip.’<sup>38</sup> This is the case because the employment of the categories is synonymous with formulating cognitive judgments. Determinate concepts are thus the “means” by which we judge possible objects of experience. As Kant states, “the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them” (A68/B93). This is to say that when we have cognitions of objects, we make *judgments* about their properties.<sup>39</sup>

Since determinate concepts are universal rules for the possibility of cognition, cognitive judgments have universal validity. This is the case

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<sup>38</sup> In particular, there are multiple categories at play in the formulation of this cognitive judgment. I only gave the example of unity above in order to elucidate the general function that the categories perform. Specifically, the category of quantity is unity; the category of quality is reality; the category of relation is of inherence and subsistence; and the category of modality is necessity.

<sup>39</sup> While the categories are the means by which we formulate cognitive judgments, all possible judgments must follow logical *forms* of judgments as well. The logical forms of judgments are semantic structures that do not contribute to the content of judgments, but only to their form. In fact, Kant derives the 12 categories from the table of the logical forms of judgments: 1. Quantity: Universal, Particular, Singular; 2. Quality: Affirmative, Negative, Infinite; 3. Relation: Categorical, Hypothetical, and Disjunctive; and 4. Modality: Problematic, Assertoric, and Apodictic (A70/B95). In the case of my example, ‘This is a tulip,’ the form of this judgment is as follows: the quantity is singular; the quality is affirmative; the relation is categorical; and the modality is apodictic.

because determinate concepts subsume individual properties of objects under one and the same category (A79/B105). It means that determinate concepts universally stand for all intuitions that can be grouped under one class, and thus account for objects that share the same property. For example, the category of unity allows me to recognize that there are two tulips in a vase, each of which form a unity of their own. The manifold of intuitions I have of each individual tulip is synthesized in the same way under the same category. The category of unity thus stands for the unity of each individual tulip, and at the same time for the unity of all tulips. This goes to show that properties of objects have objective validity (A89-90/B122; A125). It means that features of objects are ‘cognized’ in the same way in same in every subject.

Seeing as everyone else’s mind operates in the same way, following the same universal rules, we can conclude that the cognition of objects is the same in every subject. As Kant says, “for cognition, the determination of the object with which given presentations are to harmonize (in any subject whatever) is the only way of presenting that holds for everyone” (5:217). It means that the cognition of objects is the result of the same mental activity of synthesis in every subject. Thus, to stick with our example, everyone will arrive at the same cognitive judgment. Namely, that there are two tulips in a vase, each of which form a unity of their own. Now that we have seen how cognitive judgments are established, we can turn to the formulation of aesthetic judgments.

### *1.3 The Harmony of the Cognitive Powers*

When it comes to aesthetic judgments, the understanding does not employ determinate concepts (5:217). This is the case because there is no corresponding category for beauty. As Kant claims:

If we search for a principle of taste that states the universal criterion of the beautiful by means of determinate concepts, then we engage in a fruitless endeavor, because we search for something that is impossible and intrinsically contradictory (5:231).

Since the category of beauty does not exist, the aesthetic quality of an object is not constituted in the same way as other properties, such as shape, size, or number. Aesthetic qualities are thus not objective features of worldly objects (5:282). Therefore, Kant concludes that it is “absolutely impossible” to “subsume the concept of an object and then infer that the object is beautiful” (5:285). Instead, the imagination and the understanding must work differently in order to determine the aesthetic quality of objects.

As mentioned, aesthetic judgments are established by the free play or harmony of the imagination and the understanding. In this case, the imagination is free: it is “productive and spontaneous” (5:240), insofar as it is not subject to the determinate rules of the understanding (5:217). This notwithstanding, the imagination still fulfills its general function of combining and associating representations (5:292). This means that the imagination still performs the synthesis of reproduction, as it does with the establishment of cognitive judgments. As Kant explains:

For this apprehension of forms by the imagination could never occur if reflective judgment did not prepare them, even if unintentionally, at least with its ability [in general] to refer intuitions to concepts (5:190).

However, rather than relaying representations to the pure categories of the understanding, the imagination refers them to the faculty of the understanding itself (5:190).

Instead of synthesizing the unified manifold under a determinate concept, the understanding subsumes the imagination. Kant makes this clear when he says:

Now since a judgment of taste is not based on a concept of the object ... it can consist only in the subsumption of the very imagination under the condition [which must be met] for the understanding to proceed in general from intuitions to concepts (5:287).

It becomes clear that the imagination still performs its general function of reproduction and that the understanding still performs its general function of subsumption. However, since the understanding does not employ a determinate concept, the cognitive faculties ‘harmonize’ with each other, insofar as they assume the *general* relationship necessary for cognition (5:217).

Since the understanding subsumes the imagination, there is a “principle of subsumption” (5:286) involved in shaping judgments of taste. However, it is “indeterminate” (5:219) rather than determinate. It is indeterminate precisely because the imagination ‘harmonizes’ with the

“lawfulness” of the understanding “in general” (5:241). That is, with the general task of the understanding to apply the determinate rules or laws for the possibility of cognition. Kant clarifies:

Hence taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption; however, this subsumption is not one of intuitions under *concepts*, but, rather, one of the *power* of intuitions or exhibitions (the imagination) under the *power* of concepts (the understanding), insofar as the imagination *in its freedom* harmonizes with the understanding *in its lawfulness* (5:286).

Kant refers to the ‘indeterminacy’ of the harmony of the cognitive powers as a “lawfulness without a law” (5:242) or “*free lawfulness*” (5:240). He admits that describing free play in this way sounds paradoxical (5:241). However, if the understanding did apply a determinate rule, then it would not yield an aesthetic judgment, but rather a cognitive one (5:241).

Even though the cognitive powers assume the general relationship necessary for cognition, aesthetic judgments do not yield cognitions of objects (5:191; 5:194).<sup>40</sup> This is the case because the third moment of synthesis cannot take place. Therefore, as Hannah Ginsborg explains, the cognitive faculties do not establish “any particular *objective* judgment.”<sup>41</sup> Instead, the harmony of the cognitive powers produces the “mental state” (5:217) of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.<sup>42</sup> As Ginsborg puts it,

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<sup>40</sup> Ginsborg, “Lawfulness without a Law,” 43-44. She makes this point by referring to the unpublished Introduction to the *Third Critique* (EE VII, 220).

<sup>41</sup> Ginsborg, “Lawfulness without a Law,” 44; emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, Paul Guyer points out that Kant does not provide a clear-cut answer as to why the free play of the cognitive powers lead to the sensation of pleasure (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69).

“the corresponding state of mind does not involve the recognition of the object as falling under a concept, and hence is a non-cognitive state of mind, which is to say a feeling.”<sup>43</sup> The cognitive state of pleasure or displeasure is thus the indeterminate rule by which aesthetic qualities of objects are judged.<sup>44</sup> This is what Kant means when he says that the task of reflective judgment is to create its own rule by which to judge aesthetic qualities of objects (5:169).

Feeling pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive powers indicates that we judge the object as beautiful. As Kant says, “this relation [present] when [judgment] determines an object as beautiful, is connected with the feeling of a pleasure” (5:221). I make the judgment, ‘This tulip is beautiful,’ because I feel pleasure in my cognitive state of harmony.<sup>45</sup> However, Kant makes clear that the sensation of pleasure is not directed toward the object itself. Meaning, I do not judge the beauty of the tulip by the way it immediately makes me *feel*.<sup>46</sup> Instead, the pleasure involved in aesthetic judgments is a reflective form of pleasure that refers to the cognitive state of harmony.<sup>47</sup> Kant therefore describes it as “merely

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<sup>43</sup> Ginsborg, “Lawfulness without a Law,” 40.

<sup>44</sup> Pluhar puts this quite nicely when he says that the “harmony” of the cognitive powers thus “serve[s] as a *standard* of taste” (Pluhar, “Translator’s Introduction,” lx-lxi).

<sup>45</sup> In contrast, feeling displeasure in the harmony of the cognitive powers indicates that we do not deem the object beautiful. Kant explains, “whereas displeasure is that presentation which contains the basis that determines [the subject to change] the state [consisting] of [certain] presentations into their own opposite (i.e., to keep them away or remove them)” (5:220). For example, if I come across another tulip that is shriveled, it might spark displeasure while reflecting on it. This might lead me to make the judgment, ‘This tulip is not beautiful,’ or ‘This tulip is not as beautiful as the other one.’

<sup>46</sup> This leads Kant to distinguish between two types of pleasure. The pleasure felt toward the beautiful and ‘the agreeable’ (5:205-206) will be detailed in Chapter Four, as it relates to the impartiality of reflective (and political) judgment.

<sup>47</sup> Kant makes several different claims about how the reflective pleasure in formulating aesthetic judgments comes about. As noted above, he connects it to the harmony of the cognitive powers. However, he also connects it to the form of the object, which he

contemplative” (5:222), or as a “pleasure of mere reflection” (5:292-293).<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, the cognitive state of pleasure or displeasure can be used as an “ideal standard” (5:239) by which to judge the aesthetic quality of the object. However, unlike cognitive judgments, aesthetic judgments do not have universal validity. Instead, Kant claims reflective judgment has a ‘special validity’ (5:215), that is, a ‘subjective universal validity’ (5:215). Judgments of taste are subjective, seeing as the pleasure refers to one’s own cognitive state of harmony. It means that the sensations of pleasure and displeasure can vary from person to person. However, judgments of taste are also universal, seeing as the pleasure emerges from the same cognitive process in every subject. As Kant holds, “[t]he pleasure must of necessity rest on the same conditions in everyone, because they are

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defines as its subjective purposiveness (5:192). To complicate matters, Kant offers two different accounts of subjective purposiveness in the *Third Critique*. On the one hand, it means that the object is suitable to be perceived and judged by the cognitive faculties (5:189). On the other hand, Kant claims that the subjective purposiveness of objects (specifically of natural objects and the laws of nature) must be ‘presupposed’ (5:185; 5:186). Subjective purposiveness is a “maxim” (5:182) or “a special a priori concept” (5:181) that allows us to posit objects, and indeed nature as a whole, as *though* they were amenable to our cognitive faculties (5:181). Otherwise, nature would appear entirely disordered and unlawful. As a result, objects would neither appear to us in an orderly fashion, nor would we be able to make judgments about them. While these certainly are valid questions, answering them exceeds the scope of this project. The purpose of delving into the pleasure felt toward the beautiful is merely to set up Arendt’s affinity to Kant and thereby to justify her appropriation of reflective judgment. For an excellent account of the aforementioned concepts and issues, see Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*; and Douglas Burnham, *An Introduction to Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> In fact, there is no end or goal associated with judging the beautiful (5:242). In contrast, when it comes to cognitive judgments, there is a goal, namely, cognition. Instead, judging aesthetically simply involves wanting to remain in the harmonious state of pleasure. Kant explains that our wish is “to *keep* [us in] the state of [having] the presentation itself, and [to keep] the cognitive powers engaged [in their occupation] without any further aim” (5:222). In fact, he says that “[w]e *linger* in our contemplation of the beautiful, because the contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself,” insofar as it “repeatedly arouses our attention” (5:222). It means I wish to continue contemplating the beauty of the tulip simply because I keep feeling the pleasure in my cognitive state.

subjective conditions for the possibility of cognition as such” (5:292). It does not mean that “everyone *will feel*” pleasure in reflection and thus arrive at the *same* judgment of taste (5:237). Whereas everyone will agree that there are two pink tulips in a vase, not everyone will agree that they are beautiful. Instead, reflective judgment exemplifies a judgment that others could make, seeing as everyone forms it on the same cognitive grounds.

While the pleasure in reflection can be used as a standard by which to judge the aesthetic quality of an object, it signifies a general yet non-subsumptive rule.<sup>49</sup> It means that aesthetic judgments do not prescribe beauty, but rather exemplify it. Kant holds that aesthetic judgments thus have a general or “*exemplary* validity” (5:239). He explains, “an aesthetic judgment ... can be called *exemplary*,” in the sense that it “is regarded as an example of a universal rule that we are unable to state” (5:237). Each judgment of taste makes an individual claim about the aesthetic quality of a particular object (5:285). Each judgment of taste also reflects a general rule that applies to other, similar objects. For example, the judgment, ‘This tulip is beautiful,’ can be used as a rule by which to judge the beauty of other tulips. However, I cannot apply it to all tulips, and infer that “[a]ll tulips are beautiful” (5:285). Otherwise, I wrongfully subsume the aesthetic quality of the particular tulip under a universal rule. Instead, by comparing and contrasting other tulips against the ideal tulip, I can

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<sup>49</sup> There is another component to establishing the general validity of reflective judgment, namely, ‘expecting others to agree’ with one’s pleasure felt in reflection. It will be broached in Chapter Four, as it pertains to strengthening the analogy Arendt draws between the general validity of aesthetic and political judgments.



determine which one holds up to it and which one does not. As Kant says, “[a] judgment of taste ... [considers] the character of the object only by holding it up to our feeling of pleasure and displeasure” (5:209). The general validity of reflective judgment is thus not established by subsuming similar objects under the same class. Instead, it is established by extending the rule from one object to other, similar objects.

Lastly, the pleasure in reflection accounts for our ability possible to entertain the perspectives of others. This is the case because enlarged mentality is made possible simply by taking into consideration how everyone else’s mind operates. Kant explains,

we must [here] take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, everyone else’s way of presenting [something] (5:293).

‘Everyone else’s way of presenting something’ thus refers to the harmony between the imagination and the understanding. We merely consider how others *could* judge, meaning, how they *might* feel when contemplating an aesthetic object, and what their *potential* judgments might be. It goes to show that thinking in the place of others merely occurs on a mental or formal level.

Enlarged mentality thus consists of on an imaginative exercise in which one invokes the hypothetical presence of others. Since Kant has secured the *a priori* conditions for formulating aesthetic judgments, there is no need to shape them against the actual viewpoints of others. This is

unmistakable when Kant says, “we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as rather with the merely possible judgments of others, and [thus] put ourselves in the position of everyone else” (5:294). Given that we simply consider how everyone else’s mind operates, *sensus communis* only refers to a theoretical community of ‘ideal judging subjects’ (5:285), i.e., of abstract persons who also have the capacity to judge.

## 2. Misreading Arendt

### *2.1 Arendt’s Critics Mistake Possible with Public Debate*

Now that we have seen how Kant envisions enlarged mentality, we can address the aforementioned interpretations and criticisms of Arendt’s account of enlarged mentality. In order to show that her empiricization of Kant’s enlarged mentality does not rest on a misunderstanding of reflective judgment, I will first demonstrate that she does not misread Kant. This will exempt her from the charge that she confuses the transcendental conditions of enlarged mentality with the worldly conditions of public debate. Second, I will illustrate that Arendt also conceives of enlarged mentality as a reflective exercise. This will correct the view that entertaining the perspectives of others unfolds in the public realm. It will also lead me to the conclusion that she comes closer to Kant than it seems.

While Arendt seems to equate the imagined presence of others with their actual presence in a human community, there is textual evidence that suggests she reads Kant correctly. She is clearly aware of the hypothetical nature of enlarged mentality, as well as the *a priori* nature of common

sense. Although the following quotes are scattered remarks across her texts, I take such passages to show that her interpretation of enlarged mentality is not grounded on a misreading of Kant. This leads me to believe that her critics are the ones who make a leap from hypothetical to public debate by misreading Arendt.

First, Arendt is aware of the hypothetical nature of enlarged mentality. She clarifies that it is limited to the perspectives that we are capable of imagining. In her *Lectures*, she explains, citing Kant, that “[t]he enlargement of the mind’ ... is accomplished by ‘comparing our judgments with the possible rather than the actual judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the place of any other man.’”<sup>50</sup> We can therefore reject Yar’s claim that “Arendt (mis)takes this ‘broadened thinking’ to denote an *actual* dialogue with *real* others.”<sup>51</sup> In fact, Arendt provides further evidence that she does not conflate theoretical with worldly debate. For she correctly observes that the formulation of aesthetic judgments rests on a hypothetical community of ‘ideal judging subjects.’

Arendt thus recognizes that shaping judgments of taste does not take place in the context of the political community. This is evinced by two passages.

In “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” she states,

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<sup>50</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 43. Degryse too cites this passage as proof that Arendt does not conflate the theoretical with actual perspectives of others (Degryse, “*Sensus communis* as a foundation for men as political beings,” 353).

<sup>51</sup> Yar, “From Actor to Spectator,” 21.

while I take into account others in rendering my judgment, these others do not include everybody; Kant says explicitly that the validity of such judgments can extend only ‘over the whole sphere of judging subjects,’ of people who also judge.<sup>52</sup>

And in “The Crisis in Culture,” she reiterates:

Its claims to validity can never extend further than the others in whose place the judging person has put himself for his considerations. Judgment, Kant says, is valid ‘for every single judging person,’ but the emphasis in the sentence is on ‘judging’; it is not valid for those who do not judge or for those who are not members of the public realm where the objects of judgment appear.<sup>53</sup>

Arendt clearly affirms that the formulation of aesthetic judgments does not rest on the actual perspectives of others living in a shared world.

Second, she is cognizant of the *a priori* nature of *sensus communis*, and hence its establishment of the ‘mental interdependence’ necessary for making judgments of taste. Arendt therefore knows that the possibility of formulating aesthetic judgments merely involves considering how everyone else’s mind operates. She cites Kant at length in her *Denktagebuch*:

we must [here] take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us], i.e., a power to judge that in reflecting takes

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<sup>52</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 141. While she does not cite Kant directly, she must have in mind when he says, “[i]ts peculiarity, however, consists in the fact that, even though it merely has subjective validity, it yet extends its claim to *all* subjects, just as it always could if it were an objective judgment that rested on cognitive bases and that [we] could be compelled [to make] by a proof” (5:285).

<sup>53</sup> Arendt, “Crisis in Culture,” 20. When Arendt claims that aesthetic judgment is “not valid for those who do not judge or for those who are not members of the public realm where the objects of judgment appear” (Ibid.), she can mean one of two things. First, she could simply be referring to Kant’s ‘ideal judging subjects,’ who are abstract members of an ideal community of ‘judges.’ Second, she could be referring to those who have lost their capacity to judge. Eichmann is an example of the latter, as Arendt claims he forfeited his capacity to think, and hence to discriminate between right and wrong.

account (a priori) ... of everyone else's way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgment with human reason in general ... Now we do as follows: we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as rather with the merely possible judgments of others, and [thus] put ourselves in the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that [may] happen to attach to our own judging (5:293-294).<sup>54</sup>

This goes to show that Arendt is aware that the harmony of the cognitive powers makes it possible to entertain the perspectives of others. Thus, contrary to Degryse and Norris, we can conclude that Arendt does not conflate the formal community made possible by common sense with the political community made possible by the world.

Highlighting these passages not only shows that Arendt's interpretation of Kant's enlarged mentality does not rest on a misunderstanding, but it also allows me to show that Arendt comes closer to Kant than it seems. In fact, it is more consistent with her own thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective exercise. This is the case because it comprises the second form of representative thinking. Since the Socratic two-in-one takes place in the solitude of non-privacy, it must follow that enlarged mentality does as well. It is therefore in keeping with Arendt's phenomenological essentialism to classify enlarged mentality as an

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<sup>54</sup> Since Arendt cites the German version of the *Third Critique*, I chose to use Pluhar's translation, instead of translating this passage on my own. Her original note reads as follows: »Unter dem *sensus communis* aber muss man die Idee eines gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes, d.i. eines Beurteilungsvermögens verstehen, welches ... auf die Vorstellungsart jedes anderen in Gedanken (a priori) Rücksicht nimmt, um gleichsam an die gesamte Menschenvernunft sein Urteil zu halten ... Dieses geschieht nun dadurch, daß man sein Urteil an anderer ... bloß mögliche Urteile hält und sich in die Stelle jedes andern versetzt, indem man bloß von den Beschränkungen, die unserer eigenen Beurteilung zufälligerweise anhängen, abstrahiert« (Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band (1950-1973)*, 579).

unpolitical activity.<sup>55</sup> What confirms my claim is that she believes the imagination makes enlarged mentality possible. In the next sub-section, we will see that enlarged mentality does not take place in the public realm, but rather in the imagined presence of others. So, when Arendt says, “Kant stresses that at least one of our *mental faculties*, the faculty of judgment, presupposes the presence of others,”<sup>56</sup> she refers to the presence of others in a representative sense.

## *2.2 Arendt’s Enlarged Mentality*

In order to show that Arendt views enlarged mentality as a reflective activity, it is necessary to demonstrate where she aligns herself with Kant and where she breaks with him. My claim is not that she perfectly maps her conception of enlarged mentality onto his, but rather that she stays truer to him than it seems. In the following, I will address two points of comparison. First, Arendt comes closer to Kant, insofar as enlarged mentality takes place in the context of an imaginative community. However, what appears to bring her further away from him is that she attributes a reproductive task to the imagination, as opposed to a productive task. This is problematic, seeing as Kant associates the reproductive imagination with cognitive judgments, and the productive imagination with aesthetic judgments. Despite this difference, I will illustrate that Arendt does not stray far from Kant.

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<sup>55</sup> Classifying enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability sets the groundwork for showing that it directly contributes to the emergence of the political realm. The political potential of enlarged mentality will be analyzed in Chapter Four.

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 74.

Second, what appears to bring Arendt further away from Kant is that she does not work within a transcendental framework. She neither believes that an *a priori* principle makes it possible to entertain the perspectives of others, nor that the cognitive faculties are *a priori* structures of the mind. Instead, Arendt adds an empirical dimension to Kant's enlarged mentality. Namely, what makes it possible, for Arendt, to enlarge our mentality is having previously encountered the actual perspectives of others in the world.<sup>57</sup> However, what brings her closer to Kant is the fact that entertaining previously heard opinions sets the reflective condition for the ability to imagine *possible* ones. While Arendt certainly departs from Kant in certain respects, she stays truer to him than it seems.

To start with the first point of comparison, Arendt clearly explains that enlarged mentality involves representing the hypothetical company of others within oneself. To quote Arendt at length:

I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, *I represent them*. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy, as though I tried to be or to feel like somebody else, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> While Young claims that having come across the actual perspectives of others in the world makes enlarged mentality possible, she concludes that enlarged mentality contains both a reflective and a public dimension (Iris Marion Young, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 224-225). In contrast, I believe that Arendt's enlarged mentality is an entirely reflective exercise.

<sup>58</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," *Between Past and Future* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2006), 237; emphasis added.

What shows her affinity to Kant is that the ability to represent various perspectives within oneself is made possible by the imagination. She says: “[t]his kind of representative thought ... is possible only through imagination.”<sup>59</sup> The imagination paves the way for entertaining the perspectives of others by turning previously experienced sense-objects and previously heard opinions into objects of thought.

However, Arendt appears to break with Kant by giving the imagination a reproductive task when it comes to enlarged mentality. The formulation of political judgments thus appears to come closer to the formulation of cognitive judgments. In fact, the task Arendt assigns to the reproductive imagination bears striking resemblance to the synthesis of reproduction. However, she calls it the process of “*de-sen[sing]*,”<sup>60,61</sup> which involves preparing sense-objects or opinions for thought by turning them into images.<sup>62</sup> What brings her even closer to Kant’s account of the

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<sup>59</sup> The full quote is as follows: “[t]his kind of representative thought, which is possible only through imagination, demands certain sacrifices” (Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 141). We will see in Chapter Four that the kind of sacrifice Arendt has in mind is overcoming moral self-concern for the sake of others. As she continues, “Kant says, ‘We must so to speak renounce ourselves for the sake of others’ – and it is more than a mere curiosity that this denial of selfishness should not occur in the context of his moral philosophy but in this context of merely aesthetic judgments” (Ibid.).

<sup>60</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 77.

<sup>61</sup> While Arendt’s notion of de-sensing certainly comes close Kant’s synthesis of reproduction, this “process of preparation,” is actually indebted to St. Augustine (Ibid.). She explains, citing him, “[s]ense-perception, he says, ‘the vision, which was without when the sense was formed by a sensible body, is succeeded by a similar vision within,’ the image that re-presents it (Augustine, *The Trinity*, bk. XI, chap. 3). This image is then stored in memory, ready to become a ‘vision of thought’ the moment the mind gets hold of it; it is decisive that ‘what remains in the memory’ – the mere image of what once was real – is different from the ‘vision in thought’ – the deliberately remembered object. ‘What remains in memory ... is one thing, and ... something else arises when we remember’ (Ibid.), for ‘what is hidden and retained in the memory is one thing, and what is impressed by it in the thought of the one remembering is another thing’ (Ibid., chap. 8.). Hence, the thought-object is different from the image, as the image is different from the visible sense-object whose mere representation it is” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 77).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



reproductive imagination is that it also serves to recall previous representations back to mind. As Kant explains, the imagination “call[s] back a perception, from which the mind has passed on to another, to the succeeding ones, and thus for exhibiting entire series of perceptions” (A121). If the imagination were not able to recall previous representations, then we could neither ‘cognize’ objects nor perceive objects and events in time. The example Kant gives is of drawing a line (A102). I could not draw a line in my mind if could not recall its previous parts as I draw its current parts, let alone connect them together (A102).

For Arendt, the reproductive imagination ‘de-senses’ and recalls objects and opinions to mind, so that we can ‘think *about*’ them. As she tells us, the imagination is “the *sine qua non* for providing the mind with suitable thought-objects.”<sup>63</sup> In fact, she thinks that she can seamlessly carry over Kant’s reproductive imagination to suit her purposes. Arendt explains, citing Kant:

*Every mental act rests on the mind’s faculty of having present to itself what is absent from the senses. Re-presentation, making present what is actually absent, is the mind’s unique gift ... this gift is called *imagination*, defined by Kant as ‘the faculty of intuition even without the presence of the object.’<sup>64,65</sup>*

Since the reproductive imagination ensures that we can represent previously encountered objects and opinions, Arendt thinks it paves the way for an enlarged mentality.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 76; Arendt cites Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie*, no. 28, *Werke*, vol. VI, p. 466.

<sup>65</sup> As Kant says, “[i]magination is the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition” (B151).

However, Linda Zerilli points out that conceiving of the imagination as reproductive hinders what Arendt sets out to achieve.<sup>66,67</sup> If the imagination is reproductive, it is subject to the laws of the understanding. This prevents the imagination from ‘harmonizing’ with the understanding, and hence making an enlarged mentality possible. This leads Zerilli to conclude:

This failure to specify the productive character of the imagination in aesthetic and political judgments has consequences for how we understand Arendt’s famous account of ‘representative thinking.’<sup>68</sup>

However, Zerilli’s criticism of Arendt is beside the point. Considering the imagination as reproductive neither causes Arendt to stray too far from Kant, nor causes any problems for her conception of enlarged mentality.

For Arendt, the reproductive imagination is always free precisely because she does not work with determinate concepts.<sup>69</sup> She explains,

thinking always deals with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense-perception. An object of thought is always a representation, that is, something or somebody that is actually absent and present only to the mind which, by virtue of imagination, can make it present in the form of an image. In other words, when I am thinking, I move outside the world of appearances, even if my thought deals with ordinary sense-given

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<sup>66</sup> Zerilli, “‘We Feel Our Freedom,’” 163; 173-174.

<sup>67</sup> I also disagree with Zerilli’s interpretation of the imagination, insofar as it strives toward “plurality and affirming freedom” (Ibid., 174), as opposed to establishing intersubjective judgments (Ibid., 160). Firstly, and as we will see in Chapter Four, it is precisely the intersubjective validity achieved by reflective judgment that signals its political potential, for Arendt. Secondly, and as we will see in Chapter Five, I take issue with Zerilli’s account of the imagination precisely because the assurance of freedom and intersubjectivity are not mutually exclusive, but rather reciprocal and inter-dependent.

<sup>68</sup> Zerilli, “‘We Feel Our Freedom,’” 174.

<sup>69</sup> I would like to thank Lilian Alweiss for helping me clarify this point.

objects and not with such invisibles as concepts or ideas, the old domain of metaphysical thought.<sup>70</sup>

Since the imagination can never be subject to any kind of determinate laws, its freedom is never ‘restricted’ (5:217). Even though the imagination is reproductive, for Arendt, the analogy between aesthetic and political judgments does not break down. Thus, the reproductive imagination can pave the way to entertain the perspectives of others.

This leads into the second point of comparison. Arendt appears to break with Kant because she does not believe that enlarged mentality is made possible by considering how everyone else’s mind operates. Instead, she incorporates an empirical dimension into her conception of enlarged mentality, seeing as it rests on recalling previously heard opinions. Arendt confirms this when she explains:

To be sure, the objects of my thinking or willing or judging, the mind’s subject matter, are given in the world, or arise from my life in this world, but they themselves as activities are not necessitated or conditioned by either.<sup>71</sup>

It therefore seems that Arendt’s version of enlarged mentality does not take the possible perspectives of hypothetical persons into consideration, but rather the actual perspectives one has previously encountered. However, Arendt must deviate from Kant in this regard because she cannot base the possibility for an enlarged mentality on transcendental principles.

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<sup>70</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 165.

<sup>71</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 70.

Arendt does not ground mental faculties and their corresponding activities on transcendental principles precisely because she does not work within an *a priori* – *a posteriori* framework.<sup>72</sup> She rejects *a priori* principles because they espouse a universal form of validity, which is fundamentally anti-political. Therefore, Norris goes wrong when he maintains that Arendt should adopt transcendental principles herself in order to make her notion of political judgments more amenable to Kant’s aesthetic judgments. He claims, “Arendt’s political theory hence requires a supplemental account of the *autopoiesis* of the transcendental.”<sup>73</sup> Norris’ proposal ‘strikes at the very roots’ of Arendt’s conception of politics.<sup>74</sup> From her perspective, transcendental principles are anti-political because their universal validity suppresses the freedom, plurality, and intersubjectivity that emerges in the world. As we saw, *sensus communis* has universal validity, insofar as it ensures the same cognitive faculties in

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<sup>72</sup> As Arendt makes clear in *The Life of the Mind*, she considers the two-world theory a ‘metaphysical fallacy’ (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 22). That is, basing the emergence of worldly phenomena on transcendental or unworldly principles is fallacious because unworldly principles never appear. If we were to follow Kant’s dichotomy of the intelligible and sensible world (4:452), the former setting the conditions for the possibility of the latter, we could never be certain that the former exists and truly makes the latter possible (Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, Third Edition (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993)). From Arendt’s perspective, this follows because she conceives of reality, and hence the world, as appearance, i.e., as being ‘seen and heard’ by others. Since “the ground itself does not appear” (Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 38), the unworldly principles that are supposed to account for reality break down. Indeed, she therefore claims that Kant was wrong to account for the conditions for the possibility of experience by way of transcendental principles, and to give priority to the latter. It leads to absurdity, as what we are left with is the only world that truly appears to us, namely, the sensible, or in her terms the political, world. She thus caustically remarks, “[i]f the divine is what causes appearances and does not appear itself, then man’s inner organs could turn out to be his true divinities” (Ibid., 42).

<sup>73</sup> Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” 168.

<sup>74</sup> This is a play on Arendt’s words in regard to the relationship between the truth and politics. She says, “every claim in the sphere of human affairs to an absolute truth, whose validity needs no support from the side of opinion strikes at the very roots of all politics and all governments” (Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 233).

every subject. Thereby, it makes the ability to formulate aesthetic judgments and to entertain the perspectives of others ‘common to all.’

Since the validity of common sense is universal, we can classify transcendental principles under Arendt’s conception of the truth. For her, the truth is “despotic” and “coercive”<sup>75</sup> because its validity runs counter to and destroys the plurality and intersubjectivity of the world. Arendt states:

The modes of thought and communication that deal with truth, if seen from the political perspective, are necessarily domineering; they do not take into account other people’s opinions, and taking these into account is the hallmark of all strictly political thinking.<sup>76</sup>

The universal validity of *sensus communis* thus destroys worldly plurality, insofar as it precludes the need to hear and contend with the perspectives of others. For she says, “[t]he trouble is that with factual truth, like all other truth, peremptorily claims to be acknowledged and precludes debate, and debate constitutes the very essence of political life.”<sup>77</sup> *Sensus communis* thus suppresses the very condition that makes representative thinking and politics possible. It does not foster plurality precisely because we do not need to insert ourselves into the world in order to hear and contend with the actual perspectives of others. If Arendt were to ‘develop an account of the transcendental,’ it would extinguish the very ability to enlarge our mentality.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 236-237.

Therefore, unlike Kant, Arendt does not work with an *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide, but rather with an *invisible* – *visible* divide. Namely, with what is *not* seen and heard and what *is* seen and heard. What makes the actualization of speech and action possible is the political community. Being seen and heard from all sides makes persons and objects *visible*. As Arendt explains, “only action and speaking need a space of appearance – as well as people who see and hear – in order to be actualized at all.”<sup>78</sup> In contrast, what makes the actualization of reflective activities possible is withdrawing from the political world. Since thinking takes place in the interiority of the mind, mental activities *invisible*. As Arendt says, they are “non-appearing by definition”<sup>79</sup> because they are not seen and heard from all sides. Arendt explains:

Seen from the perspective of the world of appearances and the activities conditioned by it, the main characteristic of mental activities is their *invisibility*. Properly speaking, they never appear, though they manifest themselves to thinking, willing, or judging ego, which is aware of being active, yet lacks the ability to appear as such.<sup>80</sup>

While reflective activities do not appear in the world, they internally ‘exist’ in the mind when persons engage in them. Just as persons can appear to themselves in a minimal sense, their thoughts and mental representations ‘appear’ to them, in the sense that they are conscious of them.

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<sup>78</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 75.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 75. Indeed, as Arendt says, “[t]his reflexivity seems to point to a place of inwardness for mental acts, construed on the principle of the outward space in which my non-mental acts take place” (Ibid.)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 71.

Since Arendt works within an invisible – visible framework, it means that the imagination is not an *a priori* cognitive faculty. Instead, it is a mental capacity that comes into being when it engages in the activity of de-sensing. Arendt thus does not construct a theory of the conditions that account for the possibility of cognition. Instead, she provides a descriptive account of the activities that constitute the life of the mind, just as she does of the human activities that comprise the active life. As opposed to working within a transcendental framework, it is more accurate to say that Arendt comes closer to a quasi-Aristotelian one. This is the case because she describes mental capacities as potentialities and their actualization as “sheer activity.”<sup>81</sup> As detailed in Chapter One, Aristotle conceives of potentiality as the capacity of something to act or ‘to be acted on’ (*MP* 1046a16-17). Actuality is the activity that brings potentiality to fruition (*MP* 1050a21-22).

If we bring Arendt closer to Aristotle, it becomes clear that mental capacities are activities that are actualized *when* we engage in them. As Arendt claims, “[t]he life of the mind ... is sheer activity, like other activities, can be started and stopped at will.”<sup>82</sup> When one is not actively engaged in representative thinking, the *capacity* for thinking assumes a passive state. When one is actively engaged in representative thinking, the *activity* of thinking assumes an active state. This means that mental

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

capacities only come into being in the act of performing them. She explains:

For I am aware of the faculties of the mind and their reflexivity only as long as the activity lasts. It is as though the very organs of thought or will or judgment came into being only when I think, or will, or judge; in their latent state, assuming that such latency exists prior to actualization, they are not open to introspection. The thinking ego, of which I am perfectly conscious so long as the thinking activity lasts, will disappear as though it were a mirage when the real world asserts itself again.<sup>83</sup>

When it comes to the imagination, it can be described as a mental capacity that is actualized when it engages in the activity of de-sensing. In turn, this mental process makes it possible to activate the capacity for an enlarged mentality.

While Arendt does not refer to *a priori* principles to account for mental capacities and processes, she believes that everyone is capable of activating them. She thus implies that there is a universal underpinning that guarantees the same mental capacities in every person.<sup>84</sup> A possible explanation can be provided by turning to consciousness. As mentioned in Chapter Two, consciousness is the condition for the possibility of representative thinking. However, Arendt does not mean that consciousness is the transcendental condition for the possibility of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>84</sup> In fact, Arendt develops her own notion of common sense, but it is not transcendental. It consists of three components: (1) it accounts for an underlying unity of the five senses. It means that it allows persons to attribute various sense-perceptions to the same object. While this might have transcendental connotations, it seems that Arendt comes closer to Aristotle's notion of *koine dunamis*, as it performs the very same function (see *DA* 425a15-16; *DA* 425a26-29); (2) Common sense is a by-product of the actualization of plurality in the world, as the innumerable perspectives of others assure that persons perceive one and the same object in the same "context" (Arendt, "Thinking," *The Life of the Mind*, 52); and (3) It establishes "the *sensation* of reality" (Ibid., 50).



representative thinking. Instead, consciousness is a form of thinking that exists as ‘sheer activity.’ It is the constant stream of consciousness that accompanies all thoughts and actions. Consciousness is thus a mental activity that has the potential to spark the activity of representative thinking. It accounts for the universality of the capacity to engage in representative thinking. As Arendt claims:

Thinking in its noncognitive, nonspecialized sense as a natural need of human life, the actualization of the difference given in consciousness, is not a prerogative of the few but an ever-present faculty of everybody.<sup>85</sup>

Here, she clearly has the Socratic two-in-one in mind. As we saw in Chapter Two, leading a transparent dialogue with oneself leads to moral decision-making. It therefore follows that everyone has the capacity to determine for themselves what they think is right and wrong. Arendt makes this clear when she says:

If the ability to tell right from wrong should have anything to do with the ability to think, then we must be able to ‘demand’ its exercise in every sane person no matter how erudite or ignorant, how intelligent or stupid he may prove to be.<sup>86</sup>

While everyone has the capacity for moral decision-making, it only comes to fruition *when* persons converse with themselves. We can therefore conclude that everyone has the ability to enlarge their mentality, as it comprises the second form of representative thinking.

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<sup>85</sup> Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” 187.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

In order actualize the capacity for enlarged mentality, persons must have encountered the actual opinions of others in the world. While Arendt certainly adds an empirical dimension to enlarged mentality, recalling the actual perspectives of others is merely the starting point for enlarged mentality. Something someone said might inspire us to think about their opinion further. Or we might not be able to adequately respond to someone's question in the moment. We might need time to think it over. Whatever the case may be, the world initiates enlarged mentality, although it does not take place in it. This follows because one cannot inhabit someone else's actual perspective in their immediate presence. As Arendt says, "[i]n order for us to think about somebody, he must be removed from our presence; so long as we are with him we do not think either of him or about him."<sup>87,88</sup> We cannot think *about* others in the midst of engaging in conversation with them. Instead, sufficient distance must be acquired in order to activate the imagination, and hence recall someone else's perspective.<sup>89</sup>

At the same time, not being able to think about others in their immediate presence does not mean that we cannot hear or contend with them at all. Certainly, we can exchange opinions with others in the world, agree with

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<sup>87</sup> Arendt, "Thinking," *The Life of the Mind*, 78.

<sup>88</sup> Arendt reiterates this when she says: "Before we can raise such questions as What is happiness, what is justice, what is knowledge, and so on, we must have seen happy and unhappy people, witnessed just and unjust deeds, experienced the desire to know and its fulfillment or frustration. Furthermore, we must repeat the direct experience in our minds *after* leaving the scene where it took place" (Ibid., 86-87).

<sup>89</sup> We will see in Chapter Four that Arendt designates "two mental operations in judgment," i.e., the imagination and reflection, as the conditions for the establishment of distance and for contributing toward reaching a standpoint of impartiality (Arendt, *Lectures*, 68).

and challenge them, and vice versa. However, the point is that we cannot *inhabit* the perspectives of others when they are standing before us. This is the case because enlarged mentality also involves seeing someone else's perspective from multiple sides. Fully understanding something or someone's point of view requires the ability to see it from several sides. As Arendt explains, "insight into a political issue means nothing other than the greatest possible overview of all the possible standpoints and viewpoints from which an issue can be seen and judged."<sup>90</sup> Engendering multiple perspectives within ourselves allows us to consider someone else's point of view from multiple sides. This is the case because it creates a hypothetical community that imitates the plurality and publicity of the political world.

Arendt clarifies:

To be sure, it still goes on in isolation, but by the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is *potentially public*, open to all sides ... To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting.<sup>91</sup>

Imagining several different perspectives thus allows persons to fully consider a previously encountered perspective. I can put myself in someone else's place and walk through their line of argumentation. What is more, I can question them from my own perspective or other perspectives I have encountered before. By going back and forth with my

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<sup>90</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 168.

<sup>91</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 43; emphasis added.

imagined conversation partners, I can augment or alter the perspectives of others, or entertain further possibilities of how the conversation *could* have gone *if* I had responded otherwise.

For Arendt, the moment hypothetical responses and reactions are invented is when the imagination becomes productive. Although imaginary perspectives are constructed by the productive imagination, she makes clear that they rely on the reproductive imagination. Arendt explains:

The ability to create fictive entities *in* your mind, such as the unicorn and the centaur, or the fictitious characters of a story, an ability usually called *productive* imagination, is actually entirely dependent upon the so-called reproductive imagination; in ‘productive’ imagination, elements from the visible world are rearranged, and this is possible because the elements, now so feely handled, have already gone through the de-sensing process of thinking.<sup>92</sup>

Fictional debates rest on the sensory input gained from the imagination in the sense that they are pieced together by actual opinions we have already heard before.

However, Arendt re-aligns herself with Kant precisely because the productive imagination accounts for the ability to come up with a *possible* judgment. By stringing together different opinions I have heard before, I can devise a hypothetical judgment I *might* make if I *were* judging from someone else’s point of view. “The judgment I shall come up with,” as Arendt tells us, “will by no means necessarily be the same as” someone

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<sup>92</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 86.

else's.<sup>93</sup> Instead, it serves as an "example" of a judgment someone else could make.<sup>94</sup> While Arendt's starting point of enlarged mentality is different than Kant's, it nevertheless leads to a hypothetical debate in which one establishes the possible judgments of others. Even though her account of enlarged mentality certainly deviates from Kant in the aforementioned ways, she nevertheless stays truer to him than it seems.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that it is more consistent with Arendt's thought to conceive of enlarged mentality as a reflective activity, rather than a public one. This exempts her of the charge that she misappropriates reflective judgment by empiricizing enlarged mentality. By comparing and contrasting Arendt and Kant's conceptions of enlarged mentality, I showed that she remains truer to him than it seems.

In the next chapter, I wish to show that Arendt can turn to reflective judgment for the impartiality required for political judgment. Since she did not have the opportunity to develop her conception of political judgment, it is unclear how all of the reflective elements establish impartiality. However, Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that she would have followed Kant. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant will allow me to show that the impartiality of political judgment is obtained

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<sup>93</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 140. Here, Arendt gives the same of a "slum-dweller" in order to shed light on the fact that enlarged mentality does not involve empathizing with their "poverty and misery" (Ibid.). Furthermore, she claims that the possible judgment one entertains becomes "an outstanding example for my further judging of these matters" (Ibid.).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

analogously to the impartiality of reflective judgment. This will lead me to three conclusions: (1) She does not consider enlarged mentality as a moral ability. Instead, it is an unpolitical activity that leads into the formulation of political judgments. (2) The two mental operations of judgment are analogous to the harmony of the cognitive powers. (3) The pleasure in reflection is the standard for creating an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule by which to judge political events. Comparing Arendt to Kant in these ways will shed light on her own conception of political judgment.

## Chapter Four

### Impartiality

*Never am I less alone than when I am by myself, never am I more active than when I do nothing.*

– Cato<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to show that Arendt can turn to reflective judgment for the impartiality required for political judgment. She indicates that four requirements must be met, namely, enlarged mentality, the “two mental operations in judgment,”<sup>2</sup> the establishment of an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule, and public discourse. This chapter will analyze the first three reflective elements.<sup>3</sup> Since Arendt could not complete her theory of political judgment, it is unclear how these four components work together. This leads Kateb to the conclusion that it remains a question how impartiality is achieved.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, by bringing Arendt closer to Kant, I wish to demonstrate that each element contributes to the establishment of impartiality. This analysis will lead me to three conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Hannah Arendt, “Postscriptum to Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 216.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 68.

<sup>3</sup> In Chapter Five, we will see that Arendt empiricizes Kant’s notion of ‘expecting the agreement of others’ (5:214), allowing her to map it onto her own notion of public discourse.

<sup>4</sup> George Kateb, “The Judgment of Arendt,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 128-129; Andrew Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” *Polity* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 173; fn. 23.

First, it justifies the political potential that Arendt attributes to Kant's enlarged mentality. This disproves the common misconception that Arendt appropriates enlarged mentality as a moral ability.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, Beiner and Patrick Riley question the validity of Arendt's interpretation of reflective judgment.<sup>6</sup> This is the case because aesthetic judgments do not lead to the formulation of moral judgments.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, designating enlarged mentality as a moral ability leads Benhabib and Bernstein to the conclusion that it obscures Arendt's own division between morality and politics.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, I wish to argue that it is more in keeping with Arendt's thought to consider enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability that leads to political judgments. Enlarged mentality contributes to achieving impartiality by ensuring the public communicability of our judgments. In doing so, it prepares persons for political participation by giving them the ability to insert themselves into the world.

Second, I disagree with Degryse that the two mental operations of judgment lead Arendt further away from Kant.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, I wish to show

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<sup>5</sup> Beiner (1992); Benhabib (1988; 2003); Bernstein (1986); Degryse (2011); Disch (1993); Garsten (2007); Patrick Riley (1987); Young (2001).

<sup>6</sup> Beiner (1992); Patrick Riley (1987).

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Riley, "Hannah Arendt on Kant, Truth and Politics," *Political Studies* Vol. 35, No. 13 (1987): 384.

<sup>8</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Modern & Political Thought: The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 190; Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," *Political Theory* Vol. 16, No. 1 (February 1988): 44; Richard Bernstein, "Judging – the Actor and the Spectator," *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 233.

<sup>9</sup> Annelies Degryse, "Sensus communis as a foundation for men as political beings: Arendt's reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37(3) (2011): 349. In fact, Degryse sets herself apart from Beiner and Yar by claiming that Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment is justified (Ibid., 348). However, Degryse makes her case by showing that the two mental operations in judgment indicate



that they illuminate Arendt's affinity to Kant. What Arendt and Kant have in common is that reaching impartiality involves obtaining distance from the immediate sensations evoked by the object or event. This leads me to the third conclusion. It seems that Arendt's two mental operations establish a reflective form of pleasure, which can be used as a standard for creating a general rule by which to judge political events. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant thus sheds light on her own conception of political judgment.

## 1. The Political Potential of Reflective Judgment

### *1.1 Enlarged Mentality as a Moral Ability*

In this sub-section, I will first show that Arendt gives credence to the view that she appropriates enlarged mentality as a moral ability. There are three main reasons that lead to this common misconception. The first reason is that Arendt tends to conflate her own terms. Although she labels reflective judgment as a political ability, she frequently discusses it in a moral context. Second, Arendt seems to suggest that enlarged mentality aids in the discrimination between what is morally right and wrong. Third, she appears to imply that enlarged mentality has both moral and political relevance. After exploring these reasons, I will demonstrate that Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that she rather appropriates enlarged mentality as a means for political decision-making. This will lead me to the conclusion that it should be classified as an unpolitical ability that leads to the formulation of political judgments.

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Arendt's deviation from Kant, insofar as she develops her own theory of judgment. In contrast, I believe Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment can be justified by bringing her as close to Kant as possible.

In order to show how Arendt has been misread, I will start by addressing the first reason that leads to the common misconception that she considers reflective judgment as a moral ability. Arendt tends to conflate her own terms. Although she labels reflective judgment as a political ability, she frequently discusses it in a moral context. For example, this leads Beiner to conclude:

Arendt turns to Kant, seeking an account of moral life that recognizes the nonself-evidency of moral propositions yet does not require that we forgo moral judgment altogether. Kant's analysis of taste provides the concepts of communication, intersubjective agreement, and shared judgment that Arendt seeks for the reconstruction of moral horizons.<sup>10</sup>

Arendt certainly gives ample support for this view. While she does not mention reflective judgment by name in the following passage, she certainly implies that there is an analogy between aesthetic and moral judgments. In the same way that reflective judgment is not established by way of universal rules for cognition, she maintains that moral judgment kicks in precisely when the existing codes of conduct have collapsed.

Arendt explains:

Even though we have lost the yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," 112. Benhabib makes the same mistake (see Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 189-190; Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," 39-40).

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Essays in Understanding (1930-1954): Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books), 321.

Since she suggests that the faculty of judgment provides clarity when the reigning moral code proves insufficient, she seems to support the reading that she appropriates aesthetic judgment as a moral ability.

Second, Arendt's insistence that judgment discriminates between right and wrong appears to affirm its moral over its political character. As Bernstein points out, Arendt "increasingly emphasized the moral implications of judging – judging as the ability to say this is *right* and this is *wrong*."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Bernstein and Benhabib both cite the following passage as indication that Arendt uses the categories of right and wrong in a moral sense. Arendt asks:

Is our ability to judge, to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, dependent on our faculty of thought? ... could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such nature that it 'conditions' men against evildoing?<sup>13,14</sup>

According to Bernstein and Benhabib, appropriating reflective judgment as a moral ability contradicts Arendt's own division between morality and

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Judging – the Actor and the Spectator," *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 233.

<sup>13</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 160-161.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Arendt appears to attribute distinguishing between right and wrong in a moral sense to reflective judgment when she says, "[w]e shall be in search of the 'silent sense,' which – when it was dealt with at all – has always, even in Kant, been thought of as 'taste' and therefore as belonging to the realm of aesthetics. In practical and moral matters it was called 'conscience,' and conscience did not judge; it told you, as the divine voice of either God or reason, what to do, what not to do, and what to repent of" (Arendt, "Postscriptum to Thinking," *The Life of the Mind*, 215). In fact, Benhabib uses this passage as proof that Arendt was still concerned with reflective judgment as a moral ability in the later stages of her writing (Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought," 30).

politics.<sup>15</sup> If thinking, which Bernstein and Benhabib take to mean enlarged mentality, aids in the discrimination between what is *morally* right and wrong, then it undermines its political relevance.

Granted, Bernstein and Benhabib presume that Arendt views morality and politics as mutually exclusive. For instance, Benhabib maintains, “Arendt emphasizes harmony as the morally relevant experience, but she regarded plurality as the political principle par excellence.”<sup>16</sup> What Benhabib homes in on is the difference between moral and political decision-making. Moral decision-making fundamentally concerns the need to live with *oneself*, whereas political decision-making fundamentally concerns ‘the need to live together with *others*.’<sup>17</sup> Arendt appears to confirm this when she states, “in the center of moral consideration of human conduct stands the self ... in the center of political considerations of conduct stands the world.”<sup>18</sup> As I indicated in Chapter Two, the division between morality and politics is not as stark as it seems, as I made the case that moral decision-making has indirect ‘political implications.’ I will return to this point in the next sub-section when I tease out the distinction between moral and political judgments.

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<sup>15</sup> See also Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 190-191; 192; 196-197.

<sup>16</sup> Benhabib, “Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt’s Thought,” 44.

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 246.

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Collective Responsibility,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 153.

Third, Arendt's suggestion that enlarged mentality has moral relevance has led others, such as Beiner and Riley, to question the accuracy of Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment. For example, Arendt claims:

It is this capacity for an 'enlarged mentality' that enables men to judge; as such, it was discovered by Kant in the first part of his *Critique of Judgment*, though he did not recognize the political and moral implications of his discovery.<sup>19</sup>

Indicating that enlarged mentality has moral relevance appears to break with Kant. Precisely because, for Kant, aesthetic judgments do not lead to the establishment of moral judgments. The main reason why Kant excludes this possibility is because aesthetic judgments are formed without the application of universal rules.

In contrast, moral judgments are established by subsuming subjective, personal maxims under a universal formula (moral law) given by practical reason (4:404).<sup>20</sup> With personal maxims, Kant has in mind subjective, practical guidelines that we abide by in our own lives (4:421; fn. 9). These maxims are only subjectively valid, meaning that they hold for oneself. However, personal maxims can only become moral judgments if they are objectively valid, meaning if they hold for oneself and for everyone else (4:429). Kant sets the law of universality as the condition for determining

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<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," *Between Past and Future* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2006), 237.

<sup>20</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993). All citations from the *Groundwork* will be from the Ellington translation. For a longer explanation of Kant's moral law and Arendt's rejection of it, see Chapter Two, Section 2: 2.2 *Conscience*; fn. 150.

the objective validity of moral judgments.<sup>21</sup> It states: “I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law” (4:402).<sup>22,23</sup> For example, I cannot universalize my personal maxim, ‘It is right to steal.’ Otherwise, I not only give myself license to steal from others, but I also give others license to steal from me. However, I could universalize the maxim, ‘It is wrong to murder,’ because it is universally valid for all. It not only protects persons from the murderous incentives of others, but it also keeps the fabric of society intact. This goes to show that moral judgments are established by subsuming personal maxims under a universal rule. Since aesthetic judgments are shaped entirely differently, they cannot lead into the formulation of moral judgments, as Arendt claims.<sup>24</sup>

While Arendt’s own inconsistencies certainly support the aforementioned readings and criticisms, I believe her critics are also liable for misreading Arendt. On the one hand, she gives us enough indication to conclude that

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<sup>21</sup> In total, there are three formulations of the moral law, the second and third are derived from the first. The first is called the law of universality (cited above). The second is called the law of humanity, which is grounded in respect for the dignity of persons. It states: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means” (4:429). The third formulation is called the kingdom of ends. It is grounded in the notion of self-legislation, i.e., creating moral laws that hold for oneself and everyone else. It states: “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law” (4:431); or “the principle that every human will as a will that legislates universal laws in all its maxims” (4:432).

<sup>22</sup> For an excellent account of the law of universality, see Christine M. Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 66, nos. 1&2 (1986): 22-47.

<sup>23</sup> While the law of universality gives the “form of the action” (4:416), i.e., universality, duty gives the action its “content” (4:425). This means that moral actions must also be committed from the proper motive, i.e., “out of respect for the [moral] law” (4:400).

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Bernstein makes a similar point as Beiner and Riley when he claims, “Arendt knew well that, even though she invokes the name of Kant, she was radically departing from Kant” (Bernstein, “Judging – the Actor and the Spectator,” 232). Precisely because “[t]here is no question in Kant that the ‘ability to right from wrong’ is a matter of practical reason and *not* the faculty of reflective judgment” (Ibid., 232-233).

she reads Kant correctly, insofar as aesthetic judgments do not lead into moral judgments. The two passages I have in mind are from her *Lectures*.

Right at the end of her first lecture, Arendt asserts:

Kant had discovered an entirely new human faculty, namely, judgment; but, at the same time, he withdrew moral propositions from the competence of this new faculty. In other words: it is now more than taste that will decide about the beautiful and the ugly; but the question of right and wrong is to be decided by neither taste nor judgment but by reason alone.<sup>25</sup>

This statement proves that she is cognizant of the fact that moral actions are determined by practical reason, not by the harmony of the cognitive powers.<sup>26</sup> The second passage confirms that Arendt correctly identifies the difference between moral and aesthetic judgments. At the beginning of her last lecture, she maintains, “Kant does not believe that moral judgments are the product of the reflection and imagination, hence they are not judgments strictly speaking.”<sup>27</sup> We can therefore reject Beiner and Riley’s claim that Arendt incorrectly links aesthetic to moral judgment.

On the other hand, Arendt gives us enough indication to conclude that she does not appropriate enlarged mentality as a moral ability. As mentioned, she does not always consistently distinguish between the Socratic two-in-

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<sup>25</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 10. See also (Ibid., 15).

<sup>26</sup> In fact, what supports the view that Arendt considers enlarged mentality as a moral ability is that she claims Kant was wrong to exclude the possibility that aesthetic judgments can lead to moral judgments. As Michael Denny notes, “[a]lthough Kant withheld questions of right and wrong from the sphere of reflective (esthetic) judgment – moral judgments being rationally compelling for him – Arendt herself was convinced that in doing so he had made a major mistake” (Michael Denny, “The Privilege of Ourselves: Hannah Arendt on Judgment,” *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Political World*, ed. Melvyn A Hill (New York: St. Martin’s University Press, 1979), 266. Denny references his personal notes that he took during Arendt’s lectures on Kant’s *Third Critique* (Ibid., 266; fn. 25).

<sup>27</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 72.

one and enlarged mentality. However, in the earlier passage cited by Benhabib and Bernstein, Arendt is clear that she has the two-in-one in mind. This leads me to believe that Benhabib and Bernstein conflate Arendt's two forms of representative thinking with each other.<sup>28</sup> To quote Arendt at length:

Is our ability to judge, to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, dependent on our faculty of thought? Do the inability to think and disastrous failure of what we commonly call conscience coincide? ... could the activity of thinking as such, the habit of examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results, could this activity be of such nature that it 'conditions' men against evildoing? (The very world *con-science*, at any rate, points in this direction insofar as it means 'to know with and by myself,' a kind of knowledge that is actualized in every thinking process).<sup>29</sup>

It is evident that Arendt assigns the Socratic two-in-one with the task of discriminating between what is morally right and wrong. This squares with what I showed in Chapter Two. We can therefore reject Benhabib and Bernstein's claim that appropriating enlarged mentality as a moral ability breaks with Arendt's own distinction between morality and politics.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In fact, Garsten is also liable for conflating these two forms of representative thinking. While he correctly attributes the achievement of intersubjective validity to enlarged mentality, he incorrectly associates it with moral decision-making. Garsten maintains, "[t]he intersubjective point of view grounds moral judgments that are not based on a definite set of reasons or rules and yet are also not inscrutable to others. It arises from imagining ourselves in the place of others and seeking judgments that these imagined others could accept" (Bryan Garsten, "The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* Vol. 74, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1086). As he continues, "this means that one's moral judgments depend on the imagined community of people with whom one shares particular understandings of particular cases" (Ibid.).

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 160-161.

<sup>30</sup> In fact, since Arendt does not appropriate enlarged mentality as a moral ability, we can also reject Dostal's claim that Arendt should have turned to Kant's moral philosophy instead to develop her theory of judgment (Robert J. Dostal, "Judging Human Action: Arendt's Appropriation of Kant," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (June, 1984), 734).



We will see in the next sub-section that separating these two forms of representative thinking maintains Arendt's distinction between moral and political judgments.<sup>31</sup> It is more consistent with her own thought to associate the Socratic two-in-one with the formulation of moral judgments and enlarged mentality with the formulation of political judgments.<sup>32</sup> Since Arendt does not construct a moral theory or a systematic political philosophy, she does not offer a clear-cut definition of moral and political judgments. Therefore, I agree with Bernstein when he says,

what is needed is a discrimination of the different types of judgment such as political judgments, aesthetic judgments, and moral judgments, and historical judgments. At times Arendt does

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<sup>31</sup> Passerin d'Entrèves also picks up on the distinction between moral and political judgments (Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 111). However, he questions the validity of Arendt's turn to Kant because impartiality of aesthetic judgments is reflectively achieved (Ibid., 123-124).

<sup>32</sup> Amando Basurto distinguishes between moral and political judgments by separating the Socratic two-in-one and enlarged mentality. However, he undermines the political nature of the latter by claiming that political judgments necessarily have an ethical dimension (Amando Basurto, "Hannah Arendt's Kantian Socrates: Moral and Political Judging," *Teoria politica* Vol. 6 (2016): 315-334). In contrast, I believe that Arendt's distinction between these two types of judgments needs to be upheld sharply in order to uphold her own phenomenological essentialism.

speaking in such a manner, but nowhere does she ever try to provide us with the *differentia* of the types of judgment.<sup>33,34</sup>

What obscures Arendt's conception of judgments, generally speaking, is that she also does not offer a clear-cut definition of opinion and judgment.

At times, she makes an attempt to distinguish between them. For example, in *On Revolution*, Arendt defines opinion and judgment as distinct mental faculties. She says,

opinion and judgment obviously belong among the faculties of reason, but the point of the matter is that these two, politically most important, rational faculties had been almost entirely neglected by the tradition of political as well as philosophical thought.<sup>35</sup>

However, in *The Life of the Mind*, opinion seems to fall away from the mental faculties that comprise the life of the mind, as she limits them to thinking, willing, and judging.

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<sup>33</sup> Bernstein, "Judging – the Actor and the Spectator," 234. Detailing historical judgments exceeds the scope of this project, seeing as the aim is to show that Arendt can rightfully appropriate reflective judgment as a model for political judgment. However, what historical judgments have in common with political judgments is that they are also impartial. This is the case because formulating historical judgments requires assuming a retrospective or spectatorial attitude on human affairs. Historians are thus impartial, insofar as they are not directly involved in shaping human affairs. Instead, by obtaining distance from the world, they are able to perceive it as a whole. Arendt explains, "[t]he spectator is impartial by definition – no part is assigned to him. Hence, withdrawal from direct involvement to a standpoint outside the game is a condition *sine qua non* of all judgment" (Arendt, *Lectures*, 55). In contrast, speakers and actors are always partial precisely because they 'play a part' in actively creating the political world. She claims, "each of the actors knows only his part or, if he should judge from the perspective of acting, only the part of the whole that concerns him. The actor is partial by definition" (Ibid., 68-69). This means that speakers and actors cannot judge impartially precisely because acting and judging are mutually exclusive.

<sup>34</sup> Norris makes a similar point. He claims, "[c]ommon sense thus allows for impartiality, the *sine qua non* of good political judgment" (Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," 173). And in the footnote continues, "Arendt's other criteria of good judgment would probably be best gleaned from a systematic consideration of her own judgments, as she provides, to my knowledge, no extended discussion of what such criteria might be" (Ibid., fn.23).

<sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1990), 231.

Other times, Arendt speaks about opinions and judgments as the by-products of representative thinking. We saw in Chapter Two that conscience is the by-product of the Socratic two-in-one, which serves as an inner compass for moral decision-making. And in Chapter Three, I alluded to the fact that enlarged mentality yields political judgments. This suggests that opinions and judgments are not faculties of the mind, but rather outcomes of the thinking process itself. What complicates matters is that Arendt uses opinion and judgment interchangeably. This will become evident in the quotes provided in this chapter. However, one commonality that opinions and judgments share is that they are intersubjectively achieved. This is consonant with Arendt's attempt to salvage opinion, 'the it-seems-to-me,' from Plato's denigration of opinion to the truth.<sup>36</sup>

Resolving all of these inconsistencies exceeds the scope of this project. To this end, I will refer to opinion and judgment interchangeably, as by-products of representative thinking (and public discourse) that are intersubjectively achieved. For the purposes of this chapter, I will limit my analysis to distinguishing between moral and political judgments. In the following, I wish to take up Bernstein's task. By illuminating Arendt's distinction between the two forms of representative thinking, I will show

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<sup>36</sup> Beiner takes this to show that judgments lead into the formulation of opinions. This implies that opinions are more valid than judgments. He claims, "[h]er aim is to bolster the 'rank and dignity' of opinion. It is judgment that gives opinion its own distinctive dignity, lending it a measure of respectability when it is weighed against truth" (Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures*, 108-109).

that it is more consistent with her own thought to link enlarged mentality to political decision-making. This will lead me to the conclusion that Arendt is correct to attribute political potential to Kant's enlarged mentality.

### *1.2 Public Communicability*

In this sub-section, I will set the Socratic two-in-one apart from enlarged mentality. Elucidating this distinction will serve two purposes. First, associating the former with moral decision-making and the latter with political decision-making maintains a distinction between moral and political judgments. It keeps morality and politics distinct, but it does not make them mutually exclusive. Second, showing that enlarged mentality leads to the formulation of political judgments confirms its political potential. This follows because the hypothetical company of others contributes to the impartiality required for political decision-making. It imbues judgments with a higher degree of intersubjective validity, which makes them publicly communicable. In this way, enlarged mentality directly prepares persons for political participation, insofar as it gives them the ability to insert themselves into the world. This leads me to believe that enlarged mentality provides one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for creating and maintaining the political world.

Although Arendt does not always clearly distinguish between the two forms of representative thinking, there are several passages that indicate an attempt to separate them. In fact, the first passage demonstrates an implicit distinction between moral and political judgments. In "The Crisis

in Culture,” she contrasts the validity of moral judgments with the validity of political judgments. For she says that the validity of reflective judgment rests on a type of:

thinking for which it would not be enough to be in agreement with one’s own self, but which consisted of being able to ‘think in the place of everybody else’ and which he therefore called an ‘enlarged mentality’ (*eine erweiterte Denkungsart*).<sup>37</sup>

Arendt thus implies that the validity of moral judgments rests one’s ability to live with oneself, whereas the validity of political judgments rests on the perspectives of others. Thus, the separation between the two forms of representative thinking could not be clearer. Whereas the two-in-one is responsible for the formulation of moral judgments, enlarged mentality is responsible for the formulation of political judgments.

In fact, the difference between moral and political judgments is affirmed in Arendt’s *Denktagebuch*. In the following note, she reiterates the distinction between these two forms of representative thinking. However, Arendt deepens the distinction by claiming that Kant ‘adds’ to the Socratic two-in-one what it lacks. Namely, the hypothetical company of others, who explicitly direct one’s attention to the political world. Arendt claims:

he adds to the principle of non-contradiction, of being in harmony with oneself, the principle of being in harmony with others – and

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<sup>37</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 20.

this constitutes the greatest step in political philosophy since Socrates.<sup>38</sup>

By including the perspectives of others into one's internal dialogue, Kant's enlarged mentality directs one's attention away from oneself and toward others. Arendt thus suggests that shaping political judgments requires shedding moral self-concern. For example, she claims, "the moral interests of the self are [not] involved here. For judgments of taste, the world is the primary thing, not man, neither man's life nor his self."<sup>39</sup> Arendt makes it sound as though harmonizing one's relationship with the world and harmonizing one's relationship with oneself are mutually exclusive.

While Arendt's language is extreme, she means that inhabiting the perspectives of others requires that persons step outside of the partiality of their own perspective. While fostering the ability to live with oneself cannot be a purely subjective phenomenon, it is still more partial than political decision-making. Even though I take into account how my actions affect the political community, the question remains whether or not *I* can live with myself. In contrast, enlarged mentality entails that persons fully take themselves out of the equation. In this way, it contributes to the impartiality of political decision-making. While Kateb recognizes that obtaining impartiality entails shedding "moral or practical

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<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band (1950-1973)*, hrsg. von Ursula Ludz und Ingeborg Nordmann (München/Berlin: Piper Verlag, 2016) 570; my translation. The original note reads: «Damit fügt er dem Satz des Widerspruchs, der Einstimmigkeit mit sich selbst, den Satz von der Einstimmigkeit mit Anderen hinzu – und das ist in der politischen Philosophie der grösste Schritt seit Sokrates» (Ibid.).

<sup>39</sup> Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 21.

concerns,”<sup>40</sup> he claims that Arendt remains unclear about how enlarged mentality “make[s] impartiality possible.”<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, she is perfectly clear how enlarged mentality establishes impartiality. There are two components.

The first component is putting oneself into someone else’s shoes and testing it from multiple sides. This contributes to obtaining an impartial standpoint precisely because it entails leaving one’s own perspective behind. While the two-in-one involves conversing with oneself as though with another person, the other perspective is really one’s own. Kant’s enlarged mentality thus expands the partiality and minimal intersubjectivity of the two-in-one by ‘adding’ to it the perspectives of others. Since persons begin to prioritize the perspectives of others over their own, they set moral self-concern aside.<sup>42</sup> Arendt believes this is what Kant means when he says, what:

indicates a man with a *broadened way of thinking* [is] if he overrides the private subjective conditions of his judgment ... (which he can determine only by transferring himself to the standpoint of others) (5:295).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> George Kateb, “The Judgment of Arendt,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 129.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Arendt equates self-concern with “idiosyncrasies” (Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” 20). She cites Kant when she explains, “judgment must liberate itself from the ‘subjective private conditions,’ that is, from the idiosyncrasies which naturally determine the outlook of each individual in his privacy” (Ibid.).

<sup>43</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 43. She claims, “[e]nlarged thought is the result of first ‘abstracting from the limitations which contingently attach to our own judgment,’ of disregarding its ‘subjective private conditions ... , by which so many are limited,’ that is, disregarding what we usually call self-interest, which, according to Kant, is not enlightened or capable of enlightenment but is in fact limiting” (Ibid., 43). See also Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 141; and Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 237.

Thinking in the place of others thus expands the partiality of one's internal dialogue because one considers worldly affairs from multiple perspectives, apart from one's own. When I test my opinions against the perspectives of others, my perspective is not partial anymore. As Arendt has it, "my judgment is no longer subjective either, in the sense that I arrive at my conclusions by taking only myself into account."<sup>44</sup>

She thus claims that enlarged mentality sheds self-concern and replaces it with concern for the world. This is the case because one has fully put oneself aside by prioritizing the perspectives of others. This is what Arendt means when she says:

'In Taste egoism is overcome'; that is, we are 'considerate,' in the original meaning of the word. We must overcome our special subjective conditions for the sake of others. In other words, the nonsubjective element in the nonobjective senses is intersubjectivity.<sup>45</sup>

By leaving self-concern behind, persons not only adopt concern for the world, but they also increase the intersubjective validity of their judgments. This leads me to believe that moral judgments are less intersubjectively valid than political judgments. Since moral judgments are established by taking one other perspective into account, we could say that they carry a 'germinal' intersubjective validity.

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<sup>44</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 141.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 67.



In contrast, political judgments carry a higher degree of intersubjective validity precisely because they take multiple perspectives into account. This leads into the second component of achieving impartiality. Arendt must associate the higher degree of intersubjective validity with impartiality. For she states, “[y]ou see that *impartiality* is obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account.”<sup>46</sup> The ‘potentially public’ forum invoked in one’s mind thus imbues judgments with a higher degree of validity. She explains,

the more people’s positions I can make present in my thought and hence take into account in my judgment, the more *representative* it will be. The validity of such judgments would be neither objective and universal nor subjective, depending on personal whim, but intersubjective or representative.<sup>47</sup>

Since enlarged mentality makes judgments ‘more representative’ of the world, Kant ‘adds’ the political potential to the Socratic two-in-one that it lacks. Arendt is clear that the higher degree of intersubjectivity achieved by enlarged mentality also makes judgments publicly communicable. She claims, “[c]ommunicability obviously depends on the enlarged mentality.”<sup>48</sup> This is precisely what distinguishes political from moral judgments. Political judgments are impartial and publicly communicable, and therefore have the potential to uphold public discourse. In contrast, moral judgments are partial and incommunicable, and therefore do not have the potential to uphold public discourse.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>47</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 141.

<sup>48</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 74.

The validity of moral judgments does not have the potential foster public debate because it only rests on one other perspective. As Arendt has it, moral judgments “are legitimate as long as they are only privately held opinions, but which are not fit to enter the market place and lack all validity in the public realm.”<sup>49</sup> This is why moral judgments can only indirectly promote and stabilize the political world. While they underscore words and deeds with thoughtfulness, they cannot contribute to public discourse. Certainly, moral judgments can be discussed with others, but Arendt’s point is that public discussion does not alter their validity. As she says, “[t]hey might be communicated, but this communication is secondary; even if they could not be communicated, they would remain valid.”<sup>50</sup> This is the case because the perspectives of others have no bearing on what *I* can live with. In other words, taking other perspectives into account does not increase the validity of my judgment when it comes to moral decision-making.

In contrast, the validity of political judgments has the potential to foster public debate precisely because it rests on the perspectives of others. This must be what Arendt means when she remarks that enlarged mentality diminishes the subjective validity of one of the Socratic dictums. She maintains:

Only when it comes to these judgments of taste does Kant find a situation in which the Socratic ‘It is better to be at odds with the

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<sup>49</sup> Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” 20.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 70. While this remark is made in regard to Kant’s conception of moral judgments, it still holds true for all moral judgments. For Arendt reduces the validity of all moral decision-making to ‘thinking for oneself,’ which excludes the viewpoints of others.

whole world than, being one, to be at odds with myself' loses some of its validity.<sup>51</sup>

When it comes to political decision-making, it is not preferable to be in disharmony with the world than with oneself. Otherwise, one's judgments do not have the potential to contribute to and sustain public discourse. At the same time, Arendt does not mean to suggest that persons ought to entirely neglect the inner consistency required for maintaining their conscience. This is why she holds that the Socratic dictum 'loses *some* of its validity.' Otherwise, completely setting aside one's internal conversation partner runs the risk of threatening the fabric of the political world.<sup>52</sup> Instead, formulating political judgments simply means that persons temporarily suspend their inner harmony in order to devote their full attention to the political world.<sup>53</sup>

Directing one's full attention toward the political world has the potential to uphold public debate. Precisely because Arendt links public

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<sup>51</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 142. In fact, Arendt reiterates this when she explains: "[b]ut to man insofar as he is a citizen, an acting being concerned with the world and the public welfare rather than with his own well-being ... the Socratic statement is not true at all (Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 241). As she continues, "[t]he disastrous consequences for any community that began in all earnest to follow ethical precepts derived from that man in the singular – be they Socratic or Platonic or Christian – have been frequently pointed out" (Ibid.).

<sup>52</sup> However, sometimes it is necessary to 'sacrifice' our own interests for the sake of the world. As Arendt says, "public interest always demands a sacrifice of individual interests which are determined by life's necessities and by the limited time which is given to mortals" (Hannah Arendt, "Public Rights and Private Interests: In Response to Charles Frankel," *Small Comforts for Hard Times: Humanists on Public Policy*, ed. Michael J. Mooney and Florian Stuber (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 106). However, Arendt must be referring to exceptional circumstances. Otherwise, forsaking one's conscience on a regular basis could not possibly lead to promoting the integrity of the political realm.

<sup>53</sup> I would like to thank Niall Keane for phrasing it in terms of 'suspending' the two-in-one, as it illuminates the fact that enlarged mentality does not forsake maintaining a good conscience.

communicability to the ability to thinking beyond the partiality of one's own viewpoint. As she holds, "[t]he less idiosyncratic one's taste is, the better it can be communicated; communicability is again the touchstone."<sup>54</sup> What Arendt has in mind with public communicability is the ability to make our judgments amenable to others. Others can recognize the validity of our judgments because we have thought things through from their perspective. She alludes to this when she says, "one can communicate only if one is able to think from the other person's standpoint; otherwise one will never meet him, never speak in such a way that he understands."<sup>55</sup> Achieving the public communicability of our judgments thus directly prepares persons for political participation.

Enlarged mentality is thus the non-privative ability that is related the closest to the world. Although the *homo faber* creates the physical conditions for the emergence of the political world, they neither enter into it themselves, nor remain conscious of their political task. Although the Socratic two-in-one underscores 'words and deeds' with thoughtfulness, it indirectly contributes to the emergence and continuity of human affairs. In contrast, enlarged mentality has the most political world-building task of all. Ensuring the public communicability of our judgments makes us 'fit' to 'insert' ourselves into public discourse. Arendt alludes to this when she says, "Kant calls this an 'enlarged mentality,' meaning that without such an agreement man is not fit for civilized intercourse."<sup>56</sup> The political

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<sup>54</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 73.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 140.

potential of enlarged mentality thus lies in its ability to prepare persons for public debate. This leads me to believe that it provides one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of the public realm.

According to Arendt's own thought, it must be the case that both enlarged mentality and public debate create and sustain the political realm.<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, public debate establishes and sustains the political realm because it is an iteration (or better, an outcome) of political speech and action. Discourse is thus synonymous with a plurality of citizens voicing, discussing, and shaping their unique opinions with each other. Arendt frequently likens public debate to the Greek marketplace or *agora* where citizens offer their opinions up to public scrutiny. She explains,

the Greek learned to exchange his own viewpoint, his own 'opinion' – the way the world appeared and opened up to him *δοκει μοι*, 'it appears to me,' from which comes *δοξα*, or 'opinion' – with those of his fellow citizens. Greeks learned to *understand* – not to understand one another as individual persons, but to look upon the same world from another's standpoint, to see the same in very different and frequently opposing aspects.<sup>58</sup>

Gathering with others to discuss common affairs thus creates and sustains the political world. Precisely because a plurality of unique persons question, validate, and probe each other's opinions from all sides. Since

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<sup>57</sup> A more detailed account of Arendt's conception of public debate will be provided in Chapter Five, as it relates to her appropriation of Kant's version of 'anticipated dialogue with others.'

<sup>58</sup> Hannah Arendt, "The Concept of History," *Between Past and Future*, 51; typo in original text corrected.

public discourse is an outcome of speech and action, it actualizes plurality, intersubjectivity, humanity, and reality.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, the emergence of public debate is only possible if persons enlarge their mentality. This means that public debate is only one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of politics. While Arendt claims that “debate constitutes the very essence of political life,”<sup>60</sup> it is dependent upon establishing the public communicability of political judgments. Bernstein therefore goes wrong when he claims that political judgment is “not only the political ability par excellence but *is* a form of *action* – debate – which Arendt takes to be the essence of politics.”<sup>61</sup> At the same time, public debate is needed to bring the impartiality of political judgments to fruition. As Arendt says, “their validity depends upon free agreement and consent; they are arrived at by discursive, representative thinking; and they are communicated by means of persuasion and discussion.”<sup>62</sup> Political judgments must be reflectively *and* publicly shaped.

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<sup>59</sup> We can tease out three different levels of validity in Arendt’s thought, each corresponding to the number of perspectives one takes into account. The validity gained from the Socratic two-in-one is ‘germinal’ or minimal; that of imagining the perspectives of others is enlarged; and that of public discourse is ‘actualized.’ We can therefore read validity on a spectrum from least to most valid. While I suggest that these distinctions can be made, it does not imply that one form of validity is more significant than the other. Instead, each has its own particular function that is essential for the practice of representative thinking and for the promotion of the political world.

<sup>60</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 236-237.

<sup>61</sup> Bernstein, “Judging – the Actor and the Spectator,” 231.

<sup>62</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 243. The role of persuasion in public discourse will be broached in Chapter Five.

The impartiality of political judgments equally hinges on enlarged mentality and public discourse. For the simple fact that enlarged mentality is a limited ability. It can never fully actualize impartiality precisely because it is impossible to foresee, recall, and invent unlimited perspectives on one's own. As Arendt says, "while I take into account others in rendering my judgment, these others do not include everybody."<sup>63</sup> The actual company of others thus supplements the imagined company of others. When persons enter into the world, they are confronted with a plurality of new and unexpected opinions that they never could have imagined on their own. Exposing one's judgments to a 'truly public' forum thus increases their validity. Precisely because newly encountered opinions challenge us to think even further outside of our own standpoint. This is what Arendt means when she says, "the greater the reach, the larger the realm, the more 'general' will be our thinking."<sup>64</sup>

It is more consistent with Arendt's thought to consider enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability that leads to the formulation of political judgments. This confirms her claim that Kant's enlarged mentality has political potential. It provides one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the formulation of political judgments, and hence for the emergence and maintenance of the political world. In the next section, I

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<sup>63</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy, 141. We saw in Chapter Three that Arendt makes this remark in regard to the limitations of Kant's enlarged mentality. However, it applies to her conception of enlarged mentality as well, seeing as it is impossible to foresee or invent the true plurality of perspectives that arise in the world.

<sup>64</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 43.

will show that Arendt continues to follow Kant by setting the ‘two mental operations in judgment’ for achieving an impartial standpoint.

## 2. Arendt’s Political Judgment

### 2.1 *The ‘Two Mental Operations in Judging’*

While Degryse believes that the two mental operations of judgment confirm Arendt’s departure from Kant toward a more general theory of judgment, I believe they rather show Arendt’s affinity to Kant. Therefore, I disagree with Degryse that Arendt extracts reflective judgment from its aesthetic context, and uses it as a jumping off point to develop “her own, idiosyncratic”<sup>65</sup> reading of Kant. Instead, the two mental operations of judgment show that Arendt aligns herself with Kant, insofar as they contribute to the obtainment of an impartial standpoint. Certainly, there are differences between Arendt’s and Kant’s account. For one, the mental faculties that Arendt designates for shaping political judgments differ from those that Kant sets for shaping aesthetic judgments. However, what they hold in common is that impartiality is achieved by obtaining distance from the immediate sensations evoked by the object or worldly event. She thus takes her lead from Kant, insofar as distance-taking gives rise to a reflective and impartial form of pleasure. This leads me to believe that reflective judgment is a fitting model for the formulation of political judgments.

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<sup>65</sup> Degryse, “*Sensus communis* as a foundation for men as political beings,” 348.



In her *Lectures*, Arendt sets the imagination and reflection as the two mental operations responsible for contributing to a standpoint of impartiality. Admittedly, it is difficult to tell where her exegesis of reflective judgment begins and where her own account of political judgment ends. However, what is clear is that Arendt maps the impartial pleasure established by aesthetic judgments onto the formulation of political judgements. What appeals to her is that the pleasure is impartial because it refers to the mental process of judging itself, as opposed to the immediate sensations sparked by the object. Arendt thus takes her lead from Kant by distinguishing between two types of pleasure involved in the judging process. The first type of pleasure is subjective and partial because it pertains to the immediate feeling sparked by the object. The second type is objective and impartial because it refers to the activity of judging itself. This goes to show that formulating political judgments requires shedding oneself of the partiality associated with immediate reactions to worldly events.

In order to illuminate Arendt's affinity to Kant, it is necessary to first detail the difference between the immediate pleasure he associates with 'the agreeable' (5:205-206) and the reflective pleasure he associates with judging beauty. The former is partial because it is a sensation that is felt directly toward the object. As he says, "I have referred the existence of the object to my state insofar as that state is affected by such an object" (5:207). This form of pleasure is purely relative because it is a "feeling" (5:206) evoked by the object. For instance, the statement, 'I like the smell

of this tulip,' is partial and subjectively valid. I take "an interest in the object" (5:207) because the smell of the tulip sparks a sensation of enjoyment or "desire" (5:207).

Kant maintains that statements regarding the agreeable are not proper judgments at all.<sup>66</sup> This is the case because they neither establish objective features nor aesthetic qualities of objects. Since statements regarding the agreeable are merely the result of "*subjective* sensation" (5:206), they are neither shaped by determinate concepts nor the harmony of the cognitive powers. As a result, statements regarding the agreeable are only subjectively valid. Since they are not formed on common cognitive grounds, they are neither objectively nor generally valid. Instead, all statements regarding the agreeable express is: "It is agreeable to *me*" (5:212).

In contrast, the pleasure felt toward the beautiful is impartial precisely because it is not felt directly toward the object. Since it is a "a non-cognitive state of mind,"<sup>67</sup> it is distinct from sensation. Therefore, the judgment, 'This tulip is beautiful,' is not based on how the tulip makes me feel in sensation. I do not judge it to be beautiful because I experience delight in its lovely scent. Instead, I judge it with "pure disinterested

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<sup>66</sup> To be more precise, Pluhar explains that judgments regarding the agreeable are aesthetic judgments. However, they are not pure aesthetic reflective judgments. Instead, they "are aesthetic judgments of sense" (Pluhar, "Translator's Introduction," lv).

<sup>67</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law: Kant on the Free Play of Imagination and Understanding," *Philosophical Topics* Vol, 25, No. 1 Aesthetics (Spring 1997): 40.

liking” (5:205) because I experience pleasure in my mental state of harmony. As Kant explains:

Everyone has to admit that if a judgment of beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least biased in favor of the thing’s existence, but must be wholly indifferent about it (5:205).

Even though the pleasure in reflection rests on subjective conditions, we saw in Chapter Three that they are not merely subjectively valid. Instead, since it arises from a cognitive process that is the same in every subject, it has a general or exemplary validity, insofar as it exemplifies a judgment that others could make as well.

Now that we have seen Kant’s distinction between partial and impartial pleasure, we can see how Arendt takes her lead from him. Three parallels can be drawn. The first parallel is that she also defines the immediate sensations sparked by an object or worldly event as partial. Precisely because they are felt directly toward the object or event. She follows Kant in the sense that this form of pleasure merely constitutes “inner sensations,”<sup>68</sup> insofar as they refer to how the object immediately makes one feel. Arendt says:

These sensations are *subjective* because the very objectivity of the seen or heard or touched thing is annihilated in them or at least is not present; they are *inner* senses because the food we taste is inside ourselves, and so, in a way, is the smell of the rose.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 64.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

For Arendt, immediate sensations cannot be impartial or objective because objectivity is intersubjectively achieved by representative thinking and public debate. Sensations are therefore subjective and “entirely private”<sup>70</sup> because they only pertain to *me*. This leads into the second point that Kant and Arendt have in common. Namely, the subjectivity of sensation merely gives rise to private and partial feelings, and nothing more.

For Arendt, feelings cannot establish mental representations or political judgments because their immediacy actively prevents reflection. She indicates this when she says, “the it-pleases-or-displeases-me ... is immediate, unmediated by any thought or reflection.”<sup>71</sup> Being locked in the overwhelmingness of the reaction prevents the imagination from de-sensing and recalling the object as a mental representation. Therefore, distance must be taken from the immediate response in order to reflect on it and subsequently judge it. Arendt makes this clear when she says, it entails “the withdrawal from involvement and from the partiality of immediate interests that in one way or another make me part of the real world.”<sup>72</sup> For her, the combined effort of the reproductive imagination and reflection contribute to the obtainment of impartiality. She thus appears to deviate from Kant by making different mental faculties

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 66. She continues, “(You can recognize the smell of a rose or the taste of a particular dish if you sense it again, but in the absence of the rose or the food you cannot have it present as you can any sight you have ever seen or any melody you have every heard, even though they are absent; in other words, these are senses that cannot be represented)” (Ibid.).

<sup>72</sup> Arendt, “Thinking,” *The Life of the Mind*, 92.

responsible for achieving impartiality. However, she remains true to him, insofar as the pleasure associated with formulating political judgments is not felt toward the object, but rather toward the mental process of judging itself. The imagination and reflection thus achieve an impartial standpoint from which to judge the object by acquiring distance from the immediate response.

The mental operation of the imagination initiates obtaining distance from the immediacy of worldly events. We saw in the previous chapter that, for Arendt, the reproductive imagination recalls previously perceived objects or events back to mind. In this way, recalling the object allows us to dissociate ourselves from the immediacy and partiality of our initial sensations. This is the case because we direct our attention toward the mental representation of the object, as opposed to how it made us feel. As Arendt explains, the imagination “transforms an object into something I do not have to be directly confronted with but that I have in some sense internalized, so that I can be affected by it as though it were given to be by a nonobjective sense.”<sup>73</sup> By calling the object back to mind, the imagination paves the way for the second mental operation of reflection. As she says, “now the imagination has prepared it so that I can reflect on it.”<sup>74</sup> We can now think *about* the object without being clouded by the subjectivity of sensation.

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<sup>73</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 66-67.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

The activity of reflection constitutes the moment when proper political judgments are formed. Arendt claims, “this second operation – the operation of reflection – is the actual activity of judging something.”<sup>75</sup>

This is the case because we are no longer affected by our immediate reaction. Reflecting on one’s initial response allows one to become ‘unaffected’ by it, insofar as one judges it from an outsider’s perspective.

She explains:

Private conditions condition us; imagination and reflection enable us to *liberate* ourselves from them and to attain that relative impartiality that is the specific virtue of judgment.<sup>76</sup>

In particular, the act of judging involves making an impartial decision about whether or not to approve of one’s initial reaction. Arendt refers to this process as “approbation and disapprobation.”<sup>77</sup> For example, someone’s immediate response to a politically incorrect joke might have been laughing at it. Recalling the joke as a mental representation allows them to gain distance from their immediate reaction. Now they can reflect on it and decide whether or not it was appropriate for them to have laughed at it. The process of approbation and disapprobation yields political judgments precisely because persons impartially assess the worldly event itself, as opposed to how it made them feel. As Arendt says, this is when persons “[evaluate] something in its proper worth,”<sup>78</sup> that is,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 67.

as “right or wrong, important or irrelevant, beautiful or ugly, or something in between.”<sup>79</sup>

The third parallel between Arendt and Kant is that the process of approbation and disapprobation gives rise to a second form of pleasure. She observes, “[t]he very act of approbation pleases, the very act of disapprobation displeases.”<sup>80</sup> This second moment of pleasure is impartial precisely because it is not felt toward the object, but rather toward the mental process of discrimination itself. As Arendt says,

only later, in reflecting on it, when you are no longer busy doing whatever you were doing, will you be able to have this additional ‘pleasure’: of *approving* it. In this additional pleasure it is no longer the object that pleases but *that* we judge it to be pleasing.<sup>81</sup>

We can see that the pleasure involved in judging politically, for Arendt, is also devoid of interest, that is, in the object and the way it makes one immediately feel. In order to establish political judgments, one must be completely free of self-interest, whether that is in reference to the initial feelings sparked by a worldly event, moral self-concern, or the necessities of life. She maintains:

we must first be free to establish a certain distance between ourselves and the object ... This distance cannot arise unless we are in a position to forget ourselves, the cares and interests and urges of our lives, so that we will not seize what we admire but let it be as it is, in its appearance. This attitude of disinterested joy (to use the Kantian term, *uninteressiertes Wohlgefallen*) can be experienced only after the needs of the living organism have been

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

provided for, so that, released from life's necessity, men may be free for the world.<sup>82</sup>

Any form of self-interest actively prevents the activity of judging, as it draws persons away from the world.

It thus becomes clear that the two mental operations of judgment bring Arendt undeniably close to Kant. We will see in the following sub-section that another parallel can be drawn between Arendt and Kant. Namely, the 'pleasure in reflection' functions as the guideline by which persons create their own, non-subsumptive rule by which to judge an object or worldly event. Again, Arendt does not perfectly align herself with Kant. However, teasing out this last comparison will not only illuminate that the reflective nature of aesthetic judgment helps obtain the impartiality necessary for political decision-making. But it will also shed light on potential connections between the three reflective aspects that Arendt sets for the formulation of political judgments.

## *2.2 General Validity*

It is unclear how the reflective aspects of formulating political judgments are connected.<sup>83</sup> While we can never know how she intended to weave them together, I propose two possible connections that are consistent with her thought. The first offers a potential connection that Arendt could have made between enlarged mentality and the two mental operations. Namely, the distance achieved by the two mental operations prevents persons from

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<sup>82</sup> Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 12-13.

<sup>83</sup> Kateb, "The Judgment of Arendt," 128.



slipping into a standpoint of partiality when they enlarge their mentality. The second connection proposes a link between the two mental operations and the establishment of an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule by which to judge a particular object or event. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant in this regard offers insight into Arendt's conception of political judgment. Namely, persons employ the pleasure in reflection as a standard for establishing a non-subsumptive rule by which to judge a particular object.

The first connection I propose is between Arendt's enlarged mentality and the two mental operations of judgment. It seems that the two mental operations are involved in enlarged mentality. First, the imagination recalls a previously heard opinion back to mind in the form of a mental representation. In doing so, it establishes distance from one's immediate reaction to the previously encountered opinion. The imagination thus prevents persons from becoming swept away by their initial reactions to others. It also prevents persons from identifying with how others *feel*. Arendt is clear that thinking in the place of others does not involve taking their feelings into account. She thus distinguishes enlarged mentality from empathy, that is, relating to and understanding someone's emotional state. Arendt explains, it "does not consist in an enormously enlarged empathy through which one can know what actually goes on in the mind of all others."<sup>84</sup> Otherwise, imagining how others feel eclipses the distance and impartiality necessary for political decision-making.

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<sup>84</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 43.

For Arendt, enlarged mentality does not involve empathizing with others because Arendt defines emotions as anti-political. Imagining how others feel prevents political decision-making, and thereby destroys the political world. This is the case because emotions bind persons too closely together. In fact, this is precisely why she is critical of grounding political movements on the feeling of pity. As we saw in Chapter Two, Arendt criticizes the French revolutionaries for acting out of “the capacity to suffer with the ‘immense class of the poor.’”<sup>85</sup> Being moved to act on the basis of pity destroys the necessary distance to uphold human affairs, insofar as it brings persons too close to the suffering of others. Arendt thus defines pity “as an emotion or sentiment,”<sup>86</sup> which causes one to feel sorry for others “without being touched in the flesh.”<sup>87</sup> Although her definition of pity sounds as though it is entirely impartial, it is quite the opposite.

Pity prevents one from being affected by the suffering of others because its “boundlessness”<sup>88</sup> causes persons to become swept away with emotion. It therefore destroys the distance and impartiality necessary for political decision-making. Pity, as Arendt claims,

abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

The boundlessness of pity thus prevents persons from impartially reflecting on the opinions of others. Instead of assessing the validity of their opinions, one gets lost in the overwhelmingness of the pain and suffering of others. The imagination and reflection thus reinforce the impartiality required for enlarged mentality.

The second connection I propose provides a possible relation between the two mental operations of judgment and the establishment of a non-subsumptive rule. In one sense, this brings Arendt strikingly close to Kant. For both, the finalization of an autonomous, non-subsumptive rule is achieved by ‘expecting others to agree’ with the pleasure one feels in reflection (5:214). In another sense, this appears to bring Arendt further away from Kant. This is the case because Kant limits the ‘anticipated agreement of others’ to the conditions for the possibility of communicating judgments of taste with others. In contrast, Arendt expands ‘anticipated dialogue with others’ to the public activity of garnering the assent of others living in a shared world. The present analysis will limit itself to the first point of comparison. The aim is to account for a possible connection between the two mental operations of judgment and the establishment of a generally valid yet non-subsumptive rule. The next chapter will show that Arendt’s deviation from Kant is justified, and in fact, brings her closer to him than it would seem.

In order to show how Arendt might have linked the two mental operations to the establishment of a general rule, it is necessary to turn to Kant’s

conception of general validity. This is the case because she appears to map this process onto his. We saw in Chapter Three that, for Kant, the standard by which to judge the aesthetic quality of an object is the pleasure felt in reflection. It is general in the sense that it can vary from person to person, yet exemplifies a judgment that others could make as well. And it is non-subsumptive in the sense that it does not group similar objects under one and the same class. Instead, its general validity is established by extending the rule from one object to other, similar objects.

Furthermore, the other necessary requirement for the fulfillment of the general validity of reflective judgment is securing the universal communicability of judgments of taste (5:238).<sup>90</sup> It is made possible by *sensus communis* (5:238). Since everyone is capable of feeling the pleasure in reflection, everyone is capable of communicating their judgments with others. Kant makes this clear when he says, “what is specific to the quality of such a sensation should be universally [*durchgängig*] communicable in a uniform way is on the assumption that everyone’s sense is like our own” (5:291).<sup>91</sup> The pleasure felt in reflection thus sets the conditions for the possibility of communicating aesthetic judgments. Kant envisions ‘anticipated dialogue with others’ as a theoretical process that takes place in the interiority of the mind.

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<sup>90</sup> For Kant, universal communicability is distinct from Arendt’s conception of public communicability. Whereas the former is established by ‘expecting the agreement of others,’ the latter is established by Arendt’s version of enlarged mentality.

<sup>91</sup> Kant explains in more detail: “[t]his pleasure must of necessity rest on the same conditions in everyone, because they are subjective conditions for the possibility of cognition as such, and because the proportion between these cognitive powers that is required for taste is also required for the sound and common understanding that we may presuppose in everyone” (5:292-293).

‘Anticipated dialogue with others’ means that persons can hypothetically extend the validity of their judgments to others. As Kant says, communicability is “a claim that accounts to no more than this: that the principle of judging validly for everyone from subjective bases is correct” (5:291). Whereas enlarged mentality simply involves thinking from the perspectives of others, ‘expecting the agreement of others’ entails hypothetically ‘demanding’ (5:213) that that others feel the same way (5:285).<sup>92</sup> As Kant says, “[w]e solicit everyone else’s assent because we have a basis for it that is common to all” (5:237). Since persons are “entitled” to assume that others should feel the ‘pleasure in reflection’ (5:292-293), they theoretically can extend the validity of their judgments to others.<sup>93</sup>

Being able to ‘demand’ the special validity of reflective judgment thus carries a normative claim. Its validity “extends its claim to *all* subjects” (5:285), insofar as others *should* recognize one’s judgment as valid. As Ginsborg clarifies:

So if I feel this kind of pleasure when a given object is presented to my senses, I am at the same time aware that everyone else who perceives the object ought to share my state of mind. I am aware,

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<sup>92</sup> More specifically, it is the form of purposiveness that allows persons to ‘expect’ others to feel the same pleasure when judging the beautiful. As Kant explains, “[w]hen the form of an object (rather than what is material in its presentation, viz., in sensation) is judged in mere reflection on it (without regard to a concept that is to be acquired from it) to be the basis of a pleasure in such an object’s presentation, then the presentation of this object is also judged to be connected necessarily with this pleasure, and hence connected with it not merely for the subject apprehending this form but in general for everyone who judges [it]” (5:190).

<sup>93</sup> As Kant claims, “[t]hat is precisely why someone who judges with taste ... is entitled to require ... his liking for the object, from everyone else as well, and is entitled to assume that his feeling is universally communicable” (5:292-293).

that is to say, that all other perceivers of the object ought to experience the same pleasure as I do.<sup>94</sup>

The normative claim of reflective judgment does not mean that “everyone *will feel*” the same pleasure in reflection, and that everyone will arrive at the *same* judgment of taste (5:237). This means that the normative claim that individual aesthetic judgments hold is not absolute. As Kant says, “the *ought* in an aesthetic judgment ... is still uttered only conditionally” (5:237). Instead, the special validity of reflective judgment merely expresses that our judgments *should* appeal to others.<sup>95</sup> For the simple fact that judgments of taste are formed on the same cognitive grounds.

What appeals to Arendt about Kant’s conception of general validity is that it is autonomously achieved. When it comes to aesthetic judgments, persons create their own, non-subsumptive rule without referring to determinate concepts. Analogously, when it comes to the formulation of political judgments, persons create their own, non-subsumptive rule when the reigning standards and norms have collapsed. She therefore deviates from Kant, insofar as political judgment kicks in when the reigning standards and norms no longer suffice to discriminate between right and wrong. However, I will demonstrate that Arendt remains true to the spirit of Kant’s thought in two ways.

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<sup>94</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant on the Subjectivity of Taste,” *Kants Ästhetik*, ed. Herman Parret (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1998), 463.

<sup>95</sup> In particular, what Kant means is that we talk about beauty as though it were an objective feature of objects, although it is not. As he says, one “speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things” (5:213). To assert, “[t]he *thing* is beautiful” (5:213), makes it sound like beauty is an objective feature of the object. However, this is merely a coincidence in the logical structure of the judgment. Instead, what makes it sound as though beauty is an objective feature is that we can ‘expect others to agree’ with our judgments of taste.

First, she draws an implicit comparison between judging according to pre-existing standards and judging according to determinate concepts. While the former are empirical standards and the latter are *a priori* concepts, what she believes they have in common is that they prescribe universal rules under which particular worldly events are subsumed. Arendt thus defines pre-existing standards as ‘prejudices,’ which serve a similar function as the categories.<sup>96</sup> She explains that they are ‘ossified’ or fixed standards, insofar as they are “adopted and become, as it were, a means for rendering further judgments.”<sup>97</sup> Judging according to reigning norms does not yield autonomous, non-subsumptive political judgments. Instead, it yields universally valid judgments, insofar as they simply reflect pre-existing standards and norms. As Arendt explains,

judgment means organizing and subsuming the individual and making an orderly assessment by applying standards by which the concrete is identified, and according to which decisions are then made.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> In fact, Arendt adopts Kant’s language by referring to the existing standards and norms as ‘prejudices.’ In Kant’s Enlightenment essay, he defines prejudices as empirically established norms that have been verified and propagated over generations. He thus refers to thinking without prejudices as ‘enlightened thinking;’ as ‘thinking for oneself;’ or as thinking “without the guidance of another” (Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784), ed. Mary J. Gregor, with an Introduction by Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14). While Kant mentions the maxim of thinking for oneself in the *Third Critique*, it does not have to do with formulating aesthetic judgments. Instead, he clarifies that it is a maxim that serves as a guideline for thinking autonomously in general (5:294). For an excellent account of Kant’s Enlightenment essay, see Onora O’Neill, “The Public Use of Reason,” *Political Theory* Vol. 14, No. 4 (Nov., 1986): 523-551.

<sup>97</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Introduction into Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 102.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* While this definition of prejudice is negative, there is a positive application that Arendt attributes to it. Prejudices can, in fact, be useful when persons simply make mundane judgments about every-day life, or in situations when the reigning standards and norms are sufficient to formulate political judgments. Indeed, this is why she claims that the “task of politics” is not “to train people to be unprejudiced or that those who work toward enlightenment are themselves free of prejudice” (*Ibid.*, 99-100). Otherwise, if persons had to question prejudices each and every time they made any kind of judgment, they could not ‘go about their daily lives’ (*Ibid.*, 99). Therefore, Arendt

These are not autonomous political judgments because shaping them does not entail determining for oneself what is right and what is wrong.

The second way in which Arendt stays true to the spirit of Kant's thought is that the formulation of political judgments entails judging independently of prejudices. She alludes to this when she continues:

Judgment can, however, mean something totally different, and indeed it always does when we are confronted with something which we have never seen before and for which there are no standards at our disposal.<sup>99</sup>

Similarly to determining the aesthetic qualities of objects, the mental faculties must operate differently when assessing a worldly event that defies pre-existing standards. Political judgments are not shaped by habitually subsuming worldly events under prejudices, but rather by falling back on our own capacity for discrimination. This must be what Arendt means when she says, "its sole prerequisite is the faculty of judgment, which has for more to do with man's ability to make distinctions than with his ability to organize and subsume."<sup>100</sup>

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concludes: "[m]an cannot live without prejudices, and not only because no human being's intelligence or insight would suffice to form an original judgment about everything on which he is asked to pass judgment in the course of his life, but also because such a total lack of prejudice would require a superhuman alertness" (Ibid., 99). It goes to show that prejudices are only harmful in situations when they are insufficient to judge the particularity of a given worldly event. In these instances, the prejudices themselves should be questioned, and persons should instead create their own rule (Ibid., 101-102).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



What can be gleaned from Arendt's depiction of political judgment is that creating a non-subsumptive rule involves autonomously distinguishing between right and wrong. This leads me to believe that the two mental operations in judgment are involved in establishing a generally valid rule. If she continued to follow Kant, the pleasure in reflection that emerges from the process of approbation and disapprobation would be the general rule by which persons judge particular worldly events. As we saw earlier, Arendt claims that engaging in the operation of reflection is the moment when persons shape political judgments, properly speaking. This is the case because they assess the worldly event itself, as opposed to how it made them feel. If this is the moment when persons distinguish between right and wrong, then it follows that it must yield a generally valid rule. While Arendt did not have the opportunity to fully work out how general rules are shaped, there are two reasons that indicate that she would have continued to follow Kant.

The first reason is that she clearly maps the formulation of genuine political judgments onto the formulation of aesthetic judgments. In "Thinking and Moral Considerations," Arendt explains:

the faculty of judgment, which one may call, with some justification, the most political of man's mental abilities ... is the faculty to judge *particulars* without subsuming them under those general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules.<sup>101</sup>

And in "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," she reiterates:

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<sup>101</sup> Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," 188-189.

only if we were to assume that there exists a human faculty which enables us to judge rationally without being carried away by either emotion or self-interest, and which at the same time functions spontaneously, that is to say, is not bound by standards and rules under which particular cases are subsumed, but on the contrary, produces its own principles by virtue of the judging activity itself; only under this assumption can we risk ourselves on this very slippery moral ground with some hope of finding a firm footing.<sup>102,103</sup>

Unfortunately, Arendt does not say much more about how general rules are shaped. However, what appeals to her is that reflective judgment retains the aesthetic quality of a particular object under a general rule.

The idea is that political judgments do not involve subsuming particular worldly events under a universal rule or class. Therefore, they do not prescribe what is universally right and wrong. Instead, political judgments are individual judgments that determine whether a particular worldly event is right or wrong. They can be used as ‘ideal standards’ by which to judge other, similar events. As Arendt explains:

[Kant] defined judgment as the faculty which always comes into play when we are confronted with particulars; judgment decides about the relation between a particular instance and the general, be the general a rule or a standard or an ideal or some kind of measurement.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, 27.

<sup>103</sup> Arendt claims: “[t]hose few who were still able to tell right from wrong went really only by their own judgments, and they did so freely; there were no rules to be abided by, under which the particular cases with which they were confronted could be subsumed. They had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for unprecedented” (Hannah Arendt, “Postscript,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 294).

<sup>104</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 137.

Political judgments thus exemplify what is right and wrong without forcing others to reach the same conclusions.

Perhaps a further preliminary remark can be made by pointing to another vague passage in “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship.” Arendt implies that shaping generally valid rules should offer general guidelines for action.<sup>105</sup> She alludes to this when she describes political judgment as:

an independent human faculty, unsupported by law and public opinion, that judges anew in full spontaneity every deed and intent whenever the occasion arises. Perhaps we do possess such a faculty and are lawgivers, every single one of us, whenever we act.<sup>106</sup>

Certainly, this passage does not provide a satisfactory answer in terms of how general rules help persons act. However, perhaps a preliminary answer can be gleaned from comparing political judgments to moral judgments. While enlarged mentality and the Socratic two-in-one respond to similar situations, they perform different functions. The latter cannot give rise to guidelines for action because it is a ‘resultless’ and ‘self-destructive’ enterprise. Instead, moral judgments beg the question, ‘Can I live with myself if I harm the world?’ In contrast, perhaps political judgments tell me, ‘This course of action is right because it upholds the integrity of the political community.’

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<sup>105</sup> In Chapter Six, I turn to Arendt’s obscure notion of political principles in order to tease out how they offer general guidelines by which to gauge the validity of political judgments.

<sup>106</sup> Arendt, “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship,” 41. In this context, Arendt refers to the judges who did not have precedent by which to gauge their verdict in the Eichmann trial.

Furthermore, there is a second reason for believing that Arendt would have continued to follow Kant. Namely, ‘expecting the agreement of others’ helps to determine the general validity of political judgments. In fact, Arendt even appears to adopt Kant’s language of ‘expecting the agreement of others.’ For example, she frequently equivocates it with “anticipated dialogue with others”<sup>107</sup> or “potential agreement with others.”<sup>108</sup> However, she deviates from Kant because she defines ‘expecting the agreement of others’ as public discourse.<sup>109</sup> This means that the general validity of political judgments is not obtained by theoretically extending it to others. Instead, it suggests that Arendt maps the universal communicability made possible by reflective judgment onto her own notion of public debate. As we will see in the next chapter, the general validity of political judgments thus comes to fruition when persons discuss their judgments with others in the world.

Despite Arendt’s deviation from Kant, what brings her closer to him is that general validity is connected to the reflective pleasure taken in the mental process of discrimination. For her, public discourse either confirms or denies the reflective pleasure felt toward the mental process of discrimination. She alludes to this when she asks, “[h]ow does one choose between approbation and disapprobation?” And answers, “it is the criterion of communicability or publicness.”<sup>110</sup> While persons reflectively

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<sup>107</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Thoughts on Lessing,” *Men in Dark Times*, (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 10.

<sup>108</sup> Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” 20.

<sup>109</sup> Arendt, “Thoughts on Lessing,” 10.

<sup>110</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 69.

decide whether or not they should agree with their immediate sensations, their decision is either confirmed or denied in the context of public debate.

She explains:

One is not overeager to express joy at the death of a father or feelings of hatred and envy; one will, on the other hand, have no compunctions about announcing that one enjoys doing scientific work, and one will not hide grief at the death of an excellent husband.<sup>111</sup>

Public condemnation confirms that it is inappropriate to approve of the immediate sensations of joy or hatred in the first example; and consolation from others affirms the displeasure felt toward the loss of one's spouse. Persons thus gauge the validity of their choice by comparing and contrasting their judgments against the reactions of others. Although Arendt breaks with Kant by setting public discourse as the standard for discrimination, it shows that the establishment of general validity is actualized by 'expecting' others to agree with the pleasure felt in reflection.

### Conclusion

We have seen that it is more consistent with Arendt's own thought to consider enlarged mentality as an unpolitical ability that leads into political decision-making. This allowed me to justify the political potential she attributes to Kant's enlarged mentality. It contributes to obtaining a standpoint of impartiality, insofar as it establishes the public communicability of judgments. Enlarged mentality thus directly prepares

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 67.

persons for political participation, seeing as it gives them the ability to engage in public discourse. What is more, I showed that enlarged mentality provides one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions of the emergence of the political world.

Furthermore, I showed how Arendt maps the other two reflective elements necessary for the formulation of political judgments onto reflective judgment. First, I demonstrated that Arendt follows Kant by suggesting that the two mental operations establish a reflective and impartial form of pleasure. She therefore aligns herself with him, insofar as the 'pleasure in reflection' is not felt directly toward the object, but rather toward the mental process of judging itself. Second, by following through on Arendt's analogy between aesthetic and political judgment, I showed how she might have accounted for the establishment of a generally valid yet non-subsumptive rule. Namely, she sets 'expecting the agreement of others' as the standard for the mental process of approbation and disapprobation. However, this led me to the conclusion that Arendt appears to break from Kant by conceiving of 'expecting the agreement of others' as a public exercise.

In the next chapter, I wish to argue that Arendt's leap from universal communicability to public discourse is justified. While she breaks with Kant by empiricizing his version of anticipated dialogue with others, she nevertheless remains true to the spirit of his thought. Arendt believes that she brings Kant's notion of general validity to fruition in the way he could

not. I will make my case by demonstrating that the imagination has the potential to bridge the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide. In order to show that this allows Arendt to map universal communicability onto public debate, I will reject the claim that she aestheticizes politics. This will lead me to the conclusion that reflective judgment fosters the kind of understanding that lies at the heart of her conception of politics.

## Chapter Five

### Bridging the *A Priori* – *A Posteriori* Divide

*The fact that Kant's actual political philosophy emerges from the explication of the phenomenon of beauty shows just how much worldly experience outweighed life experience. He too loved the world more than life, which he regarded as rather dull. This is the very reason why he was so rarely understood.*

– Hannah Arendt (2016)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to justify that Arendt can bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way Kant could not. In order for reflective judgment to provide the public element required for the formulation of political judgments, Arendt must depart from Kant by empiricizing his notion of anticipated dialogue with others. However, her deviation from Kant nevertheless remains true to the spirit of his thought. Arendt intimates that Kant could not bridge the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide because he was limited by transcendental principles. However, since Arendt is not limited by transcendental principles, she can bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way he intended. Although Arendt did not have the opportunity to work this out, she indicated a potential plan. Namely, the imagination has the potential to bridge the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, Erster Band, hrsg. von Ursula Ludz und Ingeborg Nordmann, (München/Berlin: Piper Verlag, 2016), 575; my translation. The original note reads: «Die Tatsache, dass Kants eigentliche politische Philosophie aus der Erörterung des Phänomens der Schönheit hervorgeht, zeigt, wie sehr bei ihm die Welterfahrung die Lebenserfahrung überwog. Er liebte auch die Welt erheblich mehr als das Leben, das ihm doch eher lästig war. Dies gerade der Grund, warum er so selten verstanden wurde« (Ibid.).



In order to show that Arendt can map Kant's anticipated dialogue with others onto her own notion of public discourse, I will reject the claim that she aestheticizes politics. Beiner, Bernstein, Jürgen Habermas, and Albrecht Wellmer argue that the subjectivity of reflective judgment does not have the potential to uphold and sustain Arendt's conception of public discourse.<sup>2</sup> The claim is that reflective judgment lacks a cognitive basis, which makes rational discourse impossible.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, I wish to argue that aesthetic judgments do not silence public debate, but rather have the potential to spark and maintain it. Building on Linda Zerilli's account,<sup>4</sup> I will show that reflective judgment is appropriate for achieving the kind of understanding that lies at the heart of Arendt's conception of politics. This will lead me to the conclusion that the imagination has the potential to bridge the non-privative and public realms.

## 1. The Mediating Link

### *1.1 Arendt's 'Empiricization' of Universal Communicability*

The aim of this section is to show that Arendt intentionally empiricizes Kant's notion of anticipated dialogue with others. Her move from universal communicability to public debate is therefore not due to a misreading of Kant, as Norris claims. He argues that she misreads the "universal communicability" [*die allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*] as it is

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<sup>2</sup> Beiner (1992); Bernstein (1983); Jürgen Habermas (1977); Albrecht Wellmer (2001).

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 137; Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 221-222; Jürgen Habermas, "Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research* Vol. 44, No. 1, Hannah Arendt (Spring 1977): 23.

<sup>4</sup> Zerilli (2005).

involved in common sense.”<sup>5</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, Kant conceives of universal communicability as the conditions for the possibility of communicating aesthetic judgments. Since persons are ‘entitled’ to assume that others should share their pleasure in reflection, they theoretically can extend the validity of their judgments to others. However, Arendt appropriates universal communicability as a public phenomenon when she asserts that the pleasure in reflection is either confirmed or denied in the context of public debate. This leads Norris to argue that Arendt “fundamentally misconstrues what Kant means by ‘communicability.’”<sup>6</sup> He thus concludes that her “identification” of setting “‘the criterion of communicability’” for the process of “‘approbation and disapprobation’” “will not hold.”<sup>7</sup>

While Arendt appropriates universal communicability as a public phenomenon, it is clear that her departure from Kant is not due to a misreading of reflective judgment. This is confirmed when she explains, citing Kant, “the sensation of the senses is ‘generally communicable’ because we can assume that everyone has senses like our own.”<sup>8</sup> She is thus aware of the theoretical nature of universal communicability. In fact, Arendt affirms that the general validity of reflective judgment is established by theoretically assuming that others should feel the same pleasure in reflection. She explains:

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” *Polity* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter 1996): 185.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 187-188.

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures*, 69. She does not directly cite Kant, but merely refers to §39: “On the Communicability of a Sensation.”

This *sensus communis* is what judgment appeals to in everyone, and it is this possible appeal that gives judgments their special validity. The it-pleases-or-displeases me, which as a feeling seems so utterly private and noncommunicative, is actually rooted in community sense and is therefore open to communication once it has been transformed by reflection, which takes all others and their feelings into account.<sup>9</sup>

We can be assured that Arendt knows perfectly well that, for Kant, the pleasure taken in the beautiful is not affirmed or denied by publicly contesting our judgments with others. This leads me to believe that Arendt intentionally empiricizes the universal communicability associated with reflective judgment.

Arendt's leap from universal communicability to public discourse does not break with the spirit of Kant's thought. Instead, she bridges the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide in the way he could not, and thereby brings the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition. In her *Denktagebuch*, Arendt claims:

The reason why Kant could not take the step from the *a priori* to the *a posteriori* may lie in the fact that the discovery of judgment goes beyond the *a priori* – *a posteriori* framework. For the general validity of judgment is not *a priori* – does not derive itself from the self – , instead it is dependent on common sense, i.e. the presence of others.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band*, 569-570; my translation. The original note reads: «Der Grund, warum Kant den Schritt vom Apriori zum Aposteriori nicht vollziehen konnte, mag darin liegen, dass die Entdeckung der Urteilskraft das Schema von apriori – aposteriori sprengt. Denn die Allgemeingültigkeit des Urteilens ist nicht apriori – lässt sich nicht aus dem Selbst herleiten – , sondern ist abhängig von dem Gemeinsinn, d.h. der Präsenz der Anderen» (Ibid.).

Arendt does not misread Kant when she declares that the general validity of reflective judgment is not *a priori*. Instead, she criticizes him for overlooking the fact that reflective judgment has the potential to unite both realms. What prevents Kant from actualizing general validity is that he commits himself to transcendental principles. Grounding reflective judgment on *sensus communis* thus prevents him from bridging the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide.

Certainly, it is bold of Arendt to imply that she brings the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way Kant could not. However, her claim that reflective judgment has the potential to unite both realms is not as far-fetched as it sounds. There is a passage in the *Third Critique* where Kant attempts to link universal communicability to empirical sociability. We could read this passage as an effort to bridge both realms. Arendt seems to be on the right track because Kant indicates that communicating and refining judgments of taste occurs in society. He defines sociability as an “empirical interest” (5:296), i.e., our “natural inclination” to live with others in society (5:296).

Kant entertains the idea that reflective judgment can be associated with sociability indirectly (5:296), insofar as communicating them with others refines our taste. As he says,

we judge someone refined if he has the inclination and the skill to communicate his pleasure to others, and if he is not satisfied with an object unless he can feel his liking for it in community with others (5:297).

Refining taste thus involves honing the ability to communicate the pleasure in reflection to others, which can only take place in the world. However, the relationship between honing and communicating aesthetic judgments and empirical sociability can only be indirect. Otherwise, reflective judgment would neither be impartial nor *a priori*. This is the case because it would not be based on the pleasure in reflection, but rather on an empirical desire for living together with others.

Furthermore, Kant provides an example that confirms the indirect link between judgments of taste empirical sociability. He holds:

Someone abandoned on some desolate island would not, just for himself, adorn either his hut or himself; nor would he look for flowers, let alone grow them, to adorn himself with them. Only in society does it occur to him to be, not merely a human being, but one who is also refined in his own way (this is the beginning of civilization) (5:297).

Since beauty and the refinement of taste only plays a role in society, it seems as though Kant has bridged the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide. This leads Arendt to the conclusion that aesthetic judgments are finalized in the context of a human community. As she says, “[t]his is necessary because I am human and cannot live outside the company of men.”<sup>11</sup> However, the problem is that Kant immediately takes back what he says.

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<sup>11</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 67.

Kant subsequently excludes the possibility of the indirect relationship between the communicability of aesthetic judgments and our ‘empirical interest in society.’ He states:

This interest, which we indirectly attach to the beautiful through our inclination to society and which is therefore empirical, is, however, of no importance for us here, since we must concern ourselves only with what may have reference a priori, even if only indirectly, to a judgment of taste (5:297).

Clearly, Kant takes back what he says in order to keep the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment intact. Retracting his statement makes it sound as though Arendt takes empirical sociability out of context.<sup>12</sup> However, recanting the link between universal communicability and empirical sociability could also be read as a failed attempt to unite both realms – precisely because Kant is limited by transcendental principles. Interpreting this passage in this way gives credence to Arendt’s claim that Kant could not bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way he intended.

Since Arendt is not limited by transcendental principles, she can easily fulfill the conditions for the actualization of the general validity of reflective judgment. The way she sought to bridge universal communicability and public debate was by designating the imagination as our connection to the world. Arendt states, citing Karl Jaspers, “Kant’s fundamental problem (Jaspers): [to take the step] from apriori to

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, Beiner and Norris take this to show that reflective judgment does not suit Arendt’s purposes (Beiner, “Interpretive Essay,” 135; Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” 187; fn.58).

aposteriori; its mediating link: faculty of the imagination.”<sup>13</sup> What Kant overlooked was that the imagination makes the public communicability of our judgments possible. Entertaining the perspectives of others thus connects persons to the world by giving them the ability to insert themselves into it. Arendt confirms this when she notes, citing Kant:

Since it is not self-bound reason, but only the imagination that makes it possible ‘to think in the place of others,’ it is not reason, but the imagination that creates the link between persons. Against self-interest, reason, that emerges from the I-think, stands world-interest, that as common sense (passive) and as imagination (active) is sustained by others.<sup>14</sup>

The imagination thus paves the way for the actualization of general validity because it sets the conditions for the possibility of public debate. This is what she means when she maintains that the general validity of reflective judgment does not rest on *a priori* grounds. It equally depends on the hypothetical community that enlarges one’s mentality and public debate. Had Kant realized the political potential of enlarged mentality, he could have brought the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way he intended.

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<sup>13</sup> Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band*, 569; my translation. The original note reads: «Kants Altersproblem (Jaspers): den Schritt vom Apriori zum Aposteriori [zu vollziehen]; sein Zwischenglied: Schema der Einbildungskraft« (Ibid.). Arendt does not cite Jaspers until after the following note on reflective judgment. It is therefore unclear if the above citation, in fact, refers to the subsequent citation: Karl Jaspers, *Die großen Philosophen*, 477, Bd. I (München: Piper, 1957).

<sup>14</sup> Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band*, 570; my translation. Arendt cites Kant (5:294). The original note reads: «Da nun aber nicht die selbst-gebundene Vernunft, sondern nur die Einbildungskraft es möglich macht, «an der Stelle jedes andern [zu] denken«, ist es nicht die Vernunft, sondern die Einbildungskraft, die das Band zwischen den Menschen bildet. Gegen den Selbst-Sinn, die Vernunft, die aus dem Ich-denke lebt, steht der Welt-Sinn, der als Gemein Sinn (passiv) und als Einbildungskraft (aktiv) von den Andern lebt« (Ibid.).

Establishing the imagination as the mediating link between both realms justifies Arendt's empiricization of universal communicability. This is the case because it allows her to follow through on what Kant had set out to achieve himself. As she holds, he himself "hoped it would reach to the community of all mankind."<sup>15</sup> Since Arendt bridges the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide, she can extend Kant's notion of universal communicability from 'ideal judging subjects' to all citizens who inhabit the public realm. While she does not cite the following passage, Kant echoes his intention of extending universal communicability to all. He claims:

The universal communicability of the sensation (of liking or disliking) – a universal communicability that is indeed not based on a concept – [I say that] the broadest possible agreement among all ages and peoples regarding this feeling that accompanies the presentation of certain objects is the empirical criterion [for what is beautiful] (5:232).

By expanding universal communicability to the widest degree possible, Arendt thus fulfills the conditions for the actualization of general validity. Publicly communicating aesthetic judgments with others thus offers them up to a truly public forum, where their validity can be confirmed, denied, and tested by an innumerable plurality of perspectives.

Furthermore, designating the imagination as the mediating link between the two realms sheds light on Arendt's own conception of political judgment. If the imagination is the mediating link between the *a priori* –

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<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 140.



*a posteriori* divide, for Kant, then it must be the mediating link between non-privacy and the public realm, for Arendt. We already saw in Chapter Four that the imagination serves as our connection to the world, insofar as enlarged mentality prepares persons for political participation. However, it also serves as the link from the world back to non-privacy, insofar as it allows us to bring newly encountered opinions back into our internal dialogue. This leads me to believe that the actualization of general validity can only be fully achieved by retreating back into non-privacy. As we saw in Chapter Three, it is impossible to fully incorporate the perspectives of others into our judgments in their immediate presence. Instead, the imagination must recall the opinions of others in order to integrate them into our thought process.

Withdrawing from the world actualizes general validity because persons can only expand the validity of their judgments by enlarging their mentality. The more opinions persons integrate into their judgments, the more intersubjective and the ‘more general’ they become. She holds: “[t]he more people’s standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue ... the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.”<sup>16</sup> Integrating a greater plurality of perspectives yields ‘more valid’ judgments in the sense that the general validity of judgments has been fully realized. This must be what she means when she says, “[b]ut the very quality of an opinion, as of a judgment, depends upon the degree

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<sup>16</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 241.

of its impartiality.”<sup>17</sup> Actualizing general validity is not achieved by taking a certain number of perspectives into account. Instead, it constitutes a continuous process of reformulation and revision, which makes judgments ‘more valid’ each step of the way. Arendt thus indicates that the actualization of general validity is a continuous process that equally hinges on enlarged mentality and public debate.

Extracting universal communicability from its transcendental context thus allows Arendt to bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way Kant could not. The imagination bridges the uncompromising *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide by ensuring the public communicability of our judgments. It also bridges the non-private and public spheres in Arendt’s thought by serving as the mediating link between them. Empiricizing universal communicability thus allows Arendt to map Kant’s notion of anticipated dialogue with others onto her worldly notion of public discourse. However, by using reflective judgment as a model for political judgment, Beiner, Bernstein, Habermas, and Wellmer argue that Arendt ‘aestheticizes’ politics. The basis of their claim is that aesthetic judgments do not have the potential to spark the kind of argumentation that Arendt has in mind. In contrast, I will show that the persuasiveness and non-coerciveness of reflective judgment does, in fact, have the potential to uphold and sustain Arendt’s conception of public discourse.

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<sup>17</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 237.

### 1.2 Arendt's 'Aestheticization' of Politics

By adopting reflective judgment as a model for political judgment, Arendt has been accused of 'aestheticizing' politics. Habermas has sparked this trend in the secondary literature.<sup>18</sup> Beiner, Bernstein, and Wellmer agree with Habermas that Arendt leaves out a "cognitive dimension"<sup>19</sup> when it comes to the formulation of political judgments.<sup>20</sup> This leads Wellmer to conclude that turning to Kant meant that "there was no place in [Arendt's] thought for a broader conception of rationality that allowed her to tie reflective judgment to rational argument."<sup>21</sup> The general validity of reflective judgment lacks a cognitive basis precisely because it is formed on the mental state of pleasure or displeasure. The subjectivity of taste thus appears to preclude the possibility of public discourse because persons cannot appeal to rational proofs to support their opinions.<sup>22</sup>

Although Habermas does not specifically address Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment, he criticizes the seemingly relative nature of Arendt's conception of opinions. Her supposedly misguided turn to Kant can be traced back to her own strict division between knowledge and opinion. Since Arendt separates the two, Habermas maintains that she excludes the possibility of opinions from having "a cognitive

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<sup>18</sup> Bonnie Honig (1993), George Kateb (2001), and Dana Villa (1992) are also proponents of the view that Arendt aestheticizes politics.

<sup>19</sup> Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," 137; Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 221-222.

<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," *Social Research* Vol. 44, No. 1, Hannah Arendt (Spring 1977): 23.

<sup>21</sup> Albrecht Wellmer, "Hannah Arendt on Judgment: The Unwritten Doctrine of Reason," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 221-222.

foundation.”<sup>23</sup> As he explains, knowledge is objective because it “is based on ultimate insights and certainties,” whereas opinions are relative because they “cannot be true or false in the strict sense.”<sup>24</sup>

In order to elucidate this distinction, Habermas refers to the following passage where Arendt distinguishes between ‘the truth’ and opinion.

Arendt holds:

No opinion is self-evident. In matters of opinion, but not in matters of truth, our thinking is truly discursive, running as it were, from place to place, from one part of the world to the other through all kinds of conflicting views, until it finally ascends from all these particularities to some impartial generality.<sup>25</sup>

She maintains a strict division between the truth and opinion because their validity is not achieved in the same way. Arendt claims, [a]ll truths – not only the various kinds of rational truth but also factual truth – are opposed to opinion in their *mode of asserting validity*.<sup>26</sup> For her, truth-claims are universally valid because they are grounded on knowledge that is gained by ‘logical reasoning.’

The truth is thus established outside of the world, seeing as its validity neither depends on public discourse nor representative thinking. Arendt explains,

logic and all self-evidence from which logical reasoning proceeds can claim a reliability altogether independent of the world and the

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<sup>23</sup> Habermas, “Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 238; cited by Habermas, “Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” 22.

<sup>26</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 235.

existence of other people. It has often been observed that the validity of the statement  $2 + 2 = 4$  is independent of the human condition, that it is equally valid for God and man.<sup>27</sup>

Since truth-claims are established and validated by the mind conferring with itself,<sup>28</sup> they espouse a universal validity, which is fundamentally tyrannical and anti-political.

In contrast, opinions are not universally valid because they are not grounded on knowledge. Instead, they emerge from the windy, resultless, and self-destructive activity of thinking. Since opinions lack a cognitive basis, Habermas reduces them to the level of relativity. While it is true that Arendt strictly separates knowledge from opinion, Habermas unfairly reduces Arendt's notion of opinion to sheer relativity and subjectivity. We have seen that opinions are intersubjectively valid, as they must be shaped and expanded by the imaged and actual perspectives of others.<sup>29</sup> For

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<sup>27</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," *Essays in Understanding (1930-1954): Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 318.

<sup>28</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Willing," *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 33. Here, she has Descartes' *cogito* in mind when she says that it "is certainly nothing but a 'transaction of the mind within itself'" (Ibid.).

<sup>29</sup> Highlighting the intersubjective validity of reflective judgment is the basis of Villa's criticism against those who claim that Arendt aestheticizes politics. For example, he acknowledges "Kant's conception of aesthetic judgment – departing from the exchange of viewpoints necessary for representative thinking and culminating in the persuasive exchange that accompanies the rendering of each judgment – is thus, for Arendt, political through and through" (Dana Villa, "Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action," *Political Theory* Vol. 20, no. 2 (May, 1992): 297). Villa thus rejects the claim advanced by those who contend that Arendt thus 'subjectivizes' politics, since judgments of taste rests on the subjectivity of feeling, which cannot be argued with. For he maintains that the intersubjective formulation of aesthetic judgments on the basis of persuasion 'saves' her conception of political judgment from slipping into subjectivity (Ibid., 291). However, his argument strikes a different path than the one I wish to pursue. While Villa provides a positive account of Arendt's appropriation of reflective judgment, he shows that Arendt intentionally 'aestheticizes' politics by focusing on the performative character of action. This leads Villa to conclude, "[h]er theory of political judgment limits an excessive agonism not by abandoning the aestheticization of action but by *completing* it; hence her highly idiosyncratic appropriation of Kant's third *Critique*, an appropriation which enables her

Arendt, intersubjective validity denotes objective validity, which is precisely what ‘rescues’ opinion from their inferiority to the truth. This notwithstanding, the problem, as Habermas sees it, is that opinion is not objective in the strict sense of the term because it is not based on knowledge. Arendt’s commitment to this uncompromising divide thus precludes the possibility of public debate. Since opinions cannot be grounded on knowledge, Habermas claims that we do not have rational evidence to explain or prove to others why our opinions are justified. He therefore concludes, “Arendt sees a yawning abyss between knowledge and opinion that cannot be closed with arguments.”<sup>30</sup>

By turning to Kant, Arendt does not ‘close’ the gap between knowledge and opinion, but rather replicates it. She favors aesthetic over cognitive judgments precisely because the former are non-cognitive judgments. Arendt therefore ends up with the same divide and the same problem. Since aesthetic judgments are shaped on the basis of reflective pleasure, they lack objective evidence to prove their validity. In contrast, cognitive judgments can appeal to objective evidence to prove their validity. This is the case because they are established by way of determinate concepts. Since the rules for cognition are universal, it follows that everyone will arrive at the same judgment. For example, others must agree with me when I state, ‘There are two tulips in a vase.’ If someone claims that there are three tulips in the vase instead of two, they can be proven incorrect

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to preserve plurality and politics from the creeping subjectivism of Nietzsche’s purely agonistic model” (Ibid., 288). In contrast, as I will argue in the following, I do not believe that Arendt aestheticizes politics at all.

<sup>30</sup> Habermas, “Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power,” 23.

when I show them each tulip individually. Demonstrating the validity of cognitive judgments in this way thus suffices to prove them wrong.

In contrast, the general validity of aesthetic judgments cannot be proved at all.<sup>31</sup> Since there are no universal rules by which to judge beauty (5:231), they lack objective evidence to support their validity. Instead, the only appeal one has is, as Ginsborg puts it, “the subject’s liking for the object.”<sup>32</sup> Even though I can ‘expect’ others to feel the same way, it does not mean that they will arrive at the same conclusion. Therefore, I can neither prove by appealing to universal rules, nor by way of empirical demonstration that my judgment is correct (5:284).<sup>33</sup> While I can prove that there are two tulips in a vase by holding them up individually, I cannot prove that I find them beautiful simply by holding them up and declaring them to be beautiful. There is no objective evidence to sway others to believe me because they might not feel the same way.

Kant confirms that we cannot be talked into changing our opinions in matters of taste. He claims:

A judgment of taste, just as if it were merely *subjective*, cannot be determined by bases of proof. If someone does not find a building, a view, or a poem beautiful, then, *first*, he will refuse to let even a hundred voices, all praising it highly, prod him into approving of it inwardly (5:284).

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<sup>31</sup> As Hannah Ginsborg concludes, “a judgment of beauty does not allow of being proved, that is, that there are no rules for determining whether or not an object is beautiful” (Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant on the Subjectivity of Taste,” *Kants Ästhetik*, ed. Herman Parret (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1998, 450).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> As Kant says, “[h]ence there is no empirical *basis of proof* that could compel anyone to make [some] judgment of taste” (5:284).

Since we cannot be talked into feeling otherwise, aesthetic judgments seem to reduce public discourse to an arbitrary exchange of relative opinions. As Ginsborg puts it, “[n]o argument can provide me with a rational basis, either for changing my feeling about the object, or for judging that it is beautiful in spite of the fact that I do not like it.”<sup>34</sup> The only ‘evidence’ necessary to counter dissonant judgments is the empty saying, “[e]veryone has his own taste” (5:338). The subjectivity of taste appears to extinguish public discourse because persons lack objective reasons as to why their judgments are justified. Without objective standards to prove the validity of aesthetic judgments, persons cannot discriminate between right and wrong, better and worse, judgments of taste. This leads Beiner to the conclusion that “excluding any cognitive dimension from aesthetic judgment”<sup>35</sup> thus “runs the risk of turning from a genuine appreciation of political appearances *qua* appearances into an unwarranted aestheticization of politics.”<sup>36</sup>

In agreement with Zerilli, this criticism brought against Arendt is beside the point. Zerilli shows that Arendt operates with a broader notion of rational argumentation.<sup>37</sup> It is true that political and aesthetic judgments cannot be proved because they lack a cognitive basis. However, persons can explain how and why they feel pleased when reflecting on an object or worldly event. In other words, ‘providing an account’ allows others to

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<sup>34</sup> Ginsborg, “Kant on the Subjectivity of Taste,” 450.

<sup>35</sup> Beiner, “Interpretive Essay,” 137.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>37</sup> Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom,” 168-170.



acknowledge and understand my perspective without forcing them to agree. On the one hand, it shows that reflective judgment can, in fact, lend itself to Arendt's conception of public discourse. On the other hand, it means that Arendt can appeal to reflective judgment by maintaining her strict distinction between the truth and opinion. Persons do not simply defer to 'personal taste,' but rather offer an explanatory account that persuades others to recognize and validate their point of view. This will lead me to the conclusion that Arendt does not aestheticize politics. While offering an explanatory account does not imbue judgments with a cognitive dimension in the strict sense of the term, it nevertheless 'rescues' judgments from the arbitrariness of feeling.

## 2. Understanding

### 2.1 Logon didonai

In order to show that Arendt does not aestheticize politics, I will first illustrate how Arendt envisions the process of providing an explanatory account. My analysis takes its lead from Zerilli and her turn to Stanley Cavell's reading of reflective judgment. On the one hand, I agree with Zerilli that Arendt's notion of 'providing an account' underscores political judgments with a form of argumentation, which prevents her from aestheticizing politics.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Zerilli goes wrong by limiting "the affirmation of freedom"<sup>39</sup> to reflectively entertaining the perspectives of others. The second point will be addressed in the subsequent sub-section.

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<sup>38</sup> Zerilli, "We Feel our Freedom," 170.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 164; 178.

Arendt develops her notion of ‘providing an account’ by turning to Plato. Explaining how or why we arrived at a particular judgment does not involve appealing to objective proofs. Instead, it entails offering reasons that make our judgments intelligible to others. As Arendt says:

*Logon didonai*, ‘to give an account’ – not to prove, but to be able to say how one came to an opinion and for what reasons one formed it – is actually what separates Plato from all his predecessors.<sup>40</sup>

Although appealing to reasons lacks a cognitive dimension in the strict sense of the term, the argumentative process of providing reasons is not as arbitrary as it may seem. Reasons cannot prove why someone is right or wrong, but reasons can provide insight into their perspective. This is the type of argumentative process that Arendt claims to find in reflective judgment.

While Cavell does not discuss Arendt’s appropriation of reflective judgment, he develops a reading of reflective judgment that makes it amenable to the kind of explanatory account Arendt has in mind. Cavell takes issue with the traditional conception of rational argumentation. He defines it as “arriving at conviction in such a way that anyone who can follow the argument must, unless he finds something definitely wrong with it, *accept the conclusion*, agree with it.”<sup>41</sup> Even though reflective judgment does not hold up to these standards, it does not mean that its

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<sup>40</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Stanley Cavell, “Aesthetic Problems in Modern Philosophy,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*, 43.

validity is entirely relative. This is the case because supporting my judgments with reasons constitutes what Cavell calls, “recurrent patterns of support.”<sup>42</sup> Instead of merely “*retreat[ing]* to personal taste,”<sup>43</sup> I can explain myself in a way that is intelligible to others, so that they can understand my point of view.

For example, it is perfectly valid for two persons to hold opposing views on the aesthetic quality of a painting. However, the conversation does not come to an end simply by agreeing that ‘everyone has their own taste.’ Instead, in the spirit of Arendt’s thought, each person should explain their reasoning as to why or how they arrived at their respective judgment. Someone might agree with some or all of my reasons as to why I find the painting beautiful, but it does not mean that they must agree that my judgment is correct.<sup>44</sup> Zerilli explains:

I can accept your argument about why a certain painting is beautiful (such as its unique place in the history of art, the artist’s vivid use of color, or the representation of perspective) and still disagree with your judgment of beauty. That refusal may make my sense of taste deficient in your eyes, but not in the sense of being mistaken.<sup>45</sup>

Disagreeing with each other does not mean that one person is *right* and that the other person is *wrong*. Instead, providing an explanatory account allows persons to debate about their reasons. While they might not agree

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>44</sup> As Zerilli explains, “[w]e expect people to support their judgments, but even if we agree with their arguments, we need not accept their conclusions” (Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom,” 169).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

with each other's conclusions, they certainly can try to understand how the other person arrived at their judgment.

Underscoring judgments with an explanatory account maintains public debate because it makes aesthetic judgments contestable.<sup>46</sup> The distinction Kant makes between *disputieren* (to dispute) and *streiten* (to quarrel) explains why judgments of taste cannot be proved, but they certainly can be contested.<sup>47</sup> Aesthetic judgments cannot be disputed because the criteria for disputation are the pure categories of the understanding. As he explains, disputing means “to produce agreement according to determinate concepts, by basing a proof on them, so that we assume that the judgment is based on *objective concepts*” (5:338). Since aesthetic judgments proceed without a determinate concept, and hence without objective proof, we cannot determine which judgments are right and wrong. While their validity cannot be disputed, they still can be ‘quarreled about.’ As Kant says, “[o]ne can quarrel about taste (though one cannot dispute about it)” (5:338). In fact, Arendt echoes this when she says, “[s]uch judgment without standards is quite familiar to us from judgments about aesthetics and taste, which, as Kant once observed, we cannot ‘dispute,’ but certainly can argue over or agree with.”<sup>48</sup>

While the validity of aesthetic judgments cannot be disputed, our reasons for holding them can be picked apart or ‘quarreled about.’ This is the case

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Introduction into Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 102.

because the ‘evidence’ used to support aesthetic judgments is of a different kind. Undergirding our judgments with reasons offers a non-coercive form of evidence that ‘makes us understood.’<sup>49</sup> Arendt observes:

Judging has a claim to validity, although with the least ability to compel. It is in no way more subjective than other judgments, but it does not coerce in conclusion ... For this reason, the judgment has evidence; but the evidence does not compel.<sup>50</sup>

Although ‘quarreling about’ our reasons does not determine the validity of our judgments objectively, what matters is that providing and debating our reasons sparks and maintains public debate. In this way, the subjectivity of taste can, in fact, ensure the continuity of public discourse. ‘Quarreling about’ aesthetic judgments does not extinguish debate by slipping into an arbitrary exchange of relative opinions. Viewed in this light, carrying over reflective judgment neither comes at the cost of aestheticizing politics, nor silencing public debate.

Kant’s account of reflective judgment also keeps Arendt’s division between knowledge and opinion intact. For the sake of the integrity of the world, Arendt needs to maintain a strict distinction between knowledge and opinion. This leads me to believe that criticizing her for neglecting a cognitive dimension in opinion-formation is entirely misguided. If the aim of public discourse is to distinguish objectively between right and

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<sup>49</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 176.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, *Denktagebuch*, 572; my translation. The original note reads: «Das Urteilen erhebt Anspruch auf Gültigkeit, ohne doch im mindesten zwingen zu können. Es ist keineswegs subjektiver als andere Erkenntnisse, aber es ermangelt des Zwanges im Schließen ... Dafür gibt es im Urteil die Evidenz; aber die Evidenz zwingt nicht» (Ibid.).

wrong, then it would extinguish public discourse, and along with it, the existence of the public realm. Compelling others to agree on one and the same opinion is synonymous with assenting to the truth. As Arendt claims:

Every truth ... no matter whether it brings men good or ill, is inhuman in the literal sense of the word; but not because it might rouse men against one another and separate them. Quite the contrary, it is because it might have the result that all men would suddenly unite in a single opinion, so that out of many opinions one would emerge, as though not men in their infinite plurality, but man in the singular, one species and its exemplars, were to inhabit the earth.<sup>51</sup>

Not appealing to objective proofs is thus an essential aspect of maintaining public discourse and securing the continuity of the political community. This is the case because her conception of public discourse is fundamentally *agonistic*, since it consists of the constant questioning, probing, and purging of opinions.

Arendt seems to welcome dissonance and disagreement, insofar as she casts ‘rousing’ and ‘separating’ persons against one another in a positive light. Although citizens might disagree with one another, the plurality of opposing views nevertheless keeps public debate alive. As she explains, “[u]nwelcome opinion can be argued with; rejected; or compromised upon,”<sup>52</sup> whereas agreeing on one opinion or on ‘the truth’ brings public discourse to an end. For Arendt continues, “[f]acts are beyond agreement and consent, and all talk about them – all exchanges of opinion based on

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<sup>51</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Thoughts on Lessing,” *Men in Dark Times* (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), 30-31.

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 236.

correct information – will contribute nothing to their establishment.”<sup>53</sup> To be clear, disagreement is also not the objective of public discourse. However, in contrast to agreeing on ‘the truth,’ it ensures that persons continue to contest their judgments with one another. This leads me to believe that reflective judgment is amenable to politics precisely because it neither objectively distinguishes between right or wrong, nor slips into relativity.

## *2.2 Rhetoric and Persuasion*

Now that I have shown that aesthetic judgments can be ‘quarreled about,’ I will explore how they have the potential to foster understanding. For Arendt, understanding something in a political sense means to consider it from the most possible perspectives.<sup>54</sup> Since she sets persuasion and rhetoric as the means for fostering understanding, she appears to break from Kant. This is the case because Kant is skeptical of rhetoric. Taking my lead from Zerilli, I will show that Arendt remains in the spirit of his thought precisely because she does not use rhetoric in the traditional sense of the term. However, I will set myself apart from Zerilli by showing that “affirming freedom”<sup>55</sup> is not only a matter of enlarged mentality. Instead, enlarged mentality and the enactment of freedom are reciprocal and inter-

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Arendt also defines understanding as ‘reconciliation,’ which she defines as a continuous process of accepting the world we live in. She explains, “[i]t is an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality, that is, try to be at home in the world” (Arendt, “Understanding and Politics,” 307-308). For an excellent account of judging as it pertains to reconciliation, see Roger Berkowitz, “Reconciling Oneself to the Impossibility of Reconciliation: Judgment and Worldliness in Hannah Arendt’s Politics,” *Artifacts of Thinking: Reading Hannah Arendt’s Denktagebuch*, ed. Roger Berkowitz and Ian Storey (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom,” 174.

dependent. Illuminating the inter-dependency between enlarged mentality and the enactment of freedom in the world achieves two things. First, it strengthens Zerilli's argument that reflective judgment fosters the kind of understanding that lies at the heart of Arendt's conception of politics. Second, it proves my claim that the imagination is the mediating link between non-privacy and the public sphere.

Explaining how and why someone arrived at their opinion fosters the kind of understanding that lies at the heart of Arendt's conception of politics. This is the case because it not only involves seeing things from another's perspective, but from the most possible perspectives. For Arendt, the activity that fosters understanding is persuasion.<sup>56</sup> She thus believes that the general yet non-coercive validity of reflective judgment perfectly maps onto her conception of public debate. She says that aesthetic judgments:

share with political opinions that they are persuasive; the judging person – as Kant says quite beautifully – can only 'woo the consent of everyone else' in the hope of coming to an agreement with him eventually.<sup>57</sup>

Arendt takes this as indication that judgments of taste attempt to garner the validation of others, which puts persons in a position to consider their judgments from all sides. However, by attributing persuasiveness to reflective judgment, she appears to break with Kant because she sets rhetoric as the means of persuasion.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>57</sup> Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," 21.



To say the least, Kant is weary of rhetoric because it takes advantage of the vulnerability of others and strips them of their capacity for autonomous decision-making. He defines rhetoric as “oratory (*ars oratoria*), the art of using people’s weaknesses for one’s own aims (no matter how good these may be in intention or even in fact), is unworthy of any *respect* whatsoever” (5:328; fn. 63). It seems as though Kant would disapprove of Arendt’s interpretation of the persuasiveness of reflective judgment. However, she keeps the integrity of Kant’s conception of anticipated dialogue with others intact. This is the case because she maintains a positive conception of rhetoric by seeing extracting it from its traditional link to Sophistry. Arendt therefore does not associate rhetoric with “certain tricks of the Sophists,”<sup>58</sup> insofar as it not used as a tool to sway the consent of others by appealing to their emotions. She thus does not appropriate rhetoric in the way that Kant conceives of it, namely, as “an insidious art, an art that knows how, in important matters, to move people like machines to a judgment that must lose all its weight with them when they meditate about it calmly” (5:328; fn. 63). Instead, Arendt conceives of rhetoric as a non-coercive means for achieving understanding.

In the context of public discourse, persuasion is not implemented as a ‘trick’ to force others to change their minds. Instead, Arendt adopts it as a way to coax others into acknowledging the validity of one’s perspective,

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<sup>58</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 167; Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom,” 168.

without forcing their assent. Referring to the Greek *agora* (marketplace),

Arendt claims:

this world of coming together, being together, speaking about something with one another ... they saw this entire arena under the sign of the divine *Pheito*, the power to persuade and influence, which reigned among equals and determined all things without force or coercion.<sup>59</sup>

Rhetoric therefore does not undermine autonomous decision-making, but rather reinforces it. Exchanging, examining, and understanding the reasons why someone holds their opinion does not necessarily entail that I should adopt their conclusions.

Instead, persuasion fosters understanding because it enables both interlocutors to see things from the other's perspective, or better, from the most possible perspectives. This becomes clear when Arendt says:

The crucial factor is not that one could now turn arguments around and stand propositions on their heads, but rather that one gained the ability to truly *see* topics from various sides – that is, politically – with the result that people understood how to assume the many possible perspectives provided by the real world, from which one and the same topic can be regarded and in which each topic, despite its oneness, appears in a great diversity of views.<sup>60</sup>

Considering something from all sides promotes autonomous decision-making because it allows persons to test and shape their own opinion against those of others. Analyzing someone's reasons as to why they hold a certain opinion gives persons the opportunity to decide whether or not

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<sup>59</sup> Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 164.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-168.

they agree. Conceiving of rhetoric and persuasion in this way does not compromise the integrity of reflective judgment. Likewise, the general yet non-coercive validity of reflective judgment is amenable to Arendt's conception of public discourse. Precisely because it lends itself to acquiring the ability to see things from the greatest possible perspectives.

Furthermore, the persuasiveness of reflective judgment reinforces the *agonistic* character of public debate. This is the case because exchanging our opinions may never guarantee eventual agreement. However, it nevertheless ensures that persons will share at least one common denominator – the political world. While citizens might inhabit radically opposing perspectives, hashing out their disagreements illuminates the fact that they can only express their differences because they inhabit one and the same world. As Villa explains, public debate therefore “can, potentially, reveal to an audience what they have in common in the process of articulating their differences. And what they have in common” is “the *world*.”<sup>61</sup> Reflective judgment thus fosters the persuasive activity of public discourse, despite of, or even in light of, the inevitable emergence of differences of opinion.

While I agree with Zerilli that Arendt does not aestheticize politics, she goes wrong when she isolates “the affirmation of freedom”<sup>62</sup> in enlarged mentality. While Zerilli recognizes that fostering understanding requires

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<sup>61</sup> Villa, “Beyond Good and Evil,” 298.

<sup>62</sup> Zerilli, “We Feel our Freedom,” 164; 178.

publicly deliberating on our judgments with others, she places more weight on the freedom associated with enlarged mentality. She claims:

[Arendt] invokes imagination to develop reference to a third perspective from which one observes and attempts to see from other standpoints, but at a distance. Arendt does not discount the importance of actual dialogue ... she emphasizes the unique position of *outsideness* from which we judge.<sup>63</sup>

What Zerilli correctly homes in on is that we can only fully understand something when we enlarge our mentality. However, she limits freedom to enlarged mentality by linking it to the increased impartiality gained when persons retreat from the world.<sup>64</sup> For Zerilli holds, “[t]he judgment that at once expands our sense of reality and affirms freedom is possible only once the faculties are ‘in free play,’ as Kant puts it.”<sup>65</sup> By placing more weight on the mental process of judging, Zerilli overlooks the fact that judging freely and acting freely in the world are reciprocal and interdependent.

What would strengthen Zerilli’s defense of Arendt is turning to the very thing Zerilli overemphasizes, namely, the imagination. The freedom of the imagination allows persons to enact their freedom in the world. Since enlarged mentality gives us the ability to participate in public discourse, it sets the conditions for the possibility of actualizing our freedom in the world. When citizens actively exchange their opinions, they

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>64</sup> She says, “[v]alidity is rather tied to an affirmation of freedom that expands the very peculiar kind of objectivity that Arendt associates with the political sphere, namely, the objectivity or sense of reality that turns on seeing an object or event from as many sides as possible” (Ibid., 178).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

simultaneously increase their understanding and bring freedom into the world. Arendt makes this clear when she admires the ancient Greek conception of the *polis* for this very reason. She claims:

The ability to see the same thing from various standpoints stays in the human world; it is simply the exchange of the standpoint given us by nature for that of someone else, with whom we share the same world, resulting in a true freedom of movement in our mental world that parallels our freedom of movement in the physical one. Being able to persuade and influence others, which was how the citizens of the polis interacted politically, presumed a kind of freedom that was not irrevocably bound, either mentally or physically, to one's own standpoint or point of view.<sup>66</sup>

Arendt seems to suggest that freedom is neither limited to our mental faculties nor to the public realm.

We should read the freedom of judging and the freedom of political participation as equally dependent upon each other. What makes them possible, and hence mediates between them, is the imagination. Fostering understanding and actualizing freedom are not possible without an enlarged mentality. Likewise, gaining a full understanding of human affairs and initiating an enlarged mentality are not possible without public debate. This must be what Arendt means when she says, “[w]ithout this kind of imagination, which actually is understanding, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world. It is the only inner compass we have.”<sup>67</sup> Considering the imagination as the mediating link between the mental and political world illuminates the fact that it plays the same role

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<sup>66</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 168.

<sup>67</sup> Arendt, “Understanding and Politics,” 323.

for Arendt as it does for Kant. By bridging the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide, Arendt bridges the non-privative and the public realms. Helping Kant fulfill what he could not achieve in his lifetime helps Arendt fulfill what she could not achieve in her lifetime.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Arendt intentionally empiricizes the universal communicability made possible by reflective judgment. However, I argued that her leap from universal communicability to public discourse is justified. Precisely because she bridges the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide in the way Kant could not. Since he was limited by transcendental principles, he overlooked the fact that the imagination has the potential to unite both realms. I took this to show that the imagination unites the non-privative realm with the public realm. This is the case because enlarged mentality ensures the public communicability of our judgments, which grants us the ability to insert ourselves into the world. In turn, the imagination allows us to bring back newly encountered perspectives into non-privacy, where we can reflectively fulfill the general validity of our judgments.

Subsequently, I showed that Arendt can seamlessly map Kant's conception of anticipated dialogue onto her own conception of public debate. While Beiner, Bernstein, Habermas, and Wellmer accuse Arendt of aestheticizing politics, I argued that the general validity of reflective judgment has the potential to uphold and sustain public discourse. Building on Zerilli's account, I demonstrated that underscoring our

judgments with reasons keeps public discourse alive. This kind of non-coercive evidence maps onto Arendt's notion of debate precisely because it neither appeals to objective evidence, nor slips into the relativity of feeling. This led me to the conclusion that the persuasiveness and non-coerciveness of reflective judgment fosters kind of understanding that lies at the heart of Arendt's conception of politics.

In the next chapter, we will see that bridging the *a priori* – *a posteriori* dichotomy allows Arendt to bring Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. I will argue that she is correct to claim that the general validity of reflective judgment can only be realized in a human community. This is the case because Kant undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment himself.<sup>68</sup> He sets empirical examples as “precedent” (5:282) to verify the validity of aesthetic judgments. This proves that the general validity of reflective judgment is not only theoretically established by entertaining the perspectives of others. But rather, it must be tested against historically and communally validated standards of exemplary taste. This will lead me to the conclusion that Arendt's declaration that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy is not as groundless as it seems.

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<sup>68</sup> Steven DeCaroli, “A Capacity for Agreement: Hannah Arendt and the *Critique of Judgment*,” *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 2007): 374.

## Chapter Six

### Kant's Unwritten Political Philosophy

*But Socrates, if you leave us will you not be able to live quietly, without talking? Now this is the most difficult point on which to convince some of you. If I say that it is impossible for me to keep quiet because that means disobeying the god, you will not believe me and will think I am being ironical. On the other hand, if I say that it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for men, you will believe me even less.*

– Plato<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to justify Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. It is curious that Kant sets empirical examples as "precedent" (5:282) to verify the validity of aesthetic judgments, seeing as he refrains from linking universal communicability to empirical sociability. Squaring Kant's obscure account of empirical examples with his failed attempt to bridge both realms exceeds the scope of this project. However, his appeal to empirical examples substantiates Arendt's claim that the general validity of reflective judgment is realized in a human community. Even though Kant's account of empirical examples in the *Third Critique* is brief and schematic, two conclusions can be reached.

Building on Steven DeCaroli's account, I will first show that empirical examples emerge in the world. This is the case because Kant defines empirical examples as historically and communally validated standards

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Apology*. Translated by G.M.A Grube. *Plato: Complete Works*. Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), (37e-38a).



of exemplary taste. Second, since beauty lacks objective standards, Kant maintains that empirical examples are the only reference for gauging the validity of aesthetic judgments. This suggests that the general validity of reflective judgment is not only established by theoretically extending it to other ‘ideal judging subjects.’ But it must also be tested against historically and communally validated standards of exemplary taste.

While DeCaroli’s account certainly justifies Arendt’s appropriation of reflective judgment, he limits his analysis to showing how empirical examples shape the general validity of aesthetic judgments. As a result, he glosses over the fact that empirical examples perform the same function for Arendt when it comes to finalizing the general validity of political judgments. Although Arendt’s account of political principles is obscure, what is clear is that they emerge when persons speak and interact with each other in the world. When political principles are enacted, ‘words and deeds’ serve as shared standards of exemplarity. In turn, actualized political principles can be used as general “guidelines”<sup>2</sup> by which to measure the validity of political judgments. Bringing Arendt closer to Kant thus offers a fuller picture of her conception of political judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*, ed. and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 193.

## 1. Kant's Unwritten Political Philosophy

### *1.1 Kant's Appeal to Empirical Examples*

In this section, I will show that Kant appeals to empirical examples as standards to measure the validity of reflective judgment. Building on DeCaroli's account, I will justify Arendt's claim that finalizing the general validity of reflective judgment unfolds in the context of a human community. DeCaroli takes Kant's reference to empirical examples as indication that "Arendt's controversial interpretation of Kant becomes more plausible."<sup>3</sup> "By looking over the importance of exemplarity in Kant's final *Kritik*," DeCaroli concludes, "many interpreters of Arendt assume that she took exceptional liberties with her analysis of Kant's thought."<sup>4</sup> Since Kant suggests that general validity relies on empirical examples, we can conclude that Arendt's reading of Kant is not as "idiosyncratic,"<sup>5</sup> as Villa maintains. It also disproves Matthew Weidenfeld's assertion that Arendt "engaged in a creative destruction of Kant's texts"<sup>6</sup> by "read[ing] empirical community and plurality back into Kant where they cannot be found."<sup>7</sup> Kant's appeal to empirical examples thus supports Arendt's claim that she brings his unwritten political philosophy to fruition.

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<sup>3</sup> Steven DeCaroli, "A Capacity for Agreement: Hannah Arendt and the *Critique of Judgment*," *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 33, No. 3 (July 2007): DeCaroli, "A Capacity for Agreement," 362.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>5</sup> Dana Villa, "Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche, and the Aestheticization of Political Action," *Political Theory* Vol. 20, no. 2 (May, 1992): 276; 288.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew C. Weidenfeld, "Visions of Judgment: Arendt, Kant, and the Misreading of Judgment," *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (2) (June 2012): 254.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

Arendt did not have the opportunity to substantiate her claim. However, she gives us enough indication to conclude that she might have turned to empirical examples in the *Third Critique*.<sup>8</sup> She claims that empirical examples aid in finalizing the general validity of our judgments.<sup>9</sup> Arendt says:

In the *Critique of Judgment*, i.e., in the treatment of reflective judgments, where one does not subsume a particular under a concept ... examples lead and guide us, and the judgment thus acquires 'exemplary validity.'<sup>10</sup>

She alludes to the fact that empirical examples serve as a standard for measuring the validity of our judgments. While Arendt's remark in her *Lectures* is brief and schematic, she appears to be on the right track. This is the case because Kant's brief discussion of empirical examples in the *Third Critique* points in this direction.

Unfortunately, Kant's account also leaves us guessing as to the exact function empirical examples have in finalizing the general validity of reflective judgment. On the one hand, it is surprising that Kant sets empirical examples as standards to finalize general validity. As we saw in the previous chapter, he rescinded his attempt to link universal communicability to empirical sociability. Precisely because it would otherwise jeopardize the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment.

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<sup>8</sup> DeCaroli, "A Capacity for Agreement," 362.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 76.

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Imagination," Seminar on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, New School for Social Research (1970), *Lectures*, 84. Although Arendt's lecture on the imagination appears in her *Lectures*, I will cite it separately, since it is distinct from her lectures on Kant's political philosophy.

Interestingly, Kant is perfectly aware that appealing to empirical examples puts him in the same position. He claims, “[t]his seems to point to a posteriori sources of taste and to refute the autonomy of every subject’s taste” (5:282). Kant thus admits that the validity of reflective judgment is not only established exclusively by garnering the hypothetical agreement of others. But it is also established in the context of a human community because persons can only come across empirical examples in the world.

On the other hand, there is some plausibility in measuring judgments of taste against empirical examples. This is the case because there are no other standards to fall back on. Since reflective judgment proceeds without a determinate concept, the only recourse available is to defer to historically and communally verified examples.<sup>11</sup> As Kant claims:

Among all our abilities and talents, taste is precisely what stands most in need of examples regarding what has enjoyed the longest-lasting approval in the course of cultural progress, in order that it will not become uncouth again and relapse into the crudeness of its first attempts; and taste needs this because its judgment cannot be determine by concepts and precepts (5:283).<sup>12</sup>

Since we cannot appeal to determinate concepts to establish general validity, Kant instructs us to turn to empirical examples instead.

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<sup>11</sup> DeCaroli, “A Capacity for Agreement,” 378.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

The kind of examples he has in mind are shared standards of exemplary taste that have been verified and set by tradition, such as the literary tradition or fine arts. He explains:

It is true that we extol, and rightly so, the works of the ancients as models, call their authors classical, as if they form a certain noble class among writers which gives laws to people by the precedent it sets (5:282).<sup>13</sup>

Shared standards of exemplary taste can be used as ‘precedent’ to gauge the validity of our own judgments. Precisely because they are reliable indications of exemplary taste, insofar as they have withstood the test of time. As DeCaroli holds, they have been “validated by historical precedent,” which “exist both in relation to communities of people who have repeatedly judged them to be exemplary, and in relation to the history of those judgments that have set certain objects and individuals above others as models.”<sup>14</sup>

While shared standards of exemplary taste have been established by and verified over several generations, they are not absolutely reliable. Since shared standards of exemplarity are empirical, they will always carry a degree of unreliability and contingency. To use Arendt’s description of moral judgments, they “can change considerably and uncomfortably from person to person, from country to country, from century to century.”<sup>15</sup>

What is regarded as a shared standard of taste is subject to change.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 378.

<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 101.

Therefore, shared standards of exemplarity are reliable, only insofar as they reflect what a given tradition, at a given time, deems exemplary.

It seems that Kant attempts to imbue empirical examples with more reliability by turning to the general consensus. The passage I have in mind is where he makes an effort to link universal communicability to empirical society. We saw in Chapter Five that Kant intends to extend universal communicability to all. He claims:

The universal communicability of the sensation (of liking or disliking) – a universal communicability that is indeed not based on a concept – [I say that] the broadest possible agreement among all ages and peoples regarding this feeling that accompanies the presentation of certain objects is the *empirical* criterion [for what is beautiful] (5:232).<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps Kant is suggesting that shared standards of exemplarity are confirmed when most people tend to agree. He affirms this when he continues:

This criterion, although weak and barely sufficient for a conjecture, [does suggest] that a taste so much confirmed by examples stems from [a] deeply hidden basis, common to all human beings, underlying their agreement in judging the forms under which objects are given to them (5:232).

He thus seems to suggest that the general consensus regarding what is beautiful reinforces the reliability of shared standards of taste. For instance, if the literary tradition has deemed Homer's *Iliad* as an iconic

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<sup>16</sup> Emphasis added.

epic poem, and most people tend to agree that it is beautiful, then it is a more reliable standard.

It is rather curious that Kant would appeal to empirical examples and the majority rule to determine reliable standards for gauging the validity of aesthetic judgments. It not only undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment, but it also seems to undermine the autonomy of reflective judgment. If persons refer to pre-existing standards to finalize the general validity of their judgments, then they do not exclusively rely on their own capacity for discrimination. However, it is precisely the opposite, for Kant clarifies that referring to empirical examples does not put the autonomy of reflective judgment into question. Instead, gauging our judgments against shared standards of exemplarity hones our ability to judge. Comparing and contrasting our judgments against empirical examples leads us to devise our own rules. In the next sub-section, we will see that the autonomy involved in referring to empirical examples is precisely what appeals to Arendt. It seems that incorporating the general consensus into our thought process allows us to hone our ability to judge.

### *1.2 Autonomy*

In the following, I will show that incorporating the general consensus into the formulation of aesthetic judgments does not undermine the autonomy of taste, but rather reinforces it. Kant is clear that persons should not change their judgments to reflect the tradition or general consensus. Instead, referring to empirical examples should hone our ability to establish generally valid rules on our own. This will allow me to show

that the general consensus performs a similar function for Arendt when it comes to the formulation of political judgments. Taking the general consensus into account, without being swayed by it, reinforces the autonomy of political decision-making. Comparing and contrasting one's judgment against the general consensus hones our capacity for discriminating between beautiful and ugly, right and wrong.

Although shaping the general validity of reflective judgment involves appealing to shared standards of exemplarity, Kant warns against simply deferring to the general consensus. Otherwise, it undermines our autonomy because it makes our judgments wholly dependent on those of others. He explains, "[t]aste lays claim merely to autonomy; but to make other people's judgments the basis determining one's own would be heteronomy" (5:282). When it comes to aesthetic judgments, heteronomy thus means to take stock of the judgments of others and align our judgments with them. Appealing to empirical examples should not lead us to fall in line with the general consensus. Instead, Kant makes clear that it should prompt persons to refer back to their own capacity for judging. He claims,

we demand that he judge for himself: he should not have to grope about among other people's judgments by means of experience, to gain instruction in advance from whether they like or dislike that object; so we demand that he pronounce his judgment a priori, that he not make it [by way of] imitation, (say) on the ground that a thing is actually liked universally (5:282).

In order to elucidate how incorporating the general consensus into one's judgment fosters autonomy, Kant gives the example of a young poet.



Despite the unanimous consensus, the poet still believes that their poem is beautiful. The general consensus cannot force the poet to retract their judgment. No one can make them feel otherwise. As Kant says, “a young poet cannot be brought to abandon his persuasion that his poem is beautiful, neither by the judgment of his audience nor by that of his friends” (5:282). Instead, the judgments of others might simply lead the poet to question the validity of their judgment. Kant explains, “[i]f others make a judgment that is unfavorable to us, this may rightly make us wonder about our own judgment” (5:284). Comparing and contrasting their judgment against the general consensus might make the poet realize that their judgment is in need of revision. However, instead of aligning their judgment with the general consensus, the poet replaces their judgment with a new one.

Incorporating the general consensus into their decision-making process thus calls the poet to fall back on their own capacity to judge. As Kant claims, it “might put others on a track whereby they could search for principles within themselves and so adopt their own and often better course” (5:283). Even if the poet changes their judgment to reflect the unanimous consensus, it does not mean that they forfeit their autonomy. While their judgment might align with everyone’s opinion, what matters is that they came to it on their own. Furthermore, comparing our judgments against the general consensus hones our ability to judge. As Kant maintains, “[o]nly later on, when his power of judgment has been

sharpened by practice, will he voluntarily depart from his earlier judgment” (5:282). Honing the ability to judge thus involves continuously creating and re-creating our own rules by which to judge. In this way, the general consensus can promote autonomous decision-making and can even help us become better at inventing our own rules.

From Arendt’s perspective, reaffirming the autonomy of taste by questioning the general consensus demonstrates its political potential. Precisely because the general consensus plays the same role for her when it comes to the formulation of political judgments. It aids in the establishment of a generally valid rule by calling us to fall back on our own capacity for discrimination. She asserts, citing Kant:

Wherever the word taste appears in Kant, it can be replaced by the capacity to judge. Then it immediately becomes clear that it deals with a hidden Critique of political reason. Then the problem is how to understand both of the ‘peculiarities’ of taste – 1. That it does not make its general validity dependent on ‘groping about and collecting votes’ and 2. not on ‘concepts’, but that it rather deals with ‘the generality of a particular judgment.’<sup>17</sup>

What interests her is that general validity is not established by taking stock of the judgments of others and falling in line with them. At the same time, the establishment of general validity still involves factoring in the general consensus. When it comes to political judgments, Arendt seems

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<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Denktagebuch, Erster Band (1950-1973)*, hrsg. von Ursula Ludz und Ingeborg Nordmann (München/Berlin: Piper Verlag, 2016), 578; my translation. The original note reads: «Anstelle des Wortes Geschmack kann man bei Kant überall Urteilsfähigkeit einsetzen. Dann ist sofort erkennbar, dass es sich um eine versteckte Kritik der politischen Vernunft handelt. So ist in der Tat das Problem, die beiden «Eigentümlichkeiten» des Urteils zu verstehen – 1. dass es seine Allgemeinheit nicht von «Stimmensammlung und Herumfragen abhängig» macht und 2. nicht von «Begriffen», dass es sich ferner um «die Allgemeinheit eines einzelnen Urteils» handelt« (Ibid.).

to follow a similar procedure as Kant. Incorporating the general consensus into our decision-making process reinforces the autonomy of political decision-making.

Like Kant, Arendt warns us about simply deferring to the general consensus. When persons adopt the opinions of others as their own, they forfeit their ability to judge autonomously. In reference to neglecting an enlarged mentality, she says:

I can refuse to do this and form an opinion that takes only my interests, or the interests of the group to which I belong, into account; nothing, indeed, is more common, even among highly sophisticated people, than the blind obstinacy that becomes manifest in lack of imagination and failure to judge.<sup>18</sup>

Although Arendt does not use the term ‘heteronomy,’ it seems that basing one’s opinion on those of others leads to the same thing. Namely, the erosion of autonomous decision-making.

At the same time, autonomous decision-making does not mean blatantly disregarding the general consensus. Instead, we have seen that an essential component of political decision-making involves incorporating the judgments of others into our own. While entertaining the perspectives of others requires that persons put themselves aside, it does not mean that they take stock of the judgments of others and fall in line. Simply because the majority of residents in Louisiana voted against abolishing slavery

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<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” *Between Past and Future* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2006), 237.

laws in the 2022 US Midterm Elections does not by any means suggest that we should agree that modern day slavery is acceptable.<sup>19</sup> Instead, we only use the majority rule as a standard for reflecting on the validity of our own judgments. Arendt explains,

while I take into account others when judging, this does not mean that I conform in my judgment to their's. I still speak with my own voice and I do not count noses in order to arrive at what I think as right.<sup>20</sup>

Incorporating the general consensus into our decision-making process thus involves comparing and contrasting the judgments of others against our own. While persons prioritize the perspectives of others over their own, it reinforces the autonomy of political judgment precisely because it leads persons to decide for themselves what they think is right and wrong.

Furthermore, Arendt continues to follow Kant, insofar as taking the general consensus into account hones our ability to judge. Arendt confirms this when she claims that continuously entertaining the perspectives of others strengthens the capacity for an enlarged mentality.

She holds:

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<sup>19</sup> As part of the 2022 US Midterm Elections, five states had the opportunity to abolish archaic slavery laws in their state constitutions, which make it possible to subject prisoners to forced labor, either for negligible pay or entirely unpaid work. While Alabama, Tennessee, Oregon, and Vermont voted to overturn these laws, a shocking 60% of Louisiana residents voted against striking them from their state constitution (see Max Matza, "Four states voted to abolish slavery, but not Louisiana. Here's why," BBC News, 10 November 2022. Web link: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63578133>; accessed 23 November 2022).

<sup>20</sup> Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 140-141. Arendt reiterates this in reference to enlarged mentality. She says, "[t]his process of representation does not 'blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective, nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity' (Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 237).

The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion.<sup>21</sup>

Using the general consensus as input in our decision-making process hones our ability to judge because it constantly calls us to question the validity of our own judgments. As demonstrated in Chapter Five, engaging in a continuous process of revision and reformulation helps to bring the general validity of political judgments to fruition. It therefore follows that honing the capacity for an enlarged mentality strengthens the ability to create and re-create generally valid rules. It perpetuates an endless process of examination and reformulation of our own rules, so that they do not turn into rigid and 'ossified' standards themselves.

What Arendt and Kant thus have in common is that incorporating the general consensus into one's thought process does not diminish the autonomy of judging, but rather reinforces it. Continuously falling back on one's own capacity of discrimination thus simultaneously affirms our autonomy and hones our ability to judge. While it is curious that Kant appeals to empirical standards of taste, it certainly brings him closer to Arendt's reading of him, and confirms her claim that the finalization of general validity is a worldly phenomenon. Moreover, what strengthens Arendt's affinity to Kant is that she appeals to her own version of empirical examples in order to finalize the general validity of political

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<sup>21</sup> Arendt, "Truth and Politics," 241.

judgments. For Arendt, exemplarity emerges in the world when persons enact political principles. While she did not fully work this out, we can conclude that shared standards of exemplarity offer general guideposts to gauge the validity of political judgments. Teasing out the connection between political principles and exemplarity offers further insight into how the general validity of political judgments is achieved.

## 2. Arendt's Appeal to Worldly Examples

### *2.1 Political Principles*

In order to show how examples assist in finalizing the general validity of political judgments, I will first provide an account of how Arendt thinks examples are established. In particular, she links the appearance of exemplarity in the world to the enactment of political principles. While her account of political principles remains schematic, what is clear is that the enactment of political principles gives rise to shared standards of exemplarity. In turn, these instances of exemplarity can be used as general guidelines by which to gauge the validity of political judgments. This leads me to believe that actualized political principles play the same role as empirical examples in Kant's *Third Critique*. That is, they serve as 'models' or 'precedents' for realizing the general validity of political judgments.

While Arendt's examples of political principles are extensive, her account unfortunately remains schematic and neglected within the secondary literature. As Lucy Cane points out, overlooking the importance of political principles in Arendt's thought "is understandable given that

Arendt's own discussions of principles, while numerous and suggestive, tend to be frustratingly brief."<sup>22</sup> Although Arendt does not sketch political principles in sufficient detail, the following examples can be found throughout her works: freedom, virtue, honor, glory, equality, fear, distrust, hatred,<sup>23</sup> fame, justice,<sup>24</sup> solidarity,<sup>25</sup> 'mutual promise and common deliberation,'<sup>26</sup> and 'public happiness.'<sup>27,28</sup> While her account of political principles is incomplete, what we can be certain of is their worldly character. Political principles are worldly phenomena because they only exist *when* citizens bring them into the world.

In particular, Arendt links the generation of political principles to participating in the political activities of speech and action. She explains, "the manifestation of principles comes about only through action, they are manifest in the world as long as the action lasts, but no longer."<sup>29</sup> In other words, political principles only appear *when* persons speak and act for the sake of creating and maintaining the political realm. Thus, they exist in

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<sup>22</sup> Lucy Cane, "Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action," *European Journal of Political Theory* Vol. 14(1) (2015): 56. While Cane aims "to reconstruct a fuller account of principles" (Ibid.), the purpose of her undertaking is to tease out an ethical dimension in Arendt's conception of politics. The crux of Cane's claim is that the establishment of political principles offers us 'general guideposts' by which we can gauge the moral saliency of our actions (Ibid., 58). According to her, it goes to show that Arendt does not, in fact, lack "moral criteria by which to judge political action" (Ibid., 57). Although I will pick up on the accuracy of certain points in Cane's reconstructive account of political principles, I fundamentally disagree that it points to a "political ethics" (Ibid.). Since I have shown that moral and political judgments are distinct, it goes to show that judging according to political principles is a political matter.

<sup>23</sup> Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," *Between Past and Future*, 151.

<sup>24</sup> Arendt, "Introduction into Politics," 195.

<sup>25</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 88-89.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>28</sup> Cane also includes dignity, consent and dissent, rage, charity, and distrust (Cane, "Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action," 62, fn.37. Canvovan adds loyalty and faith to the list as well (Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 171).

<sup>29</sup> Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 151.

the world only for the moment that they are *enacted*. In this sense, political principles come close to Aristotle's conception of *arête* (virtue or excellence), insofar as they become "fully manifest only in the performing act itself."<sup>30,31</sup> As we saw in Chapter One, Aristotle distinguishes between potentiality and actuality. When it comes to the moral virtues, the distinction is as follows: one has the potential or capacity to become virtuous, which one actualizes in the activity of exhibiting virtuous behavior.<sup>32</sup> For instance, the female warrior, Penthesilea, has the potential to be courageous. However, she only becomes courageous *when* she properly faces her fear of injury or death with the appropriate level of confidence.<sup>33</sup>

Enacting political principles seems to run along similar lines for Arendt. Since all persons have the capacity to speak and act, they have the capacity to bring political principles to fruition. However, it is only in the act of performing them that political principles appear in the world. For

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> After briefly referring to Montesquieu's and Aristotle's conceptions of virtue, Arendt in fact elaborates on the political principles, and freedom in particular, by drawing on Machiavelli's conception of *virtù* (excellence) (Ibid.). Since we have already familiarized ourselves with Aristotle's conception of virtue in Chapter Two, I will limit my analysis to Aristotle's virtue ethics. Even though Arendt mainly appeals to Montesquieu's conception of political principles, the only point I wish to make is that they only emerge when engaging in the activity itself. Therefore, it is sufficient to make the connection between Aristotle's *arête* and the worldly characteristic of her understanding of political principles. For a more detailed account of Arendt's indebtedness to Montesquieu, see Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought*, 172-175; Cane, "Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action," 62-63.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle is clear that we are not born with the virtues, but we are predisposed to forming them throughout our lives (*NE* 1103a23-25). He makes this clear when he says, "[a]s all potentialities are either innate, like the sense, or come by practice, like the power of playing the flute, or by earning, like that of the arts, those which come by practice or by rational formula we must acquire by previous exercise" (*MP* 1047b30-35).

<sup>33</sup> Penthesilea was an Amazonian warrior who featured in the fifth book (*Aethiopsis*) of the *Epic Cycle*, believed to have been written by Arctinus of Miletus. She fought against Achilles in the Trojan War.



example, all persons have the potential to be free, but they only become free *when* they speak and interact with each other in the world.<sup>34</sup> She explains:

Freedom or its opposite appears in the world whenever such principles are actualized; the appearance of freedom, like the manifestation of principles, coincides with the performing act. Men *are* free – as distinguished from their possessing the gift for freedom – as long as they act, neither before nor after, for to *be* free and to act are the same.<sup>35</sup>

Since Arendt holds that ‘to act’ and ‘to be free’ are synonymous, we can consider political speech and action as the conditions for the possibility of political principles unfolding in the world. It is only by enacting our capacity for speech and action that persons become free, virtuous, and equal.

On the one hand, the link between political activities and political principles shows that the enactment of political principles is inextricably linked to the creation and maintenance of the public realm. Since the enactment of political principles hinges on speaking and interacting with others in the world, it follows, as Cane points out, “the manifestation and contestation of principles *is* politics.”<sup>36</sup> If persons did not repeatedly enact their freedom, they would not be free. In other words, neither political principles nor the political world would exist. On the other hand, linking the appearance of political principles to speech and action suggests that

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<sup>34</sup> For an excellent account of the political principle of freedom, see Nemesio S. Que, “Hannah Arendt on Freedom and Political Action,” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 1(1997): 123-137.

<sup>35</sup> Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 151.

<sup>36</sup> Cane, “Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action,” 72.

the establishment of political principles ‘comes at a price.’<sup>37</sup> It is the very one that lies at the core of Arendt’s concern for the political world, namely, the risk of its disappearance.

Since political principles only exist as long as they are enacted, it suggests that they are vulnerable and contingent, just like the political world. Thus, similarly to the political activities of speech and action, political principles are fleeting and contingent in nature. As Arendt maintains, “the products of action, such as events, deeds, and words, all of which are in themselves so transitory that they would hardly survive the hour or day they appeared in the world.”<sup>38</sup> Since the ‘products’ of speech and action are intangible human relationships, there is nothing to guarantee their existence, apart from repeatedly speaking and interacting with others in the world. If political activities and political principles are intertwined, it is imperative that citizens continuously enact their freedom, virtuosity, and equality. In fact, Arendt claims that they “can be *repeated* time and again;”<sup>39</sup> and what is more, they *should* be repeated in order to preserve the continuity of the world.

Otherwise, citizens would neither *be* free, nor have a shared space in which to actualize their freedom. Cane therefore describes political

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<sup>37</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 244.

<sup>38</sup> Hannah Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 12.

<sup>39</sup> Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 152; cited by Cane, “Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action,” 68.

principles as “(re)generative” in the sense “that they reinforce the vitality of the public realm in which they operate.”<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Arendt implies that the purpose of politics is to ensure a public space in which persons can bring political principles to fruition. As she says, “[i]f, then, we understand the political in the sense of the polis, its end or *raison d’être* would be to establish and keep in existence the space where freedom and virtuosity can appear.”<sup>41</sup> Meaning, the purpose of politics is to maintain itself, so that citizens can express and uphold their freedom, virtuosity, and equality. This must be what Arendt means when she says, “[t]he extraordinary significance of these principles is not only that they first move human beings to act but that they are also the source of constant nourishment for their actions.”<sup>42</sup> Now that we have seen how political principles are established, we can turn to how they generate shared standards of exemplarity, which aid in the finalization of general validity.

## 2.2 Exemplarity

While Arendt does not work this out in detail, the role that political principles serve is similar to the role that Kant attributes to empirical examples. As I will show, this follows because enacting political principles gives rise to exemplary human conduct. In turn, these instances of exemplarity can be used by others as standards by which to gauge the validity of their own judgments and actions. Indeed, across Arendt’s texts, she repeats that political principles “set the standards by which everything

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<sup>40</sup> Cane, “Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action,” 72.

<sup>41</sup> Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 154.

<sup>42</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 195.

that is done must be judged;”<sup>43</sup> that they provide an “ultimate standard for judging the community’s deeds and misdeeds;”<sup>44</sup> and that “[w]e judge and tell right from wrong by having present in our mind some incident and some person, absent in time or space, that have become examples.”<sup>45</sup>

While she explains that they can be current, past, or even fictional examples,<sup>46</sup> the point is that we have seen and heard them in the world.

However, only certain forms of human conduct can serve as examples. Merely seeing others speak and interact with each other in the world is not a sufficient condition for the constitution of exemplarity. Instead, Arendt indicates two criteria for the establishment of exemplary human conduct. First, the enactment of political principles must proceed from the motivation to create and maintain the political world for its own sake. Second, the ensuing action should be ‘generalizable,’ insofar as it stands for a particular instance and at the same time applies to other, similar cases.

To start with the first criterion, Arendt makes clear that the motivation to participate in the establishment of political principles should not stem from private or personal concerns, but rather from common concern for the world. This is what she means when she says that political principles cannot ‘inspire from within,’ “but inspire, as it were, from without.”<sup>47</sup> The

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<sup>43</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 194.

<sup>44</sup> Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, 201.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 145.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 152.

motivation cannot arise internally, such as from the biological need to sustain the life cycle or the love that unites the family.<sup>48</sup> Private interests therefore cannot give rise to exemplary human conduct. This is why Arendt claims that pity cannot serve as a political principle. Since it binds persons too closely to one another, it destroys the integrity of the public realm. It does not unite persons around a shared goal, but rather overwhelms persons with emotion.

In contrast, Arendt proposes that solidarity can serve as a political principle. This is the case because it enables citizens to “establish deliberately and, as it were, *dispassionately* a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited.”<sup>49</sup> She admits that the impartiality of solidarity “may appear cold and abstract”<sup>50</sup> because one is not directly affected by the concrete suffering of others. However, the impartiality of solidarity, as Canovan explains, is “actually an advantage, for those inspired by solidarity are not carried away from reality on the boundless seas of emotion.”<sup>51</sup> Instead of being affected by the suffering of others, solidarity unites persons around a shared goal. It thus fulfills the first criterion for the establishment of exemplarity because it is guided by the “common interest” of promoting “the dignity of man.”<sup>52</sup> The impartiality of solidarity promotes the public realm because it ensures that persons are

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<sup>48</sup> Cane, “Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action,” 63.

<sup>49</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 88; emphasis added.

<sup>50</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 89.

<sup>51</sup> Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought*, 171.

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 88.

guided by the motivation to create and maintain the political world for its own sake.

Political principles thus ‘inspire from without’ in the sense that seeing others enact solidarity ‘inspires’ us to do the same. It means that the impulse to bring political principles into existence is the very fact that others create them before us. Arendt thus describes political principles as “wellsprings” that “set [actions] into motion.”<sup>53</sup> For example, the Iranian protests ‘inspire from without,’ insofar as they motivate others to unite around defending the dignity of Mahsa Amini. Seeing Iranian citizens act out of solidarity moves other citizens to participate, and to enact their own freedom from the authoritarian, Islamic regime. What is more, acting on the basis of political principles is what makes actions exemplary. This is the case because they are ‘generalizable.’ It means that actions stand for one instance while standing for other, similar instances. As Arendt tells us, an example is “some particular instance which now *becomes* valid for other particular instances.”<sup>54</sup> One can act in solidarity with Iranian citizens fighting for their rights, and one can act in solidarity with Ukrainian citizens fighting for theirs.

Enacting political principles must be synonymous with establishing shared standards of exemplarity. This is the case because persons can ‘abstract’ a general rule from the particular instance of exemplary

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<sup>53</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 196.

<sup>54</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 144.

conduct. As Arendt says, solidarity “partakes” “of generality,” insofar as one “is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually, not only the multitude of a class or a nation or a people, but eventually all mankind.”<sup>55</sup> What she means is, when citizens act out of solidarity, they can identify with and defend the dignity of the affected person, while keeping the dignity of humankind in view.<sup>56</sup> For example, protesting the unjust death of Mahsa Amini upholds her dignity in particular and the dignity of all Iranian women in general. Amini’s death not only represents a particular instance of injustice, but it also stands for decades of injustice committed against Iranian women. In this way, it serves as an example for other similar cases, which retains the particularity of her case under a generalizable rule that others can ‘hold onto.’

Since solidarity fulfills both criteria for the establishment of exemplarity, it goes to show that persons can use such examples as guidelines to determine the validity of their own judgments and actions. It becomes clear that enacted political principles play a similar role for Arendt as empirical examples play for Kant. That is, the appearance of exemplary human conduct in the world provides us with shared standards by which to gauge the validity of political judgments. What Kant’s empirical examples and Arendt’s actualization of political principles thus have in

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<sup>55</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 88.

<sup>56</sup> In fact, what underscores the amenability of solidarity to the public sphere is that it enforces equality, whereas pity enforces inequality. Whereas solidarity ensures that we regard the affected sufferers as equals, she explains that “pity, in contrast to solidarity, does not look upon both fortune and misfortune, the strong and the weak, with an equal eye” (Ibid., 89). Despite pure intentions, feeling sorry for the misery of others establishes a hierarchy in which the privileged look down upon the underprivileged. In contrast, solidarity creates equality precisely because the guiding motivation is to uphold the dignity of the oppressed, and in doing so, the dignity of all.

common is that they are the only available reference to measure the validity of our judgments. Just as there are no universal rules by which to judge beauty, there are no universal rules by which to judge extraordinary political events. Therefore, when pre-existing standards do not suffice to judge the particularity of a given worldly event, Arendt instructs us to refer to worldly instances of exemplarity.

She rhetorically asks:

How, for instance, is one able to judge, to evaluate, an act as courageous? When judging, one says spontaneously, without any derivations from general rules, 'This man has courage.' If one were a Greek, one would have in 'the depths of one's mind' the example of Achilles.<sup>57</sup>

In the same vein as Kant, Arendt claims that exemplary human conduct serves as 'precedent' in order to verify the validity of political judgments. Similarly to Kant's empirical examples, worldly instances of exemplarity are reliable standards to use in order to fulfill the general validity of political judgments. What makes them authoritative is that they have withstood the test of time, insofar as they have been established by and verified over generations. As Arendt states, "they have their origin in some particular historical incident, and we then proceed to make it 'exemplary' – to see in the particular what is valid for more than one case."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Arendt, "Imagination," 84.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.



Historically validated ‘precedents’ help us finalize a generally valid rule precisely because they represent a particular instance of exemplarity that illuminates a general rule. Arendt explains:

one may encounter or think of some table that one judges to be the best possible table and take this table as an example of how tables actually should be: the *exemplary table* (‘example’ comes from *eximere*, ‘to single out some particular’). This exemplar is and remains a particular that in its very particularity reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined. Courage is *like* Achilles.<sup>59</sup>

Uncovering the general rule hidden within shared standards of exemplarity allows us to measure the validity of our own rule against it. Perhaps what Arendt means is that the general validity evinced in examples helps determine the scope of our own judgments. We can determine whether or not our rule is too particular or too general, and then decide for ourselves whether or not devising a new one is necessary.

While shared standards of exemplarity should assist in completing the general validity of political judgments, the problem is that they do not provide fixed ‘guidelines’ by which to determine the validity of our judgments. Arendt maintains that principles:

are never anything more than the guidelines and directives by which we orient ourselves and which, as such, are never cast in stone, but whose concrete realizations are always changing because we are dealing with other people who also have goals.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 77.

<sup>60</sup> Arendt, “Introduction *into* Politics,” 193.

What seems to complicate matters is that political principles are subject to change. While Arendt says that they are “fundamental convictions that a group of people share,”<sup>61</sup> they lack permanency, insofar as they are “not bound to any particular person or to any particular group.”<sup>62</sup> Since political principles fluctuate over time and from community to community, it begs the question whether or not the instantiation of political principles truly gives us substantial standards that aid in the establishment of political judgments.

Arendt is very well aware of this problem, for she explains, without giving a satisfactory answer:

the question arises whether there is really nothing to hold onto when we are called upon to decide that this is right and this is wrong, as we deceive that this is beautiful and this is ugly. And the answer to this question is yes and no.<sup>63</sup>

This suggests that we cannot know with certainty whether or not our judgments are truly generally valid. All Arendt tells us is that “[t]he judgment has exemplary validity to the extent that the example is rightly chosen.”<sup>64</sup> Or that the general validity of political judgments cannot be too broad. Otherwise, it becomes “something so general that distinctions can no longer be made, names no longer be named.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>62</sup> Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 152.

<sup>63</sup> Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy,” 143.

<sup>64</sup> Arendt, “Imagination,” 84.

<sup>65</sup> Arendt, “Postscript,” *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 295. Specifically, Arendt makes this claim in regard to the public’s reluctance to hold individual persons responsible. Instead of the desire to hold individuals accountable for their misdeeds, it seems what the public would rather “condemn are trends, or whole groups of people – the larger the better – in short, something so general that distinctions can no longer be made, names no longer be named” (Ibid.). However, the problem Arendt takes with this phenomenon is that

Perhaps an indication that the scope of political judgments is not too broad is being able to keep sight of the particular. This is Arendt's issue with pity precisely because its 'boundlessness' prevents persons from identifying with particular instances of suffering. As she explains, one can "no longer direct it towards specific suffering and focus it on particular persons."<sup>66</sup> Particular cases of suffering get lost in the overwhelmingness of their misery, which causes one to "depersonaliz[e] the sufferers, lump[ing] them together into an aggregate."<sup>67</sup> Losing sight of the particular thus prevents one from being able to 'abstract' a general rule from it. Precisely because one subsumes the suffering of particular persons under the universal suffering of 'the masses.'

This might not be a satisfactory solution to determining the scope of general validity. However, Arendt cannot provide a definitive answer. Political principles cannot give us 'anything to hold onto' because they cannot provide set guidelines.<sup>68</sup> Otherwise, they prescribe how we ought to judge or how we ought to act. It would turn judging into the subsumptive activity of plugging a particular case under a universal rule. Political principles thus cannot offer fixed standards, otherwise their universal validity would destroy the world. Instead, it seems that the

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holding an entire group, country, or tradition responsible for an injustice diffuses personal responsibility precisely because no one can be singled out as having committed it. As she continues, it leads to "generalities according to which all cats are grey and we are all equally guilty" (Ibid., 296).

<sup>66</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 89-90.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>68</sup> As Cane has it, they "simply 'inspire' action rather than offer determinate prescriptions for action" (Cane, "Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action," 72).

expression of political principles is their own guide, as well as their own outcome. This must be what Arendt means when she says, “[w]hat saves the act of beginning from its own arbitrariness is that it carries its own principle within itself.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, the only answer Arendt can offer us is that the particular action holds the general rule within itself. As she has it, “[t]he example is the particular that contains in itself, or is supposed to contain, a concept or a general rule.”<sup>70</sup> Perhaps what she means is that we will know when someone commits a courageous act when we see it.

She thus implies that political principles can give us ‘something to hold onto,’ insofar as they generate examples that *show* us how to judge and how to enact them. Rather than guaranteeing a certain outcome, political principles thus ‘teach’ us how to judge and act by setting an example, which we can replicate. We will see in the next sub-section that Arendt appears to break with Kant in this regard. Whereas she believes establishing general validity proceeds by way of imitation, he believes that imitation forfeits the autonomy of taste. However, I will show that Arendt does not break with Kant because examples have a persuasive form of validity that does not prescribe a specific judgment or action. Instead, examples ‘inspire’ persons to determine for themselves how they can adopt and reimagine the exhibited action in their own, unique way.

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<sup>69</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, 205.

<sup>70</sup> Arendt, “Imagination,” 84.

### 2.3 *Imitation*

Even though political principles cannot offer a firm footing from which to validate the general validity of political judgments, they nevertheless provide a general guideline for judgment and action. This is the case because actualized political principles bring examples into the world that show persons how to judge and how to become examples themselves. The general validity of political judgments and the enactment of political principles is thus achieved by way of imitation. Arendt explains, “these examples teach or persuade by inspiration, so that whenever we try to perform a deed of courage or of goodness it is as though we imitated someone else.”<sup>71</sup> By setting imitation as the means by which to finalize our judgments, Arendt appears to break from Kant. He is skeptical of imitating the judgments of others because it undermines our autonomy.

Kant clarifies that finalizing the validity of aesthetic judgments is not established by imitating the judgments of others (5:232). He explains:

For taste must be an ability one has oneself; and although someone who imitates a model may manifest skill insofar as he succeeds in this, he manifests taste only insofar as he can judge that model himself (5:232).

Imitating the judgments of others might make us seem as though we have ‘good taste.’ If the young poet were to keep their initial judgment to themselves and align with the general consensus, others might think their judgment is exemplary. However, imitating the general consensus entails

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<sup>71</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” 243.

forfeiting their autonomy because the poet did not create their own rule. Instead, they simply adopted the judgments of others as their own.

While Arendt employs the term ‘imitation,’ she stays truer to Kant than it seems. She does not define imitation as conforming to the judgments or actions of others. Imitation does not involve adopting the judgment or action, but rather reinventing and reimagining it in our own way. We can therefore see that Arendt works with a positive conception of imitation, which reinforces the autonomy of judging, as well as the vitality of the public realm. In particular, the persuasiveness of examples teaches us how to invent our own judgments and actions that instantiate the example. To elucidate the persuasiveness of exemplarity, she refers to Socrates, who “set an example” “when he refused to escape the death sentence.”<sup>72</sup> He showed by way of example not only that one should not fear death because philosophy prepares one for it. But he also demonstrated that an “unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology* 37e-38a), insofar as choosing to live in exile would prevent him from pursuing knowledge with others. While Socrates’ fate is tragic, his commitment to his convictions nevertheless shows the worth in leading an ‘examined life.’

At the same time, Arendt’s choice of example is curious, given that she typically categorizes philosophy as anti-political, since it pursues ‘the truth.’ However, it becomes political when philosophical commitments enter the public sphere in the form of examples. As she explains:

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

And this teaching by example is, indeed, the only form of ‘persuasion’ that philosophical truth is capable of without perversion or distortion; by the same token, philosophical truth can become ‘practical’ and inspire action without violating the rules of the political realm only when it manages to become manifest in the guise of an example.<sup>73</sup>

By following through on what Socrates believes in, he becomes a political actor in the sense that his exemplarity persuades others of the importance of leading a philosophical life. His decision, although grounded in philosophical truth, becomes amenable to the public realm. Arendt thus concludes, “[t]his transformation of a theoretical or speculative statement into exemplary truth ... is a borderline experience for the philosopher: by setting an example and ‘persuading’ the multitude in the only way open to him, he has begun to act.”<sup>74</sup> Accepting the death penalty shows perhaps in the most radically persuasive way that a life lived without pursuing knowledge with others is not worth living.

However, it does not mean that others should show their commitment to a philosophical way of life in precisely the same manner with the same outcome. Instead, Socrates’ example has the potential to persuade others of the importance of philosophical examination, which inspires them to pursue it in their own way. In fact, it is precisely because of the fluidity and generality of examples that makes them capable of promoting the plurality of the public realm. This is the case because imitation gives rise to a plurality of expressions of one and the same principle. Imitating

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

others does not entail following suit, but rather determining for oneself what it means to actualize a given political principle. This is what Cane implies when she says that political principles can be expressed “in innovative and unexpected ways.”<sup>75</sup> For instance, showing solidarity with Iranian women can be expressed in a myriad of different ways. While some citizens take to the streets, others cut off strands of their hair or completely shave their heads. While some citizens take off their hijabs, others burn them on the streets. Even though these actions vary, they are all iterations of the same principle of solidarity.

Furthermore, the open-endedness of imitation paves the way for the continuous revision of political judgments, which is essential to establishing their general validity. The general standards provided by worldly instantiations of exemplarity thus leave imitation open for interpretation, and most importantly, for revision. This supports Arendt’s conviction that general validity is not something that can be completed in a final sense. Instead, it consists of an endless process of revision, which is achieved taking the ‘innumerable’ perspectives of others into consideration, as well as the ‘innumerable’ ways of instantiating exemplarity. Otherwise, the standards persons invent themselves become ‘ossified’ and fixed, which petrifies the ability to judge. Encountering new and unexpected instantiations of exemplarity thus ensures that the activity of judging keeps itself open, which simultaneously preserves the continuity of the world. Thus, Arendt’s conception of imitation does not

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<sup>75</sup> Cane, “Hannah Arendt on the principles of political action,” 69.



break with Kant, but rather reinforces the autonomy and creativity of reflective judgment.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have justified Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition. This is the case because Kant undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment himself. He appeals to empirical examples as 'precedent' in order to verify the validity of aesthetic judgments. This led me to believe that general validity is not merely achieved by theoretically extending it to others. Instead, referring to empirical examples proves that general validity must be supplemented by shared standards of exemplary taste. Since empirical examples can only emerge in the world, it confirms Arendt's claim that the general validity of reflective judgment can only come to fruition in a human community.

By linking the emergence of shared standards of exemplarity to Arendt's obscure account of political principles, I showed that they play a similar role as Kant's empirical examples. Namely, actualized political principles provide general guidelines against which to gauge the validity of political judgments. When persons enact political principles in the world, their 'words and deeds' serve as shared standards of exemplarity. In turn, imitating examples teaches persons how to judge and act, which reinforces the autonomy of political decision-making and fosters the plurality characteristic of the political world. Bringing Arendt closer to

Kant in this regard offers insight into how she might have completed the general validity of political judgment.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I developed a new reading of Arendt's interpretation of reflective judgment. The novelty of my claim is that it fits reflective judgment squarely within her political thought – without compromising the integrity of Kant's aesthetics or her own conception of politics. This allowed me to show that reflective judgment lends itself as a model for Arendt's conception of political judgment.

I stayed true to Arendt's political thought by offering a new reading of the private-public distinction that keeps her categories intact. Developing an 'Arendtian phenomenology' of privacy achieved three goals: (1) it offered a richer account of privacy by working out the non-privative realm; (2) it established an inter-relationship between the private and public realms that is consistent with Arendt's thought; and (3) it squared the formality of reflective judgment with the publicity and worldliness of political judgment.

My analysis showed that it is possible for reflective activities to lead into political activities. And what is more, it showed that non-privative activities constitute one of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for the emergence of politics. These activities consist of the work of the *homo faber* that fabricates the human artifice; the Socratic two-in-one that stabilizes politics by underscoring 'words and deeds' with thoughtfulness; and enlarged mentality that gives persons the ability to 'insert' themselves into the world.

I stayed true to Kant's thought by bridging the *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide in a way that does not undermine the integrity of his system. Arendt indicated that the imagination is the clue to uncovering our link to the world. Considering the imagination as the mediating link between the two realms allows her to bring the general validity of reflective judgment to fruition in the way he intended. What reinforced Arendt's claim that she follows through on Kant's own ideals is that he undermines the *a priori* nature of reflective judgment himself. He sets empirical examples as standards by which to gauge the validity of aesthetic judgments. Since the general validity of reflective judgment is, in fact, a worldly phenomenon, it substantiates Arendt's claim that she brings Kant's unwritten political philosophy to fruition.

Bringing her closer to Kant offered a fuller picture of her conception of political judgment. I showed that she maps all four elements required for the formulation of political judgments onto the formulation of aesthetic judgments. While provisional, my resulting analysis provided possible connections between enlarged mentality and the two mental operations of judgment; the two mental operations and the creation of a generally valid rule; and enlarged mentality and general validity. Furthermore, I showed that Arendt's solution to reconciling Kant's *a priori* – *a posteriori* divide gives her the answer to uniting the non-privative and public spheres. The imagination is the mediating link between them, insofar as it gives

persons the ability to ‘insert’ themselves into the world, and to bring newly heard opinions back with them.

My interpretation of the non-privative sphere and Arendt’s appropriation of reflective judgment has the potential to resolve further, deep-seated tensions in her political thought. The following is not an exhaustive list, but it indicates three further avenues of research and potential applications of this project.

- (1) The *vita contemplativa* and *activa* are two sides of the same coin;
- (2) Judgment unites the spectator and the actor;
- (3) Arendt develops one, consistent theory of judgment.

To start with the first tension in Arendt’s thought, locating all of the activities that comprise the *vita contemplativa* in non-privacy has the potential to unite it with the *vita activa*.

My suggestion is consistent with Arendt’s claim that she never meant to oppose these two ways of life. Later in her life she even admits,

the main flaw and mistake of *The Human Condition* is the following: I still look at what is called in the tradition the *vita activa* from the viewpoint of the *vita contemplativa*, without ever saying anything real about the *vita contemplativa*.<sup>1</sup>

While we can never know with certainty how Arendt planned to unite these two ways of life, my interpretation of non-privacy provides a possible solution to this problem. Even though willing is a mental activity,

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Arendt on Hannah Arendt,” *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Political World*, ed. Melvyn A Hill (New York: St. Martin’s University Press, 1979), 305. I would like to thank Lilian Alweiss for bringing this quote to my attention.

it stands to reason that it is also an unpolitical and non-privative ability. For one, it is world-oriented, seeing as its function is to plan and anticipate the fulfillment of future actions. As Arendt claims, “[e]very volition, although a mental activity, relates to the world of appearances in which its project is to be realized.”<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the will prepares persons for political participation because it equips them with the ability to initiate infinitely possible and spontaneous actions in the world. This is the case because Arendt associates the will with natality. She thus defines “the Will as an organ for the future and identical with the power of beginning something new.”<sup>3</sup> It thus provides the necessary but not sufficient conditions for bringing our “future projects”<sup>4</sup> into the world. This leads me to believe that the will in particular sets the conditions for the actualization of natality in the world.

My reading of non-privacy thus allows us to see all three mental activities that comprise the life of the mind as the reflective counterparts to the emergence of public phenomena. Whereas the Socratic two-in-one underscores speech and action with thoughtfulness, enlarged mentality sets the conditions for the emergence of public discourse, and willing sets the conditions for the actualization of natality. The *vita contemplativa* and

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, “Willing,” *The Life of the Mind*, (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

the *vita activa* are thus two sides of the same coin, since they both contribute to the emergence of the political world.

Second, my reading of non-privacy shows that the spectator and actor are also two sides of the same coin. This resolves two misconceptions in the secondary literature. On the one hand, it resolves the claim that the spectator and actor are irreconcilable. On the other hand, it resolves the claim that turning to reflective judgment exacerbates the divide between them.<sup>5</sup> Arendt gives credence to these claims because she appears to drive a wedge between the spectator and the actor. She conceives of the spectator as “uninvolved and nonparticipating”<sup>6</sup> in human affairs. Precisely because they must withdraw from the world in order to judge it impartially.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the actor is an involved participant in human affairs, seeing as their ‘words and deeds’ create and sustain the public realm. This appears to preclude the actor from assuming the role of the spectator, and hence from judging impartially. Arendt claims, “each of the actors knows only his part or, if he should judge from the perspective of acting, only the part of the whole that concerns him. The actor is partial by definition.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Beiner (1992); Bernstein (1986); Passerin d’Entrèves (1994); Kateb (2001); Weidenfeld (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 65.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

Turning to reflective judgment appears to exacerbate the divide between the spectator and the actor. This is the case because reflective judgment entails assuming a spectatorial attitude on human affairs. Arendt explains:

When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one's bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen, and therefore, also a *Weltbetrachter*, a world spectator.<sup>9</sup>

It seems that the roles of the spectator and actor are mutually exclusive. However, my reading of non-privacy and reflective judgment unites them in a way that is consistent with Arendt's thought. Since non-privacy is the realm of withdrawal, it follows that engaging in all mental activities requires assuming a spectatorial attitude on human affairs.

Every actor must become a spectator in order to determine how to act meaningfully in human affairs. In turn, every spectator becomes an actor when they communicate their judgments.<sup>10</sup> What mediates between the roles of the actor and the spectator is enlarged mentality. She alludes to this when she claims, "the spectator's verdict, while impartial and freed from the interests of gain or fame, is not independent of the views of others – on the contrary, according to Kant, an 'enlarged mentality' has to take them into account."<sup>11</sup> Although the spectator and actor create and maintain the political world in different manners, they can only perform their functions by assuming both standpoints.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt, "Thinking," *The Life of the Mind*, 94.



Third, considering enlarged mentality as the mediating link between the spectator and actor resolves the claim that Arendt develops two, distinct theories of judgment.<sup>12</sup> That is, a mental one for the spectator and a political one for the actor.<sup>13</sup> Others have developed two theories of judgment along these lines not only because of the tension between the spectator and the actor, but also because there is a shift in Arendt's thought. As Beiner rightfully notes, in her earlier works, she describes judgment as the political ability of the actor, who creates the world through their 'words and deeds.' Yet in her later works, she describes judgment as the mental ability of the spectator, who creates the world by communicating their judgments on human affairs.<sup>14</sup> The way I have read reflective judgment allows us to see Arendt's theory of judgment as one, consistent theory. This is the case because it offers us both the reflective dimension (enlarged mentality) and the public dimension (public discourse). Arendt therefore does not need to situate judgment "exclusively within the ambit of the life of the mind,"<sup>15</sup> as Beiner claims. She can have it both ways: judgment can be a mental capacity that leads persons into the world and back.

Justifying Arendt's claim that reflective judgment has political potential by bringing her closer to Kant has the potential to unite her thought in the same way she claimed to unite his – the imagination is the mediating link.

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<sup>12</sup> Beiner (1992); Benhabib (2003); Passerin d'Entrèves (1994); Yar (2000).

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," *Lectures*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92; see also Richard J. Bernstein, "Judging – the Actor and the Spectator," *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 221.

<sup>15</sup> Beiner, "Interpretive Essay," 139.





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