

The Foundation of Political Life: Kant, Arendt, and Schelling, and the Ineliminability of Conflict

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Abstract

One of the most persistent questions in the history of the thinking out of the sphere of political life pertains to the relation between the spectator and the actor in this sphere. This thesis asks: How is the relation between the actor, who participates in the political event from the particularity of their own unique position, and the spectator, who views and judges a political event distantly, universally, and disinterestedly, to be thought out? This question is approached in three stages. Firstly, there is a step back to Immanuel Kant, who contends in *The Conflict of the Faculties* that the sphere of political life is primarily grounded in the universal and disinterested judgment that is only possible from the position of the spectator. In the second stage of the thesis, Chapter 2 juxtaposes the political theory of Kant and the political theory of Hannah Arendt. In contrast to Kant, Arendt argues that the foundation of the political must be located within the realm of the actor, who, in acting from their position in the world, struggles to view the event objectively. Out of the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt comes the conclusion that both Kant and Arendt fail to adequately account for the relation between the actor and the spectator because both thinkers attempt to avoid the fundamental tension between judging and acting by naming one side of the tension primary and the other side secondary. The third stage of the thesis consists of asking whether there is a third possibility for dealing with the relation between the actor and spectator. In Chapter 3 the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt becomes doubly meaningful as symptomatic of what is called the ineliminability of conflict as the foundation of the sphere of political life. Thus Chapter 3 contends that Schelling, as the original thinker of the ineliminability of conflict, is the missing link in the history of thinking out the sphere of the political life as founded in the ineliminability of the conflict between judging and acting.

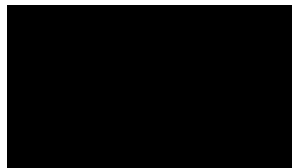
Thesis Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. The core theme of the thesis is the “political”. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the Philosophy department under the supervision of Professor Andrew Benjamin. A version of Chapter 1 was presented at “Kant and Hegel: Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art” at Monash University, April 2016. Versions of Chapter 3 were presented at both the North American Schelling Society conference, “The Heritage and Legacy of F.W.J. Schelling”, in September 2015, and at the Australasian Association of Philosophy conference in July 2015.

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The undersigned hereby certifies that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student’s and co-authors’ contributions to this work.

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Introduction

One of the most persistent questions in the history of thinking out the sphere of political life pertains to the relation between the spectator and the actor in this sphere. The sphere of political life is a space in which human beings appear as together simply for the sake of being together. One implication of this definition is that in the sphere of political life there is an inherent value in being together in a way that holds open the possibility for being together into the future. That is, even this brief description of the sphere of political life already delimits the very activity of the political; nothing is to be discussed or carried out in this sphere that would threaten the possibility for the continual actualization of the political in the future. What this implication then demands is an outline of precisely what activity has this characteristic; what activity holds this space open primarily for the sake of its openness? One answer, favored in this thesis, would be to say that what allows people to be together in the sphere of political life simply for the sake of seeing one another and being seen in this sphere is universal and disinterested speech and action that is enacted by individuals amongst other distinct and unique individuals. In this definition of the sphere of political life the reader may already recognize echoes of the Kantian political, insofar as the sphere of political life is held open by *universality* and *disinterestedness*; as well as echoes of the Arendtian political, because it defines the sphere of political life in terms of appearing to others through speech and action. Immanuel Kant's political writings tend to locate the sphere of political life within the realm of the spectator, who views and judges a political event universally and disinterestedly. In contrast, for Hannah Arendt the sphere of political life is located within the realm of actors, who, through the particularity of their positions in the action, participate together in the political event. The way in which the Kantian spectator and the Arendtian

actor are able to coincide is not immediately obvious. While it seems to be the case that both the actors and the spectators must play a role in the sphere of political life – since the sphere of political life does seem to demand the universal and disinterested judgment that must be acted out within the particularity of the actor – neither the political theory of Kant, nor that of Arendt, gives a clear cut theoretical framework as to the thinking out of the coincidence of the actor and the spectator. Consequently, the guiding questions of this thesis are: How is the relation between the actor and the spectator to be thought? And, pending an answer to the first question, what does the sphere of political life look like when the relation between the actor and the spectator is more fully comprehended?

These questions are approached in three stages, each of which entails its own set of sub-questions. Firstly, there is a step back to Kant, who contends in *The Conflict of the Faculties* that the sphere of political life is primarily the sphere of political judgment, and that the meaning of a political event (the French Revolution is the event that is discussed) stems out of universal and disinterested judgment that is only possible from the position of the spectator. In an apparent antinomy, Kant proposes that the spectator is he or she who participates in the political event without participating. This is:

eine Teilnehmung dem Wunsche nach, die nahe an Enthusiasm grenzt, und deren Äußerung selbst mit Gefahr verbunden war, die also keine andere als eine moralische Anlage im Menschengeschlecht zur Ursache haben kann.¹

¹ Immanuel Kant, “Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten,” in *Sämtliche Werke Band 4: Logik Und Metaphysik* (Mundus Verlag, 1789), 436.

a wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this sympathy, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral disposition in the human race.²

In other words, the sphere of political life in Kant is inhabited primarily by historians or scholars, who, as distanced from the event, are able to re-cognize the many facets of the event in one cognition. What the spectator then sees within this one cognition is that which is universalizable and disinterested in this cognition. Kant suggests that what is universalizable and disinterested in the scene that the spectator watches is not the violence and triumph of the revolution, but rather the actors attempt to improve their lot. What is universalizable and disinterested within the political event is the actors' progress towards the moral law. What this cognition triggers in the spectator is an awareness within themselves of their own capacity to recognize the moral law, and therefore their capacity to respect (*Achtung*) the moral law. It is, therefore, the spectator's recognition of their own capacity for the moral that defines them as political and it is therefore subjectivity that delimits the sphere of political life in *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Thus, it can be said that, in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the sphere of political life is located within the realm of the metaphysical, that is, apart or above the physical, where the physical is to be understood here as the world of actuality, inhabited by actors and in which action takes place. The notion that the sphere of political life should be located within the realm of the spectator is appealing, for it is precisely the distance between the spectator and the event that allows for meaning to be derived from the event. However, it

² Immanuel Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, trans. Mary J. Gregor and Robert Anchor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7:85.

is worth acknowledging that by defining the sphere of political life as one inhabited primarily by the spectator, the distance between the spectator and the event creates new questions. For example: is the political sphere wholly a matter of the metaphysically grounded subjectivity of the scholar? If there is no link between the judgment of the spectator and the action of the actor, then how does a political event such as a revolution come to be? If political judgment is solely the purview of the spectator, and the spectator is distanced from the event, then how does the actor decide and judge upon which action to take? Does the role of the actor, without whom there would not be anything to judge, not require theorizing?

In the second stage of the thesis, Chapter 2 juxtaposes the political theory of Immanuel Kant with the political theory of Hannah Arendt. Arendt's political theory can be read in part as an attempt to solve some of the new questions that emerge out of Kant's thinking of the sphere of political life as primarily bounded up with the metaphysical subject. In contrast to Kant, Arendt argues that the political is not grounded primarily in the judging subject (the spectator). She argues instead that the foundation of the political must be located within the realm of the actor, who has a place in the world, who acts from this position, and who, in acting from this position, cannot always see the part their action plays in the greater scheme of actions. This different viewpoint is the most significant difference between the spectator and the actor. Arendt acknowledges that there is:

zwischen Philosophie und Politik eine Spannung lebt. Nämlich zwischen dem Menschen, insofern er ein philosophierendes, und dem Menschen, insofern er ein handelndes Wesen ist, eine Spannung, die es in der Naturphilosophie nicht gibt. Der Philosoph steht der Natur gegenüber wie alle anderen Menschen auch. Wenn

*er darüber denkt, spricht er im Namen der ganzen Menschheit. Aber er steht nicht neutral der Politik gegenüber.*³

a tension between philosophy and politics. That is, between the human being insofar as he is a philosophical being and the human being insofar as he is an acting being, is a tension that is not there in the philosophy of nature. The philosopher is objective in the face of nature like all other human beings. When he thinks about it, he speaks in the name of the whole of mankind. But he cannot be neutral in the face of politics.⁴

For Arendt, the tension emerges out of the realization that despite the fact that the philosopher attempts to be objective, it is not possible to be so in relation to the sphere of political life. The passage above can be read as an implicit critique of Kant's formulation of the sphere of political life. The claim would be that there is a sense in which Kant treats the French Revolution as though it is an object, as though it can be treated objectively through the philosophy of nature, in the same way that the laws of the universe can be treated objectively. The human being has no necessary stake in the laws of the universe, nor can the human being change these laws. Arendt was very much caught up in the political upheavals of her time. She was persecuted when the National Socialist Party came to power. She was interred in Gurs concentration camp in France for a few weeks. She later helped refugees escape persecution. She was eventually forced to leave Germany and finally found herself as a

³ Rbb-online, "Zur Person: Was Bleibt? Es Bleibt Die Muttersprache.," *Rbb*, 1964, http://www.rbb-online.de/zurperson/interview_archiv/arendt_hannah.html.

⁴ My translation.

refugee in America. For Arendt, there was no doubt that one's position in the world, both the position that one is born into and the standpoint that one chooses to take, must be a vital element of being in the sphere of political life. The human being must always have a stake in the sphere of political life. The philosopher, *qua* human being, cannot be distanced from the political event, which he or she seeks to objectively discuss. Philosophy demands thinking in terms of universality and necessity. But the political, for Arendt, is fundamentally a matter of action, of taking a stand, of naming one's position, admitting that one's position delineates one's response, of recognizing that one is not distanced from the world one lives in, and that one must, *in order to be a human being* at all, participate in the speech and action taking place around oneself. Universalizable thought means nothing if one does not also take a stand.

With Arendt, then, the sphere of political life becomes a sphere of contingency rather than necessity. For Arendt, the political is fundamentally the "space of appearance" where people appear to one another through a communal sense that drives them to be together simply for the sake of being together in action. The juxtaposition between judging and acting did not escape Arendt's own work. In the *Life of the Mind*, the last volume of which was called "Judging" and which was never completed because of Arendt's death, Arendt returned to the problem of accounting for judgment in her political theory. She had previously taken the subject on in her lecture series, *Lectures on the Political Writings of Kant*, published posthumously, but she had never fully integrated judgment into her theory. Many of Arendt's readers get the impression that Arendt was very much aware of the fundamental tension between judging and acting in her theory.⁵ The problem was, that in attempting to relinquish

⁵ See Majid Yar, "From Actor to Spectator: Hannah Arendt's 'Two Theories' of Political Judgment," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26, no. 2 (2000): 1–27.

the metaphysically grounded political subject, Arendt was never able to fully theorize this tension itself.⁶ As Seyla Benhabib, Andrew Norris, and others have argued, without this, Arendt is left with no theoretical framework on which to ground political judgment and no way of explaining how this judgment translates into action.⁷ In 1964 Hannah Arendt was interviewed by Günter Gaus for the German television program “*Zur Person*”. Beginning with this interview, Chapter 2 positions Arendt’s answer to the question of the political in juxtaposition with Kant’s. In that interview, Arendt states emphatically that she is not a philosopher. Rather, she says, she is a political theorist, and that philosophy is something that she has left behind. (Arendt makes the same claim at the beginning of *The Life of the Mind*; I am not a philosopher, she says). For Arendt the political is primarily a realm of action, of acting together in a communal “space of appearance” where subjects are together and appear to one another in their “uniqueness”, that is, in their sameness and their difference.⁸ The main sub-question of Chapter 2 then becomes: if what emerges out of the juxtaposition of Kant and Arendt is Arendt’s wish to relinquish the philosophical insofar as it is bound up with the metaphysically grounded political subject, is such a relinquishing possible?

What becomes clear as this question is addressed, and as a result of the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt in general, is that when both Kant and Arendt are confronted with

⁶ The term “relinquish” is taken from Catharine Malabou’s work: Catherine Malabou, “Can We Relinquish the Kantian Transcendental,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28, no. 3 (2014). This is taken up in more detail in Chapter 2.

⁷ Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 82; Andrew Norris, “Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense,” *Polity* 29, no. 2 (1996): 191.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 176.

the problem of the coincidence of the spectator and the actor, both thinkers choose one side of the equation (spectator or actor) and name it as primary, relegating the other side to second position, so as to avoid the problem of how the political is a sphere of both actors and spectators. Thus Kant and Arendt propose two separate but similar ways of solving the apparent antinomy between the actor and the spectator. In the third chapter this juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt becomes doubly meaningful as symptomatic of what is here to be called the ineliminability of conflict as the foundation of the sphere of political life. This juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt can be read as symptomatic of the conflict that founds the sphere of political life, where Kant represents the primacy of judging, and Arendt represents the primacy of acting. In the third stage of the thesis the idealist/romantic thinker F.W.J. Schelling's philosophical framework is considered as a potential solution to the problem faced by Kant and Arendt. In the *Ages of the World*, F.W.J. Schelling writes that at the very foundation of all life there is ferocious conflict. According to Schelling:

*Alles, was wird, kann im Unmut werden, und wie Angst die Grundempfindung jedes lebenden Geschöpfs, so ist alles, was lebt, nur im heftigen Streit empfangen*⁹

Everything that becomes can only become in displeasure, and as anxiety is the grounding sensation of every living creature, so too is everything, that lives, only born [or received] in ferocious conflict.¹⁰

⁹ F. W. J. Schelling, "Die Weltalter," in *Schellings Werke Vierter Hauptband*, ed. Manfred Schröter (München: C. H. Beck, 1961), 698.

¹⁰ My translation.

Conflict (*Streit*) is to be understood as opposed to violence (*Gewalt*). Whereas violence aims at either absolute dominance over or obliteration of an individual or a group, conflict between two or more beings leaves open the future possibility of agreement (as well as disagreement). One disagreement or counteraction does not eliminate the other actor/s or speaker/s so that no future agreement or disagreement is possible. One disagreement may direct or dominate the relationship for a time, but does not exclude all possibility of future discussion. In fact, disagreement can be as productive, if not sometimes more productive, than agreement. This is because it continues to hold open the possibility of new and different judgment and action. Violence, on the contrary, aims at annihilation. Conflict produces future possibilities. Whereas violence is never productive but only destructive, conflict is necessary to maintaining human beings as beings that are together.

Conflict, as productive, is opposed not only to violence on the one hand, but also to boredom on the other. Where the possibility for the new or unexpected is allowed, boredom is warded off. Boredom is the refusal of the discussion altogether. Non-engagement neither produces something interesting or new, nor inflicts violence and destroys the alternative viewpoint. Boredom means opting out of conflict (which always carries risk) altogether, and this means opting out of life. There is an element of safety in this: if one opts out of the constant becoming that sustains life (human life), one does not open oneself up to the anxiety, fear and displeasure that is always the risk of life founded in ferocious conflict. Opting out of human life means opting out of that element of life that is *uniquely* human. What is uniquely human is the life that judges and acts with and amongst other human beings. What is uniquely human is being together in the sphere of the *political* life.

Chapter 3 asks whether it is possible to theorize action and judgment and avoid the denial of one or the other. What is explored is the late philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling. While the relation between Schelling and the political has, until the recent publication of several articles, as well as a book on Schelling political theology, appeared at best tenuous, Chapter 3 asks whether Schelling, as the original thinker of the ineliminability of conflict, is the missing link in the history of thinking the sphere of the political life.¹¹ Chapter 3 reads Schelling's framework for the positive philosophy and philosophy of mythology politically in order to reconfigure the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt in such a light that the political life can be the sphere of both acting and judging in alternation.

Furthermore, what emerges out of the culmination of the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt, is a Schellingian framework of the political that demands the distinction between three concepts which have traditionally been conflated; namely the conceptions of the sphere of the social life, the sphere of the communal life and the sphere of the political life. These three concepts are often used interchangeably. It will be important for the proceeding argument that these three modes of human being together remain distinct (while accepting that in practice human beings weave in and out of these modes of being together in a far more complex manner than could ever be sufficiently intimated here). Ferdinand Tönnies was the first thinker to draw the important distinction between community and society. Tönnies

¹¹ See for examples of recent publications in English within this field, Jared McGeough, "Schelling 'After' Bakunin: Idealism, Anarchism, Post-Anarchism," *Symposium* 19 (2015): 80–93; Günter Zöllner, "Church and State: Schelling's Political Philosophy of Religion," in *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays*, ed. Lara Ostaric (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Saitya Brata Das, *The Political Theology of Schelling* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

claimed that *Gemeinschaft* refers to feelings of togetherness, while *Gesellschaft* refers to an individual need for human beings to group together in order to serve their own personal interests.¹² Max Weber, moreover, argued that community refers to “a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together.”¹³ On the contrary, according to Weber, society “rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement.”¹⁴ The distinction between the spheres of social, communal and political life are taken up in more detail as the thesis develops.

Being together communally is a being together that does not need to be consciously thought out; it is a non-rational being together. By this it is meant that human beings are drawn together by a sense for the common that occurs affectively, rather than via thought. Community is not controlled through rational thought. Being together communally is not the simple matter of human bodies being in the same place. Rather, the communal happens outside of the realm of rational thought. Community is a matter of human beings being drawn to one another outside of thought; it is affectual. It is shown that what is implicit in Hannah Arendt’s account of the political is a preference for this form of being together, in the “space of appearance”, for no other reason than being together.¹⁵ This is what is referred to in this thesis as community or “the communal”. The communal is associated with non-philosophical thinking. But this being together simply for the sake of being together occurs in a world in

¹² See, Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, trans. Charles Price Loomis (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 33.

¹³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Günther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: Berkeley : University of California Press, 1978), 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

¹⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199.

which human beings are not only communal beings but also social beings. In reality human beings populate a world where society is what brings people into relation, and where society must be thought out. Society will here be associated with philosophical thinking. Society occurs where human beings are put into relation, it places human beings with one another, it forges these relations, in other words, the societal relations between human beings are not always already there. The placing together of human beings can be fraught with difficulties. The question to be answered in relation to this specific juxtaposition between society and community is: what is the role of the sphere political life in relation to the sphere of social life and the sphere of communal life? The thesis concludes that the most fully thought out conceptualization of the sphere of political life requires thinking the conflict in its ineliminability in relation to this sphere. What the political captures, if we can capture it, is the fundamental and vital tension that is a part of the being of being human. It is precisely what we must work through in order to come together, but what also holds us apart. In what proceeds it is contended that the relation between the actor and the spectator should be thought as a fundamental conflict that makes the sphere of political life possible.

Chapter 1: Kant's metaphysical spectator and the sphere of social life

1.1 Introduction

Immanuel Kant locates the sphere of political life primarily within the realm of the spectator. What follows outlines the main elements of this metaphysical sphere of political life. The virtues of grounding the political metaphysically are, namely, that it allows for a theory of universal and disinterested political judgment. The word “metaphysical” entered philosophical discourse in the Greek, *ta meta phusika*, as the title given to Aristotle's study, *Metaphysics*. It means literally the things after the physics, most likely named as such simply because it came sequentially after his work the *Physics*.¹⁶ However, the sequential placement of the *Metaphysics* in Aristotle's works is fitting, given that for Kant what is metaphysical is so *a priori*, that is, prior to experience, but that the awareness of the *a priori* form, only comes about after one realizes that there must be more to, or something prior to, the representation of the object as it stands before the subject physically. There must be something additional that makes the representation of the object possible at all. The *a priori* form, then, for Kant is always already prior to the physical object. The physically existing “object” of the spectator's judgment is the actor. The actor, then, is what alerts the subject, the spectator, to that which is beyond the actor, that is, that which makes the representation of the actor possible at all. The use of the term meta-physical is to be understood in this thesis as that which is “meta” to the physical, that is, above, apart from, or transcendent to the physical. As above and apart from the action, the sphere of political life that the spectator inhabits thinks out a mark and a measure upon which to judge all political events.

¹⁶ S Marc Cohen, “Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 201 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016).

This chapter goes on to argue that, despite these virtues, the Kantian account of the political also faces some serious difficulties, with the most profound difficulty being Kant's failure to adequately engage with the political event in itself. This failure is borne out of Kant's unsatisfactory attempts to deal with the problem of the antinomy between judging and acting faced by the political subject. This failure means that Kant cannot answer questions about the actual existence of a political event like a revolution, questions such as: how is it that actors in a revolution come to be involved? Or, why does the political come to be, when it does, given that there is no utter necessity for it to be so? Finally, below, it is seen that rather than a full thinking out of the sphere of political life, what Kant achieves is the thinking out of a theory of *society* (*Gesellschaft*). Since this sphere of social life, though relevant, does not exhaust the thinking out of the sphere of political life, Chapter 2 moves on to juxtapose Kant's account of society with Arendt's account of this sphere of political life.

1.2 The antinomy between spectating and acting

Kant's late essay, "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" is the primary source for this chapter. It was written in 1795, but was withheld from publication until 1798, when it was published as the second essay in *The Conflict of the Faculties*.¹⁷ At the heart of this essay is the tension between the limitless human capacity for reason (used by a spectator publicly, that is, freely and openly) and the unavoidable limits of human physicality (for example, as actor in a revolution, who can never fully detach him or herself from interests, opinions, position, and bodily needs). In the *Conflict of the Faculties*,

¹⁷ References to the text are to Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," 235–327. References to the German original are to Immanuel Kant, Kant, "Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten," 377–458. A brief history of the essays, including the censorship faced by Kant, is given in the "Editor's Introduction", in Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," 235–36.

Kant writes that the sphere of political life is:

*bloß die Denkungsart der Zuschauer, welche sich bei diesem Spiel großer Umwandlungen öffentlich verrät und eine so allgemeine und doch uneigennützigte Teilnehmung der Spielenden auf einer Seite gegen die auf der andern.*¹⁸

simply the mode of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself *publicly* in this game of great revolutions, and manifests such a universal yet disinterested sympathy for the players on one side against those on the other.¹⁹

Teil-nehmung (literally, a par-taking) means both sympathy and participation – for it is true that when a person sympathizes with someone’s cause, they par-take (take-part) in that cause. The spectator participates without participating. More emphatically, the spectator’s “participation” requires, depends upon and demands, his or her non-participation.

A contradiction, which in Kantian terms can be called an antinomy, is already apparent. It is characteristic of Kant to formulate a philosophical problem as appearing to be an incommensurable contradiction. One only needs to recall the antinomies of the *Critiques*. Kant spends the remainder of *The Conflict of the Faculties* attempting to solve the apparent contradiction. The problem can be posed as the following question: how does the political subject maintain their freedom (to participate), as well as respect that which places limits

¹⁸ Kant, “Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten,” 436.

¹⁹ Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” 7:85. Note that the term “conflict” already appears in the title of the work. This notion becomes more significant as the thesis progresses.

upon the subject and their participation (leading to the demand of non-participation).²⁰ In other words, how can freedom and limitation be thought co-presently in the sphere of political life, which for Kant is inhabited by the spectator?

The first sentence of the paragraph above already begins to answer the question. Kant orientates the “way of thinking” (*Denkungsart*) of the spectator towards the moral. Kant uses the term “*bloß*” to delineate the way of thinking of the spectator as “mere” (rather than as “simply” as in the translation used above).²¹ The “mere” in Kantian discourse is that which is directed by reason towards the supersensible. The supersensible is the realm of the moral and the ideal, which is apart from or above the realm of the sensible. It is the metaphysical. The “mere” directs the subject towards the *a priori* form, that is, that which is there prior to experience and therefore can be generalized. It is the condition of possibility of the

²⁰ Recall that in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, “*Achtung*”, meaning attention or respect, is related to duty, and paying attention to the moral law and the sublime in the 3rd Critique “Respect”, *Achtung* or attention, taken together with the negative feeling of humiliation, is the “moral feeling” and an “incentive to make the [moral] law its [one’s] maxim”. Immanuel Kant, “Critique of Practical Reason,” in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. McGregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5:76. See also, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:257.

²¹ In *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kant’s Aesthetics* Rodolphe Gasché discusses the distinction between the terms “mere” and “pure” in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. He argues that these terms are not interchangeable. Specifically, he argues that “pure” in Kant denotes that which is positively separate and isolated as well as self-sufficient and self-defining. In contrast, Gasché argues that “merely” is a negative delimitation, only made in relation to something else. For Gasché, these terms become an important philosophical device in Kant’s 3rd Critique. See Rodolphe Gasché, *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kant’s Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 19.

representation. The *a priori* can be contrasted with that which is *a posteriori*, that is, that which is known after experience, and is therefore dependent on experience. As experience-dependent, *a posteriori* knowledge is variable in relation to different experiences, that is, it is not universal. Kant makes it clear that from their position, above the melee, the spectator feels the revolution:

*Diese Revolution, sage ich, findet doch in den Gemütern aller Zuschauer (die nicht selbst in diesem Spiele mit verwickelt sind) eine Teilnehmung dem Wunsche nach, die nahe an Enthusiasm grenzt, und deren Äußerung selbst mit Gefahr verbunden war, die also keine andere als eine moralische Anlage im Menschengeschlecht zur Ursache haben kann.*²²

This revolution, I say ... finds in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in this game themselves) a wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this sympathy, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral disposition in the human race.²³

There is much grist for the mill in the passage above. Firstly, it is evident that there is an affect associated with experiencing the sphere of political life, where this experience is only an experience insofar as it is tied up with judgment: the spectator feels themselves engaged in political life. Moreover, in this passage Kant evokes the notion of the border (*die Grenze*); it is precisely at the border or the limit between participating and not participating that the

²² Kant, "Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten," 436.

²³ Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," 7:85.

Kantian political subject finds him or herself feeling the political; it is against the limits of human being (physically) that the Kantian spectator rallies. The spectator transcends the revolution; and is, to lift a phrase from the *Critique of Pure Reason* “actually incite[d] ... to tear down all those boundary posts and to lay claim to a wholly new territory that recognizes no demarcations anywhere.”²⁴ This is the trajectory of the Kantian political subject. The Kantian political subject *qua* spectator is precisely the subject who is necessarily physically uninvolved in the revolution. By holding themselves back from the temptation to participate, spectators re-cognize themselves as above and beyond the limits of the physical elements of the revolution. They re-cognize themselves as superior to the particularities of the revolution. That is, the spectators re-cognize themselves as being necessarily above or apart from the violence, the losses, the triumphs and the myriad interests of those involved in the revolution.

If it is not the toss and tumble, the violence (*Gewalt*), triumphs, losses, interests and risks of the event that the Kantian political subject sees, then what is it? What the spectator looks for in the revolution is its “form”. That is, the revolution’s generalizable conditions of intuitability. In other words, what raises the spectator above and beyond the revolution is their recognition of their own capacity to intuit that which can be generalized (universalized). Since the spectator has no interest in the conclusion of the event, he or she only sees that which can be communicated publicly. The spectator can expect that that which can be communicated publicly will also appear as meaningful to others. According to Kant, the *form* of a revolution appears as progress towards the universal moral character of humanity.²⁵ By seeing progress

²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A296/B352.

²⁵ Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” 7:85.

(towards the moral law) in the “form” of the revolution, the spectator becomes aware of their own capacity for following the moral law, which allows them to transcend the revolution. It is in this higher position apart from or beyond the event that the Kantian political subject lives in the sphere of political life.

Recall that in the Introduction that “conflict” was defined as the contest or clash between different modes of being. Therefore it is the conflict within the spectator’s own self, and their own ability to overcome the conflict between the pull to participate and the demand to stay distanced, that the spectator sees and feels. This is what is necessary to Kant’s conception of the sphere of political life. Thus in *The Conflict of the Faculties* the revolution itself is only the trigger for the spectator’s reflection (*Reflexion*) on their own capacities to enter the sphere of political life. What the spectator really sees, then, is their own *a priori* capacity to be above the actuality of the revolution, and overcome the conflict that their faculties are placed into, due to the nature of their being human, which is signified by their urge to become physically involved. Thus, in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the co-presence of freedom and limitation appears as an overcoming of the conflict between participation and non-participation, where non-participation, as the metaphysical, is raised above actual participation. The spectator sees their own ability to submit themselves freely to the moral law. The spectator is aware of the qualitative difference between the actor and themselves. The actor and spectator inhabit qualitatively different modes of being, where one is ground and thus the condition of possibility of the knowledge of the revolution, and the other is grounded. What is grounded is the revolution and therefore the actors in the revolution. Attributing meaning to the revolution is only possible from the point of view of the spectator. The qualitative difference between spectators and actors allows both to be at the same time

(*zugleich*). The philosophical device of “at-the-same-timeness” is used by Kant unrelentingly. The reason the spectator can participate and not participate *at the same time* is dependent upon the dichotomy between the physical and metaphysical, acting and judging, and the actor and spectator in Kant. Kant posits the dichotomy, places the two modes of being into an antinomy to find what is universal and necessary in the representation of a political event, and solves the antinomy by claiming that the actor and spectator are two modes of being at the same time, and that this is possible because they are two modes of being within two different realms.²⁶

In *The Conflict of the Faculties* the political subject knows his or her position, as a historian or scholar, and respects this position, that is, pays attention to it (again, *Achtung*). The scholar’s reflection upon their position, and particularly their position in relation to the position of others, is what causes the subject to become aware of themselves as a *moral* being. The importance of *position* is made clear by Kant:

*Vielleicht liegt es auch an unserer unrecht genommenen Wahl des Standpunktes, aus dem wir den Lauf menschlicher Dinge ansehen, dass dieser uns so widersinnig scheint. Die Planeten, von der Erde aus gesehen, sind bald rückgängig, bald stillstehend, bald fortgänglich. Den Standpunkt aber von der Sonne aus genommen, welches nur die Vernunft tun kann, gehen sie nach der kopernikanischen Hypothese beständig ihren regelmäßigen Gang fort.*²⁷

²⁶ Chapter 3 returns to this notion of at-the-same-timeness in relation to F.W.J. Schelling.

²⁷ Kant, “Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten,” 434.

If the course of human affairs seems senseless to us, perhaps it lies in a poor choice of position from which we regard it. Viewed from the earth, the planets sometimes move backwards, sometimes forward, and sometimes not at all. But if the standpoint selected is the sun, an act which only reason can perform, according to the Copernican hypothesis they move constantly in their regular course.²⁸

For Kant, reason is above and apart from what it judges, but remains in relation to what is judged. In a similar vein, the sun is above and apart from the earth, but is also in relation to the earth, such that without any relation at all no judgment would be possible. Kant clearly finds something in the position of the sun preferable: namely, the sun provides a viewpoint that allows for an ordered, comprehensible judgment of that which it is apart from but also in relation to, that is, the world. For Kant, the subject who judges the revolution needs to remain aware, or become aware of their capacity to transform their position in relation to the revolution. However, the position of the spectator, who inhabits the sphere of political life insofar as he or she becomes aware of the moral law within them, is in fact more precarious than Kant tends to explicate.

In “Kant and the Perversion of the End” Matt Waggoner makes a lot of what he calls “irony” in Kant’s philosophy. Waggoner points out the irony of the Kantian subject position. The subject in Kant appears not simply to be located, but to be *trapped* on the border between the metaphysical and the physical. Waggoner specifically discusses irony as the feeling borne

²⁸ Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” 7:83.

out of negotiating the necessity of the end together with the impossibility of the end.²⁹ Waggoner notes that this is the full import of the “as if” in Kant: the “as if” signifies the drive towards the end, and the impossibility of reaching that end. One must, on this account, act *as if* the end were actualizable, even though it may not be. Waggoner argues that there are therefore two potential standpoints for the subject: in succession and secession.³⁰ Succession provides movement to the Kantian system that leads the subject to look forwards, towards the end, hopeful of one day reaching that end (perpetual peace, for example).³¹ Secession denotes the present as a constant interrupting – an inability to move forward, and hence denotes a pessimistic subject outlook, regarding the finiteness of the subject and impossibility as opposed to possibility. The political subject in Kant is trapped in this state of “irony” because he or she is free and limited, and participating and not participating, *at the same time*.

It is worth noting the continual role that conflict (again, contest between two conflictual modes of being) plays in this scenario. For Kant, simply overcoming the physical once (publicly and disinterestedly) is not sufficient to remaining a political subject. The project is never fully complete. The spectator must continually overcome the conflict between their own physicality and metaphysicality in order to appropriately judge an event as political.

²⁹ Waggoner writes that “The joke, if that is what we shall call it, was that the goal of peace confronts us as both necessary and never ending.” Matt Waggoner, “Kant and the Perversion of the End,” *Critical Horizons* 15, no. 1 (2014): 98. It is the subject held in this “joke” or “irony” that allows for new possibilities to be actualized. On the Enlightenment in Kant *qua* exit see Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow (London: Penguin Books, 1986).

³⁰ Waggoner, “Kant and the Perversion of the End,” 103–6.

³¹ Immanuel Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace,” in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The Kantian political subject is one who engages in a negative judgment uncovered through dialectical thinking. This judgment is negative insofar as its very possibility depends upon the representation of that which it judges. The Kantian dialectic is a dialectic of illusion. The challenge for the subject is to see the principles of transcendence and immanence for what they are, in their different functions for the faculty of understanding. The illusion “irremediably attaches to humans, so that even after we have exposed the mirage it will still not cease to lead our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed.”³² Hence there is no escape, the illusion can be overcome, be as soon as it is overcome it rears itself again; it continually reappears. The actor in the revolution, for Kant, engaged in the action, does not have the distance between themselves and the action to properly eliminate, however briefly, the transcendental illusion. The spectator only remains in their position “above” the world by being constantly vigilant towards the illusion and therefore in constant anxiety of failing to overcome the illusion. That human beings must keep on thinking and judging repetitively is an important point for Kant and (as will be seen) Arendt. Only thinking allows human beings to continually separate the ideal from the real, essence from existence, and, although Kant tended to place emphasis on the benefits this has to the maintenance of the realm of thinking, it is equally necessary for the maintenance of the real. If human life is to continue, it can only do so if thinking continues, because it was precisely this illusion, where one mistakes a subjective point of view for an objective one, that allowed the crimes of the 20th century to take place.

1.3 The necessity of the metaphysical element of the political life

What is clear in *The Conflict of the Faculties* is the meta-physical/physical distinction.

³² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A298/B354-355.

When the scholar recognizes their own moral essence, the moral law, what he or she recognizes is their own metaphysical subjectivity as a measure; a measure against which to judge the event of the revolution. It gives the subject a way of judging human action. It is as a marker, a higher measure, that the metaphysical becomes necessary to thinking the sphere of political life. The metaphysical spectator decides what it means to be a human being.³³ Is a human being in detention, for example, being treated in a way that is appropriate to the way a human being should be treated? Are they being treated as a free and rational creature who lives with others? This is the measure necessary to political judgment.³⁴

There is a similarity between the way the non-universalizability of the judgment of the actor is used to reinforce the primacy of reason in *The Conflict of the Faculties* and the way that the rationality of the subject is strengthened in the face of the sublime in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment (Kritik der Urteilskraft)*. According to Kant,

³³ Admittedly, this decision can be hijacked. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, in relation to the Nazi appropriation of some of Nietzsche's core ideas.

³⁴ In "Antinomies of Race: Diversity and Destiny in Kant", Mark Larrimore explores the development of the concept of "race" and "whiteness" in Kant, who, Larrimore argues, played a very important role in the invention of these concepts. The term "race", Larrimore points out, imported into German from English and French, was concerned with "breeding" initially, specifically to breeding animals, sculpting them into the desired form. I mention this to point out that even within Kant, there was the tendency to forfeit to ideology, to attempt to mold human beings into the form or ideal. This is precisely not the way that metaphysics should be employed. It again illustrates the risks of metaphysics, of letting metaphysics become an ideology, and the need to protect from this, by constantly thinking and eliminating the transcendental illusion, by properly dealing with the problem of conflict and the political. For Kant on race see Mark Larrimore, "Antinomies of Race: Diversity and Destiny in Kant," *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 4–5 (2008): 341–63.

*Ästhetisch gleichwohl ist der Enthusiasm erhaben, weil er eine Anspannung der Kräfte durch Ideen ist, welche dem Gemüte einen Schwung geben, der weit mächtiger und dauerhafter wirkt als der Antrieb durch Sinnenvorstellungen.*³⁵

Enthusiasm is aesthetically sublime, because it is a stretching of the powers through ideas, which give the mind a momentum that acts far more powerfully and persistently than the impetus given by sensory representations.³⁶

Enthusiasm, or as Kant says in the second essay of *The Conflict of the Faculties* “genuine enthusiasm”, occurs only when the subject is at a distance from the appearance, in this case the French Revolution. The actor in the French Revolution cannot judge in the same way as the spectator because,

*Wer sich fürchtet, kann über das Erhabene der Natur gar nicht urteilen, so wenig als der, welcher durch Neigung und Appetit eingenommen ist, über das Schöne. Jenner flieht den Anblick eines Gegenstandes, der ihm Scheu einjagt; und es ist unmöglich, an einem Schecken, der ernstlich gemeint wäre, Wohlgefallen zu finden.*³⁷

Someone who is afraid can no more judge about the sublime in nature than someone who is in the grip of inclination and appetite can judge about the

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik Der Urteilskraft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2009), 272/B121.

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:272.

³⁷ Kant, *Kritik Der Urteilskraft*, 261/B103.

beautiful. The former flees from the sight of an object that instils alarm in him, and it is impossible to find satisfaction in a terror that is seriously intended.³⁸

Kant argues that, as long as the subject is in safety, the more fearful objects such as waterfalls or volcanoes are, the more attracted human beings are to them. Moreover, the contrast between the spectator and the object in these situations is stronger, so the spectator's awareness of their "capacity for resistance" is recognized within the spectator all the more strongly, giving the spectator the "courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all powerfulness of nature."³⁹ Political events are, for Kant, utterly overwhelming on the plane of the actor. The actor cannot avoid being swept up in the event to the extent that political judgment is not possible. In the passage above, Kant again mentions the measure. That which seems too large and too complex to comprehend, and which in the face of its greatness or complexity the subject recognizes their own finality, also leads the subject to re-cognize their freedom. The revolution is a trigger for the sublime in that it provides something against which to measure the human capacity for the moral. An event is therefore a point of reference, a point of measurement, according to which the subject realizes that he or she is above the event as it is happening on the ground. The spectator then becomes the ultimate measure in the sphere of political life. In regards to the sublime feeling in the face of nature, Kant writes that:

Also heißt die Natur hier erhaben, bloß weil sie die Einbildungskraft zu Darstellung derjenigen Fälle erhebt, in welchen das Gemüt die eigene Erhaben

³⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:261.

³⁹ Ibid.

*seiner Bestimmung, selbst über die Natur, sich fühlbar machen kann.*⁴⁰

Nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature.⁴¹

Recall that it was mentioned above that Kant considers enthusiasm, which is felt by the spectator, to be aesthetically sublime. To extrapolate upon the passage above, it might be said that the political event in *The Conflict of the Faculties* is called political merely because it causes the spectator to “make palpable to itself” its own vocation for the political. The subject’s recognition of the limits of their capacity to represent and comprehend the event allows he or she to simultaneously expand the mind beyond these limits. This is how new markers, new measures upon which to judge politically, are able to be forged. These markers are necessary, without them there would be no way of judging in the sphere of political life, that is, of distinguishing between the universalizable from the particular and judging accordingly.

1.4 Is Kant’s solution to the antinomy satisfactory?

The previous section outlined the necessity of the metaphysically grounded element of the sphere of the political life, that is, of the spectator. This was argued as necessary because only the metaphysically grounded subject can judge from a universal viewpoint, and thus only the spectator can provide the measure against which to judge in the sphere of political life.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Kritik Der Urteilkraft*, 262/B105.

⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:262.

The conflict between the desire to participate and the demand not to participate was intimated in Section 1.2. The following section discusses potential problems with Kant's thinking of the sphere of political life as inhabited primarily by the spectator.

Kant thinks the conflict between participating and not participating that occurs within the spectator as a process or a means to an end, namely, to the spectator's recognition of their own vocation over the political event, and as such, he thinks this necessity as something which must be overcome. The ultimate ground of the political remains bound up with the metaphysical spectator. When Kant discusses the French Revolution in terms of sublimity, part of what he forgets is that nature – a tumultuous storm, a seething volcano, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, on which Kant wrote – does not look back at the spectator. Nature has no gaze. Kant treats the revolution and its participants in the same way. In staging the revolution in terms of a theater, with a distinct separation between the actor and the spectator, with the actor presumably blinded by the lights that light up the spectacle, so as not to see or communicate with the spectator other than as being an object on the stage, Kant misses the full relationship between the actor and the spectator. It is in the theater context that the spectator participates without participating. The spectator in a theater does not simply sit on the sidelines watching the show. The spectator of theater participates in the trials and tribulations of the show without getting out of his or her seat and actually participating. But the actors on stage are blinded by lights, and their audience sits in the dark. Kant fails to take account of the fact that the actors in the political event have the capacity to look back at the spectator who does not fully participate. This is where the theater analogy begins to fail. For while the actor may not be able to judge the event in its entirety, the actor can from their own point of view. The actor can judge the spectator and the spectator's reaction. What the

spectator finds meaningful in the revolution, can become meaningful for the actor. The spectator's position is reflected back upon him or her through the opinion of the actor. Has the spectator assumed the appropriate position? The actor can judge the person who raises their self above the revolution, and the actor can wonder why that person is not fully taking part. If the causes are worthy, why should the spectator retain a position above the melee? If the spectator finds the cause meaningful, why does the spectator not get involved?⁴²

On one level, the reader might sympathize with Kant's account of revolution. For one thing, Kant carries his critical project through to the political writings, and maintains a certain consistency in doing so. Moreover, Kant goes out of his way *not* to justify or encourage instances of revolution. In fact, he is quite disturbed by many of the acts that take place during some political events. Revolution, for Kant, is only able to be judged as justified or unjustified from a distance, from the distance provided by an historian or a scholar. Kant writes,

*Die Revolution eines geistreichen Volks, die wir in unseren Tagen haben vor sich gehen sehen, mag gelingen oder scheitern; sie mag mit Elend und Gräueltaten dermaßen angefüllt sein, dass ein wohldenkender Mensch sie, wenn er sie zum zweiten Mal unternehmend glücklich auszuführen hoffen könnte, doch das Experiment auf solche Kosten zu machen nie beschließen würde ...*⁴³

⁴² It is this side of the political that Hannah Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wish to take account of. Their account is taken up in Chapter 2. How can the problems of Kant's account be avoided, *and* the action or the actual be retained as the foundation of the political? How should action and judgment be thought together?

⁴³ Kant, "Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten," 436.

The revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day may succeed or miscarry; it may be filled with misery and atrocities to the point that a right-thinking human being, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such a cost.⁴⁴

Clearly, Kant sees his formalization (this is a formalization insofar as it is the form of the revolution that makes it meaningful) of revolution as justified partly by its ability to give an account of revolution that does not encourage or condone revolution. But revolution is not simply a matter of justification. Revolutions may be justified or corrupt, but they are also a matter of fact. It is a matter of human condition, of the real, of action and of resistance. One cannot even discuss whether a revolution is justified, one cannot spectate upon it, before it is a concrete fact. And it may never become a concrete fact. Many potential revolutions do not get off the ground, in which case there need be no judgment at all. The necessary contingency of the revolution is something that Kant cannot comprehend. Since Kant cannot understand the revolution in its spontaneity, he cannot understand how it is that the revolution changes the course of history, in a very real way.

I submit that thinking the metaphysical subject is necessary to thinking out the sphere of political life, but that this necessity is only a qualified necessity. That is, it is necessary only in virtue of a certain philosophical anthropology: human beings are beings who think philosophically and who need the metaphysical marker that this thinking results in to be human beings at all. Given the existence of human beings as philosophically thinking beings who exist, there does seem to be a primacy of reason, and hence a primacy of the reasoning of

⁴⁴ Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," 7:85.

the spectator over the actor. However, the qualification of the necessity is thus: we need not have been as we are. Yet we are philosophically thinking beings. This contingent necessity is only a post-factum necessity. If things had been otherwise, human beings may have emerged as beings who think out the sphere of political life poetically, rather than philosophically. But given that that was not the case, human beings are post factum necessarily philosophically thinking beings.

Kantian critical philosophy is the attempt to articulate the conditions of possibility of synthetic knowledge. The word synthesis derives from the Greek *sun* meaning “with” and thesis, from the Greek *tithenai*, meaning “to place”. Kantian philosophy occurs via the placing together of a thesis (a place, position or proposition), and an anti-thesis (an opposing place, opposing position, or opposing proposition), such that the apparent contradiction between the opposites disintegrates because a concept that encompasses the general essence of both the thesis and the anti-thesis. This process seems to be what occurs in the judgment of the spectator. Kant uses the notion of synthesis in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and (implicitly) applies it to his political philosophy; where the political, for Kant, means the potentiality for membership to a scholarly-like society. Kant writes that “*Ich verstehen aber unter Synthesis in der allgemeinsten Bedeutung die Handlung, verschiedene Vorstellungen zu einander hinzuzutun und ihre Mannigfaltigkeit in einer Erkenntnis zu begreifen.*”⁴⁵ (“By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition.”⁴⁶) The question is therefore one of how to place many varied representations together and cognize

⁴⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik Der Reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988), B103.

⁴⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B103.

them as one, that is, to synthesize them in such a way that the conflict between the two becomes insignificant, at least for a moment. Kant's answer is to let their differences (that which is conditioned by the empirical) fall away until what is left is that single cognition within the political event, that which captures the meaning of the whole event. Thought in this way, it can be said that philosophy works on different and apparently contradictory representations to synthesize them into one cognition. In terms of the revolution, the violence, interests, triumphs, etc. fall away, and what is left is the form of the revolution: the human beings' attempts to progress towards the moral law.

Yet Kant's problem remains that the Kantian dialectic's pronunciation of the primacy of the spectator creates an impasse. This formalized solution to the problem of thinking the relation between the spectator and the actor in the sphere of political life immediately presents the new problem of explaining how the judgment of the spectator reaches across the distance between the spectator and the actor and is transformed into action in the realm of experience. Without an account of this, Kantian political judgment remains purely formal, and the political has meaning only for those who do not fully participate. G.W.F. Hegel and Schelling concern themselves at length with this problem. As Karl Ameriks writes, Hegel and Schelling use the term dialectic in a sense different to Kant's sense of dialectic. For these two early respondents to Kant,

The difference is that their unconditioned, unlike Kant's, cannot be a particular thing in itself, or group of them, but must be an all-inclusive whole, an absolutely unconditioned structure that allows us to determine it, that is, to know and fulfill it. An advantage of their position is that it blocks all transcendent mysteries and

fits more closely with the now-common unrestricted understanding of the term “unconditioned.” A problem for their position (eventually emphasized by Schelling himself), aside from the details of the particular arguments they present, is that the core content of their program seems directly to threaten the very commitment to absolute individual freedom that was the prime motive for developing a Critical philosophy in the first place.⁴⁷

Eventually, Schelling, recognizing that absolutely encircling experience within the noose of reason will lead to the death or closure of freedom, returns to Jacobi. That Kant’s philosophy is “too formal” is a well-known and common criticism and it lies at the heart of the critique implicit in Arendt’s attempt to relinquish the metaphysical subject, that is the topic of Chapter 2. In a famous passage in *David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism, a Dialogue* (1787), Jacobi writes that “*Dass ich ohne jene Voraussetzung in das System nicht hineinkommen, und mit jener Voraussetzung darin nicht bleiben konnte.*” (“Without the presupposition [of the ‘thing in itself’] I was unable to enter into [Kant’s] system, but with it I was unable to stay within it.”)⁴⁸ Schelling makes a similar comment when he points out in *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy* university lectures, given in Berlin in 1841 that,

... man braucht nicht einmal die Frage aufzuwerfen, wie jenes Ding, das an sich

⁴⁷ Karl Ameriks, “The Critique of Metaphysics: The Structure and Fate of Kant’s Dialectic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 295.

⁴⁸ George di Giovanni, “Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *David Hume Über Den Glauben Oder Idealismus Und Realismus: Ein Gespräch* (Breslau: Gottl. Loewe, 1787), 223.

*nicht im Raum und nicht in der Zeit und durch keine Kategorien bestimmbar ist, wie dieses gleichwohl hintennach in unserem Vorstellungsvermögen den Formen desselben sich füge, die Bestimmungen unseres Erkenntnisvermögens annehme, die bloß in unserem Subjekte ihren Grund haben. Die Hauptfrage bleibt immer: was ist es selbst dieses Ding an sich? Erst wenn ich dieses erkannt hätte, würde ich glauben, das eigentlich Wissenswerte zu wissen.*⁴⁹

... one does not even need to raise the question of how that thing, which in itself is not in space and time and can be determined through none of the categories, slips in through the back door into our faculty of representation and submits to its forms, taking on the determinations of our faculty of knowledge, which have their foundation solely in our subjectivity. The central question always remains: what is this thing in itself in its own right? Only when I know *this*, will I presume to know that which is really worth knowing.⁵⁰

In other words, what is a revolution outside of a relation to the primarily spectating subject? How do we think the political event outside of a relation to the spectator? How is it that the Kantian spectator has the capacity to unlock the *a priori* meaning of the revolution? How is this meaningful if it remains within the realm of the subjectivity of the spectator? Is the sphere of political life really only inhabited by the spectator? In her defense of Kant's things in

⁴⁹ F. W. J. Schelling, "Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung," in *Schellings Werke Sechster Ergänzungsband*, ed. Manfred Schröter (München: C. H. Beck und R. Oldenbourg, 1954), 50.

⁵⁰ F. W. J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, trans. Bruce Matthews (Albany: SUNY, 2007), 123.

themselves, Karin de Boer argues that Jacobi is unfair to Kant because he does not address Kant's things in themselves on Kant's own terms. As de Boer writes, "the *Critique of Pure Reason* primarily aims to determine the limits within which synthetic a priori knowledge – rather than empirical knowledge – is possible."⁵¹ A few pages later de Boer writes: "Jacobi ignores the fact that Kant intended this work as a preliminary investigation into the very possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge rather than as a system consisting of such knowledge."⁵² As a result, it could be said that Jacobi's, and, by association, Schelling's, criticisms talk past Kant and his discussion of things in themselves. Kant, it might be said, is not worried that his system captures only what might be called the essence of the political, if it were to exist – and not the existence of the political, that is, that revolutions and political events in general do exist. And on one level this may be true. Kant did set out in the first *Critique* to account for the conditions of possibility of *a priori* synthetic knowledge. Thus, in terms of the Kantian system as a negative philosophy, which is what Schelling calls it, it is unfair to bring Jacobi's criticism. However, emphasizing that Kant was only concerned with conditions of possibility insinuates that Kant was advocating for a pure idealism, and Kant makes it clear in no uncertain terms that he does not advocate a pure idealism. Kant does want and in fact needs to account for the existence of the thing in itself. However he fails to do so. In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant explicitly refutes pure idealism. According to Kant, "Idealism ... is the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us to be either merely doubtful and indemonstrable, or else false and impossible."⁵³ Kant attributes the former to Descartes and the latter to Berkeley. Kant's response is that "The

⁵¹ Karin de Boer, "Kant's Multi-Layered Conception of Things in Themselves, Transcendental Objects, and Monads," *Kant-Studien*, 2014, 224.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 227.

⁵³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B274.

mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me.”⁵⁴ In other words, that which is mere, is recognized empirically but is not itself empirical. For example, the concept of space is a pure concept of the understanding, but it is recognized by the subject through the perception of space, that is, by the intuition of objects within space. It is via this formulation that Kant derives the *a priori* concepts of space and time. In other words, while Kant demonstrates a distaste and distrust of the experiential and phenomenal world, he is aware that without the phenomenal world, characterized in relation to a phenomenal/noumenal distinction, the *a priori* could not be recognized. The existence of the thing in itself really does play a significant role in Kant’s system. While he set out only to expound the conditions of possibility of synthetic knowledge, he discovered eventually that to do so, he would need an explanation of the thing in itself (since it is out of this that his entire system becomes possible). What Kant set out to do becomes irrelevant, when what he fails to do (provide an explanation of the thing in itself as the ground of reason itself), means that he cannot fully do what he set out to do. Without the highly formal nature of Kant’s account, no account would have been possible at all; while at the same time, it’s formality is it’s undoing. It cannot move beyond the form, into the actual world, into actuality, action, and Arendt’s *vita activa*; that is, into life in its full meaning.

These issues indicate a further problem in Kant’s work on revolution: Kant relies on a formalized conceptualization of history in which the notion of progress is vital. According to Kant, only the “way of thinking” of the spectator can genuinely identify progress: the human being’s “original vocation lies precisely in such progress [*Fortschritt*].”⁵⁵ Kant imagines that

⁵⁴ Ibid., B275.

⁵⁵ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?,” in *Practical*

humankind is gradually and continually progressing. He writes that,

*Allmählich wird der Gewalttätigkeit vonseiten der mächtigen weniger, der Folgsamkeit in Ansehung der Gesetze mehr werden. Es wird etwa mehr Wohltätigkeit, weniger Zank in Prozessen, mehr Zuverlässigkeit im Worthalten usw. teils aus Ehrliche, teils aus wohlverstandenen eigenen Vorteil im gemeinen Wesen entspringen und sich endlich dies auch auf die Völker im äußeren Verhältnis gegeneinander bis zur weltbürgerlichen Gesellschaft erstrecken, ohne dass dabei die moralische Grundlage im Menschengeschlechte im mindesten vergrößert werden darf.*⁵⁶

gradually violence on the part of the powers will diminish and obedience to the laws will increase. There will arise in the body politic perhaps more charity and less strife in lawsuits, more reliability in keeping one's word, etc., ... And eventually this will also extend to nations in their external relations towards one another up to the realization of the cosmopolitan society, without the moral foundation in humanity having to be enlarged in the least.⁵⁷

Fichte takes this idea a step further, declaring outright in 1794 in *Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar's Vocation* (German title: *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*), written one year before Kant wrote the second essay of *The Conflict of the*

Philosophy, ed. and trans. M. J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8:39.

⁵⁶ Kant, "Der Streit Der Fakultäten in Drei Abschnitten," 440.

⁵⁷ Kant, "The Conflict of the Faculties," 7:91-92.

Faculties, and four years before the publication of *The Conflict of the Faculties*, that “there will certainly be a point in the a priori foreordained career of the human species when all civic bonds will become superfluous.”⁵⁸ Progress, in Kant and then in Fichte, occurs continually until the real con-forms to the ideal, the object con-forms to the forms. This re-emphasizes the claim that Kant is not fully aware of the “irony” of his subject’s position, to borrow Waggoner’s term. Fichte, it seems, even more than Kant, was sure that this progress that achieves the ideal would occur. This is the kind of means-ends thinking that Arendt wishes to disassociate with the sphere of political life. In terms of the Arendtian sphere of political life there is no progress in the sense Kant means it, there is only a space held open in which speech and action can take place. Progress, I submit, is not a necessary element of the sphere of political life, as it is not the ultimate vocation of human beings. Rather, the ultimate vocation of human beings, if there ever were to be such a “vocation”, would be the being together in judgment and action in the sphere of political life. More on this claim as the thesis continues.

⁵⁸ J.G. Fichte, “Some Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar,” in *Fichte: Early Philosophical Writings*, trans. Daniel Breazeale (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), VI, 306. Fichte goes on:

This is the point when reason, rather than strength or cunning, will be universally recognized as the highest court of appeal. I say “be recognized” because even then men will still make mistakes and injure their fellow men thereby. All they will then require is the goodwill to allow themselves to be convinced that they have erred and, when they are convinced of this. To recant their errors and make amends for the damages. Until we have reached this point we are, speaking quite generally, not even true men.

1.5 What does Kant's theory of the political really think out?

Given the appealing and unappealing elements of Kant's account of the sphere of political life discussed above, I submit that what Kant really writes is an account of the ideal social human being, who is able to take many representations (many different actions and many different people) and synthesize them in one cognition. That is, who can place many different human beings together under the one cognition. Recall that the word synthesis derives from the Greek *sun* meaning "with" and thesis, from the Greek *tithenai*, meaning "to place". It is the placing together of a thesis (a place, position or proposition), and an anti-thesis (an opposing place, position, or proposition) such that the apparent contradiction between the opposites disintegrates. The term synthesis will here be closely tied to the notion of *society*. For society is essentially the synthesis of human beings; society is the placing together of many human beings under the one cognition. This one cognition could be thought of in terms of citizenship. Those who are members of a given nation are placed under the one cognition for example, "Australia". When recognized under the one cognition, those who were born in Australia and those who have been naturalized, are called Australians, and as such are placed into relation in ways that they would not necessarily be if they were not Australian. Within this cognition, there are a whole host of rights that follow from the placement of human beings together in Australian society. These are relations that are thought out and provided; they are contingent upon this thinking out and provision. What Kant discusses is how it is that human beings are capable of achieving unity between many, otherwise unrelated human beings. Society encompasses all of these thought out relations, including institutions such as the courts, schools and universities, parliaments and councils, to name but a few of the institutions and organizations that make up the complex web of society. It is society that is often also associated with "progress" or a constant attempt to improve

upon the current way that human beings are placed into relation. The way of placing human beings into relation in society is achieved via philosophically grounded discourse and discussion. The potential for agreement and unity amongst otherwise distinct individuals is what makes the social possible. This seems to correspond with the way that Kant writes the sphere of political life. The Kantian approach to the political sphere will henceforth be referred to Kantian sphere of social life. The Kantian sphere of social life can be thought of as an object full of variation and difference that must be worked on so that the differences fall away and only that which unifies the manifold is left (namely, the attempt to improve one's lot in life.)

Kant's theory of the sphere of social life requires the public, universalizable and disinterested judgment of the spectator. The role played by action in this sphere is the role of the trigger. Action is part of the process of achieving unity in the sphere of the social life but is not the primary characteristic of this sphere. This, for Kant, provides the framework upon which human beings can enter a sphere whereby they are rendered the same, since they all share the same capacity for using reason in a public manner. The result of the primacy of reason of the spectator is this transcendently acquired sameness amongst individuals. Yet sameness is not the same as equality. The sphere of political life, *contra* Kant, does not simply emerge when all difference is eliminated, so that people are the "same" and thus assimilated. The capacity for reason is not, by itself, a sufficient ground for the sphere of political life. This is because the sphere of political life is not simply a space of assimilation, for totality (totalitarianism) and ideology, but one in which human beings come together in virtue of their sameness *and* difference, and equality is only achieved when both sameness and difference, universals and particularities, appear publicly. It is, in other words, in a sphere

of genuine plurality.

1.6 Conclusion

After Kant's account of the sphere of social life, which attempts to eliminate conflict for the purpose of unity and agreement, questions about the relation between the spectator and the actor, and the political event more generally, remain. Kant's account of the revolution is so distanced that it lacks context. This chapter has demonstrated that this distance is too extreme. If the main significance of the French Revolution is the spectator's recognition that they can transcend the violence and upheaval of revolution, then what is it that distinguishes one event from another? How is the role of the actor to be thought? What distinguishes the French Revolution from the American Revolution, from the Hungarian Revolution, from the Arab Spring, or, for that matter, from any other political event? What is the French Revolution outside of a relation to the spectator? What is the revolution in its brute existence? What is also worth knowing is the spring, the spontaneity and the life of the revolution. Chapter 2 argues that Arendt's political theory accounts for the foundation of the sphere of political life, that is, for how political events are actualized.

Chapter 2: Arendt's actors and the sphere of communal life

2.1 Introduction

The point being made in this thesis is not that Kant is wrong about the role of judgment in the sphere of political life, nor that Hannah Arendt is wrong about the role of speech and action in the sphere of political life. Rather, the point to be further developed here is that both arguments are lacking, and that these arguments can, with some amendments, supplement one another. The guiding question of this chapter is, is it possible to relinquish the metaphysical element of the sphere of political life? Catherine Malabou asks a similar question in relation to relinquishing Kant in general. She writes that,

The problem is all the more serious if we admit that Kantianism may be considered the very origin, the very foundation, of European philosophy, that is, of the continental tradition. So the “we” included in the question “Can *we* relinquish the transcendental?” addresses all continental philosophers. Its signification then becomes: Can we relinquish the transcendental without relinquishing purely and simply continental philosophy? Without putting at risk continental philosophy's identity?⁵⁹

Firstly, the question – what does it mean to relinquish something? – must be addressed. Malabou makes a significant distinction in regards to relinquishment as opposed to

⁵⁹ Malabou, “Can We Relinquish the Kantian Transcendental,” 243. Whereas Malabou concludes that this relinquishment is possible and in fact necessary to pursue, here it will be argued that such a relinquishment is not possible.

abandonment. She points out that relinquishment is not the same as abandonment, but that relinquishment is “softer, gentler, than *abandon*. *Abandonment* means a definite separation, whereas *relinquishing* designates a negotiated rupture, a farewell that maintains a relationship with what it splits from.”⁶⁰ The difference can be borne out in the following example. There is a difference between a mother abandoning their child to the world, and a mother relinquishing the child to the world. In the case of the former the ties are cut and there is an attempt to forget altogether. Abandonment of a child leaves the child out in the cold, alone and without the right (which includes the possibility) of reply to the abandonment. As Malabou highlights, relinquishing implies negotiation, a sense of push and pull, of argument and conflict. It implies that philosophy, were it to be relinquished, would still have some pull on he or she who attempts the relinquishing. There is never a full rupture or departure. This chapter addresses Arendt’s attempt to push away from philosophy traditionally understood as bound up with the metaphysically located spectator. The question is, is even this “softer, gentler” relinquishment possible?

After looking at Arendt’s reasons for attempting to relinquish the metaphysical, this chapter examines the function of this relinquishment within the work of Arendt, supplementing the analysis with the work of Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy. It is then shown that these attempts to relinquish the metaphysical ground of the sphere of political life fail. Even if, in this act of relinquishing, one retains some form of relation to what is relinquished (as opposed to the finality of abandonment), this relinquishing is still not possible. What Arendt’s political theory achieves is not the full thinking out of the sphere of political life, but rather the thinking out of the foundation of this sphere. It is seen that what

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Arendt thinks out as the foundation of the sphere of the political life can be called the sphere of the communal life. Chapter 3 then argues that Schelling's philosophical framework allows one to retain the metaphysically grounded spectator that is necessary for political judgment in the sphere of social life, as it was established by Kant, *and* gives a framework for understanding power, spontaneity, natality, community and plurality in the sphere of communal life, as it appears in the work of Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. Chapter 3 then finally brings these two theories together, arguing that the sphere of political life is borne out of the founding conflict between the sphere of communal life and the sphere of social life, in other words, between acting and spectating.

2.2 Why relinquish the metaphysical spectator?

Chapter 1 has already intimated some of the problems with grounding the political subject as primarily metaphysical. Namely, the Kantian political subject is too distanced from the action to judge the action in its full meaning. The discussion that follows explores Arendt's own reasons for rejecting the metaphysically grounded spectator. These reasons are both philosophical and personal. On the 28th of October 1964, Hannah Arendt appeared in a televised interview with Günter Gaus for the television program "*Zur Person*". In that interview, Arendt emphatically denied that she was a philosopher:

Ja, ich fürchte, ich muss erst einmal protestieren. Ich gehöre nicht in den Kreis der Philosophen. Mein Beruf – wenn man davon überhaupt noch sprechen kann – ist politische Theorie. Ich fühle mich keineswegs als Philosophin. Ich glaube auch nicht, dass ich in den Kreis der Philosophen aufgenommen worden bin, wie Sie freundlicherweise meinen ... Ich habe meiner Meinung nach der Philosophie

*doch endgültig Valet gesagt. Ich habe Philosophie studiert, wie Sie wissen, aber das besagt ja noch nicht, dass ich dabei geblieben bin.*⁶¹

I am afraid I have to protest. I do not belong to the circle of philosophers. My profession, if one can even speak of it at all, is political theory. I neither feel like a philosopher, nor do I believe that I have been accepted in the circle of philosophers, as you so kindly suppose ... In my opinion I have said good-bye to philosophy once and for all. As you know, I studied philosophy, but that does not mean that I stayed with it.⁶²

The claim to have departed from philosophy was formative for Arendt; it appeared to provide the interruption necessary for the reassessment of the political after the Holocaust, locating this political outside of philosophy but necessarily inscribed with a philosophical-like thinking. This move was Arendt's attempt to pull herself out of the position of the mere (*bloß*) spectator of the world, where the spectator is located in the transcendent position held by the political subject discussed in Chapter 1. Arendt sought to theorize a position (the notion of position, location, situation, context, is essential to the sphere of political life) in which she could think universally (hence philosophically), while placing herself firmly *in the world*, to,

⁶¹ Rbb-online, "Zur Person: Was Bleibt? Es Bleibt Die Muttersprache."

⁶² Hannah Arendt, "What Remains? The Language Remains," in *Hannah Arendt: The Last Interview and Other Conversations*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York; London: Melville House Publishing, 2013), 13–14. Interesting questions that emerge from Arendt's statement (but not taken up here) are: What does it mean to "feel like a philosopher"? Is there a feeling associated with being a philosopher? Is it up to the thinker themselves to decide whether they are a philosopher? Admittedly, this thesis takes Arendt as a philosopher despite her protestations.

as it were, *take a stand in the world*. This involved the re-orientation of the political subject, from the spectator, who is immune to the world and its events, to the actor, who is thoroughly a part of the world. This re-orientation was Arendt's attempt to give action the theoretical validity that spectatorship, because of the primacy of reason (reason as prior as well as superior to the actual world), had traditionally held.

Arendt gives the following grounds for this self-distancing from philosophy (yet distancing is an essential philosophical tool that has traditionally brought into play the role of the spectator as opposed to the actor, and thus the metaphysically ground of the subject).

According to Arendt:

*Der Ausdruck "Politische Philosophie," den ich vermeide, dieser Ausdruck ist außerordentlich vorbelastet durch die Tradition. Wenn ich über diese Dinge spreche, akademisch oder nicht akademisch, so erwähne ich immer, dass zwischen Philosophie und Politik eine Spannung lebt. Nämlich zwischen dem Menschen, insofern er ein philosophierendes, und dem Menschen, insofern er ein handelndes Wesen ist, eine Spannung, die es in der Naturphilosophie nicht gibt. Der Philosoph steht der Natur gegenüber wie alle anderen Menschen auch. Wenn er darüber denkt, spricht er im Namen der ganzen Menschheit. Aber er steht nicht neutral der Politik gegenüber. Seit Plato nicht!*⁶³

The expression "political philosophy," which I avoid, the expression is awfully biased by tradition. When I talk about these things, academically or not

⁶³ Rbb-online, "Zur Person: Was Bleibt? Es Bleibt Die Muttersprache."

academically, I always mention that there is a tension between philosophy and politics. That is, between the human being insofar as he is a philosophical being and the human being insofar as he is an acting being, is a tension that is not there in the philosophy of nature. The philosopher is objective in the face of nature like all other human beings. When he thinks about it, he speaks in the name of the whole of mankind. But he cannot be neutral in the face of politics. Not since Plato!⁶⁴

There are instances in Arendt's lacuna where a criticism of Plato can be extended to be taken as a criticism of Martin Heidegger. Seyla Benhabib writes that "As opposed to Plato's contempt and ultimate turning away from the world of human affairs, Arendt saw in Aristotle's distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, between making and doing, the philosophical articulation of the concept of action as deeds and words."⁶⁵ Arendt regarded Heidegger too, as somebody who had turned away from the realm of actuality, from human affairs. Plato's *Apology* explains the original schism between philosophy and politics. That is, the *Apology* illustrates the philosophy's founding, after which it was no longer possible for philosophy to ignore politics.⁶⁶ The persecution of Socrates implicated philosophy in the workings of politics. Philosophy was threatened, and that threat demanded a response. This was therefore also the first conscious awareness of conflict as the foundation of life, since before this, there was no need for philosophy to posit an other (politics), from which to distinguish itself in conflict with. Derrida discusses the position that Socrates assumes in

⁶⁴ My translation.

⁶⁵ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 114.

⁶⁶ See, Plato, "Apology," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. G.M.A Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

Plato's *Apology*.⁶⁷ Socrates positions himself as the foreigner, that is, as the other of the polis.⁶⁸ Arendt's claim is that as soon as philosophy had to position itself against its other (politics) it no longer retained a neutral position. In its very resistance to the conditions that politics attempted to impose upon it, philosophy (represented symbolically in the figure of Socrates) lost its unconditioned position, where the polis and its happenings could not affect it, and was drawn into the sphere of political life. After the execution of Socrates, and once the distinction between philosophy and politics was drawn, there was no turning back. Philosophy had to take a stand in the political realm, and Plato saw to it that the position of the philosopher in the political realm was the position of king. This king, or tyrant, was best suited to this role because, as a philosopher, it was he who could see *the* truth, and thus make the universal and disinterested decisions required to run a polis, a society, smoothly.⁶⁹

At this moment of initial confrontation, philosophy and politics were brought into conflict for the first time. Similarly, Heidegger's action (or lack of) during the war provided part of the impetus for Arendt's own political position. Since philosophers were pulled into confrontation with the polis, as Plato was with the condemnation of Socrates, it has not been possible to justify not taking a stand in the world. Plato raised the philosophical above politics, since for Plato the city-state could no longer be left in the untrustworthy hands of the citizens of Athens, who had condemned Socrates to death. Ever since politics interrupted the philosophical it has been necessary to take a stand against philosophically led ideology. For

⁶⁷ See, Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, ed. Anne Dufourmantelle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁸ See, Plato, "Apology."

⁶⁹ Plato, "Republic," in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. C.D.C. Grube, G.M.A. and Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), bk. VI.

Arendt, philosophy's response to the threat of the polis was to become tyrannical. Heidegger, who joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) from 1933 to 1945, and was the rector of Freiburg University from 1933-1934, also took the role of the unconditioned philosopher to the extreme; once more philosophy was challenged by the polis and Heidegger's response was to reinforce himself as a philosopher. Heidegger confronted Arendt with some difficult questions regarding the relation between philosophy and the philosopher and the sphere of political life.

Arendt was influenced strongly by the work of Aristotle and the contrast between Kant and Aristotle is strong.⁷⁰ What was labelled the Kantian sphere of the social life in Chapter 1 departs from Aristotle, whose concept of the sphere of the political life defined human beings in virtue of their original plurality, and therefore as first and foremost political beings, whose power (where power is what holds a relation in place) is speech. For Aristotle "it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal."⁷¹ Human beings, for Aristotle, are not grounded in metaphysical subjectivity, they are grounded in their political nature, in the *activity* of being a political animal, which, being a human being cannot avoid. That is just what human beings are; plural beings, always already part of a whole. Rather than a subject-object relation (a mode of subjectivity), for Aristotle the sphere of political life is a necessary condition of the being of being human. In Kant the social subject only has the capacity to be in the sphere of social life because he or she is rational. In

⁷⁰ On the relation between Aristotle and Arendt see, Dana Richard Villa, "Arendt, Aristotle and Action," in *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁷¹ Aristotle, "Politics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Princeton: ebooks@Adelaide, 1984), 1253a3-1253a7.

Aristotle, the plurality itself is the condition and ground of being human. The political is not something that some human beings dwell in and some do not. Rather, for Aristotle, to be a human being at all one must be part of the political. Moreover, according to Aristotle,

man is the only animal who has the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust.⁷²

The power of speech is its ability to mark out the just and the unjust. Speech draws a line between what is just (and in being just, the just *just is*, that is, it is accepted and does not open up alternative possibilities) and the un-just (which announces the possibility for a different action, which counters, and in countering suggests another way of acting). It pushes limits and creates new limits. The above passage evidently had a profound effect on Arendt's work. In *The Human Condition* Arendt discusses power, speech and action, and the political animal in almost the same terms as those above.⁷³ Arendt felt that for too long, thinking, or contemplation (the *vita contemplativa*), rather than action (*vita activa*), had been the purview of philosophers. Since contemplation is the realm of philosophy, Arendt saw that philosophers had proffered contemplation an undue primacy, in terms of its being the foundation of human life.

⁷² Ibid., 1253a8-1253a18.

⁷³ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 200.

For Arendt, the tradition that burdens philosophy is the thinking out of the subject as grounded metaphysically. Recall that the metaphysical refers to that which is above, apart from, or transcendent to the physical. The metaphysical is the condition of possibility of the thinking subject. This is why the thinking subject can be said to think for everyone when he or she does philosophy: philosophy aims at thought which is universal and disinterested. That is, the spectator thinks from the point of view of others, in a sense above the scene of action. This much was established in Chapter 1. The duality between the physical and the metaphysical traditionally relied upon in philosophy is both philosophy's beauty and its curse; it is necessary for philosophy to get started, but philosophers also wish to overcome the absolute separation of the physical and metaphysical, or the "animal" and "rational", to use Kant's terms. The duality, which Kant solves by arguing that reason transcends the empirical, is what allows for any judgment at all. Judgment demands a higher order; something against which to measure. Arendt, balking at this tradition, attempted to give up the subject as grounded metaphysically; as *primarily* rational. For Arendt, human beings remain thinking beings, but not primarily so; they are not grounded by thinking *qua* pure contemplation. In other words, for Arendt, thinking occurs in the world, not divorced from or above the world, pure and unaffected, in other words, not as transcendent to the world.

Arendt saw that philosophy, understood in the way described above, facilitated the National Socialist agenda. For one thing, it provided some people (for example, Adolf Eichmann) with an excuse not to think. The influence of Eichmann's trial on Arendt is well known. As Arendt recounts in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Eichmann recalled the Kantian categorical imperative during his trial. He claimed that he was

simply doing his duty.⁷⁴ In the case of Eichmann, philosophy, more precisely a twisted version of Kantian ethics, provided him with a doctrine that could be blindly followed and that allowed Eichmann to justify anything to himself. At the same time, as already mentioned, philosophy held others apart from their place in the world, not as an excuse to act out callous deeds, but as an excuse *not to act*, as an excuse to remain in the traditional realm of the philosopher, pretending that from there there was no need to take a stand against what was occurring.⁷⁵ The ideology of the National Socialist Party itself proved that metaphysics could be hijacked in an attempt to justify virtually any action. Thus, philosophy, for Arendt and many others after the war, could no longer claim the high ground that it had previously enjoyed, it was tainted by the events of the 20th century; it was dying. In the interview with Günter Gaus referred to above Arendt adds, “*Ich will Politik sehen mit, gewissermaßen, von der Politik ungetrübten Augen.*”⁷⁶ (“I want to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes

⁷⁴ For Arendt’s discussion of Eichmann and Kant see, Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1977), 135–37.

⁷⁵ See, as an example, Daniel Maier-Katkin and Birgit Maier-Katkin, “Love and Reconciliation: The Case of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger,” *Harvard Review*, no. 32 (2007): 44.:

‘Heidegger says proudly: “People say Heidegger is a fox.” This is the true story of Heidegger the fox: There was once a fox so utterly without cunning that he not only constantly fell into traps but could not even distinguish a trap from a non-trap...’ Arendt seems to have concluded that Heidegger was naïve about the affairs of men and oblivious to the transparency of his lies.

The quotation within the quotation is from one of Arendt’s July 1953 diary entries, written after she had resumed communications with Heidegger. How naïve Heidegger really was is a matter of debate.

⁷⁶ Rbb-online, “Zur Person: Was Bleibt? Es Bleibt Die Muttersprache.”

unclouded by philosophy.”)⁷⁷ Arendt no longer wanted anything to do with philosophy, *qua* philosophy. Yet, she did continue to engage with philosophical texts and questions.

The notion that philosophy clouds the eyes is a curious one. This is because philosophy is often thought of precisely as a discipline that un-clouds the mind. One need only recall the discussion in Chapter 1 of this thesis regarding the transcendental illusion. For Arendt, who, had been personally persecuted by the Nazi regime, what remained after the war was the emphatic sense that it was now impossible to remain politically neutral, where neutrality is that which the philosopher had previously equated with objectivity as a means to universality. Refusing to remain neutral, would, for Arendt, leave open the hope that that there would never be a repetition of an event like the Holocaust. In *The Human Condition* Arendt writes that:

We are perhaps the first generation which has become fully aware of the murderous consequences inherent in a line of thought that forces one to admit that all means, provided they are efficient, are permissible and justified to pursue something defined as an end.⁷⁸

As long as we believe that we deal with ends and means in the political realm, we shall not be able to prevent anybody’s using all means to pursue recognized ends.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Arendt, “What Remains? The Language Remains,” 16.

⁷⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 229.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

In other words, means-ends thinking (which is generally associated with philosophy) can justify anything. This is the definition of ideology, whereby an idea is constructed. For example, it is possible to build and develop an idea about what human beings ought to be (or what they ought to be based on a perception about what they really are), and the most efficient means to this end are automatically justified, simply because they lead to that end. What Arendt is saying, therefore, is that there is no place for ideology in the political. The political lies beyond or outside of this type of means-ends thinking. As the thesis develops it will be seen that this is where Arendt's mistake lies. Specifically, Arendt has an unfair tendency to equate philosophy and ideology, and to reject philosophy so that she can reject ideology. It is seen, *contra* Arendt, that ideology is a risk, but not a necessary correlate, of doing philosophy traditionally.

Drawing partly on Arendt, in *Retreating the Political* Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write that, "metaphysics too often remains that which, through philosophy, shields philosophy from thinking,"⁸⁰ and that, "An entire code is constructed and an entire metaphysical language is elaborated on the word 'metaphysics', a language which we find it necessary to escape."⁸¹ (The notion of the escape is interesting in the context of Kant's essay on the Enlightenment, in which Kant thinks Enlightenment, *Aufklärung*, as an exit, *Ausgang*. That is, as a way out, specifically the human race's way out of immaturity, *Unmündigkeit*. The thought would be that, given that the Enlightenment has not been fully instantiated, in order to continue maturing, we must relinquish that which allowed us to being this process of maturation, that

⁸⁰ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997), 124.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

is, the metaphysical subject).⁸² What Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wish to escape is the metaphysical as that which marks and limits the thinking of the political. The metaphysical, as a traditional way of thinking philosophically, is inherited, and inhibits new thought and thinking in general. Thus, theoretically at least, retaining the metaphysical as the ground of the subject excludes the truly new or radical from existing in thought and in the world. The past is a limit that it is impossible to overcome.⁸³ Thus, it can be said that thought (as always already thought, hence always already past) inhibits thinking. Thinking and thought differ insofar as the former is an activity. Thinking has no beginning or end, that is, no specific purpose. Philosophers often include the word “towards” in their book titles. This is precisely because philosophical thinking functions as though it has a goal, but in actuality never reaches that goal. (Kant’s term “purposiveness without purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*) springs to mind in this context. This notion is discussed in more detail shortly.)

Arendt makes a conscious effort to leave any metaphysically charged language to one side. For example, instead of “form” Arendt opts for the word “shape”, instead of “ground” Arendt opts for “foundation”, instead of “mere” she opts for words such as “only” or “simply”, since the mere is directed towards the pure, and for Arendt meaning and purity no longer correlate. According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, there is an,

exigency of getting away from the metaphysical *ground* of the political, from a transcendent or transcendental ground, for example in a subject, ... (which is

⁸² For Kant’s essay, see Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” Foucault notes the significance of the Enlightenment thought as an exit in his essay on Kant’s essay. See, Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment?”

⁸³ Although it can be re-written.

perhaps no reason to prohibit a questioning of the difference which should be made between ‘ground’ and ‘foundation’ in the sense understood by Arendt).⁸⁴

Here is the catch. It is the metaphysical *qua* ground that Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wish to escape, rather than the metaphysical itself, or a metaphysical way of thinking in general. That is, they wish to escape the human subject defined as only and primarily metaphysical.

2.3 *The foundation of the sphere of political life*

Arendt’s, Lacoue-Labarthe’s and Nancy’s doubts about the viability of the metaphysical spectator after the Holocaust will be returned to shortly. For now, it is necessary to explore the non-neutral position in the sphere of political life that Arendt favors. The position that lacks neutrality in the sphere of political life is, of course, the position of the actor. The fundamental theme that weaves throughout Arendt’s full repertoire is the holding open of what she considers to be the political space, which Arendt calls the “space of appearance”. This is the sphere in which actors act.⁸⁵ In *The Human Condition* Arendt writes that,

The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can exist.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, 132–33.

⁸⁵ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

This “space of appearance” amounts to a communal being together that is the foundation upon which all elements of society, such as institutions, laws, constitutions, must be built. For Arendt, society cannot be primary, precisely because it is that which must be built, as was discussed as the sphere of the social life in Chapter 1. Society must be thought out. This thinking out can only come after the foundational sense that every human being already has in common.⁸⁷ For would there be any attempt to think out the being together of a multitude of human beings if there were not already the sense that human beings should be thought together? This sense must be prior to the thinking out. The space of appearance serves no precise purpose, it is an opening and nothing more.⁸⁸ It appears (the form this appearance takes is aesthetic, that is, it is a feeling) as that space in which action and speech are possible, it holds open this possibility for actualization, but it’s very existence is not concerned with any aim or goal. As a result, it demands nothing of the action and speech that it enables, other than remaining open. It is a space of freedom, into which any human being can enter and be free of social status, upbringing, education or lack of education, etc. This is a being together in which human beings are equal in their sameness without sacrificing their differences. For Arendt, individuals constitute this co-existence of difference and sameness, which Arendt calls their “uniqueness”.⁸⁹ However, for Arendt, this space is also terribly fragile, it can be

⁸⁷ According to Peg Birmingham, Arendt’s notion of the “right to have rights” “is rooted in a principle of common humanity that does not fall into an idolatrous worship of the human.” Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and the Right to Have Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3. A similar, founding sense of community, of immediate unity, is being discussed in this thesis.

⁸⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199–201.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

closed down through violence (*Gewalt*) just as quickly as it emerged.⁹⁰ (The Conclusion of this thesis briefly returns to the theme of boredom, which was mentioned in the Introduction, as that which can shut down the political just as violence can.)

Community, that is, what will here be labelled the sphere of communal life in contrast with the sphere of social life, is a way of being together that emphasizes sameness outside of the realm of rational thought. This is a positive sameness, that does not depend upon thought. In other words, it is always already there, and as such does not emerge as an overcoming of difference, but as the initial sameness that is the very condition of the attempt to overcome difference (thus it is the very condition of the sphere of the social life). This simple togetherness is a togetherness that, I submit, *just happens*, when men and women are together in speech and action. It just happens as it is a sense for a common humanity that draws actors together in the space of appearance.⁹¹ It just happens insofar as it does not need to be thought out.⁹² The risk and volatility of the communal foundation of human being together must remain for the space of appearance to actualize at all.

The space of appearance is the most fundamental formulation of the sphere of political life that Arendt achieves. Like an artwork, the space of appearance has no purpose other than

⁹⁰ Ibid., 188–92.

⁹¹ On communal sense as a foundation in Arendt see, 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, no. 3 (2011).

⁹² I have previously written about the way that the space of appearance “just happens” in relation to Kant’s notion of reflective judgment. See, Alexandra Pearl Cain, “Actors, Spectators, and Power in Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Political Judgement,” *Colloquy: Text, Theory, Critique*, no. 33 (2017).

to be. The reader may hear echoes of Kant in this formulation of the space of appearance. Again, the relation between Kant and Arendt is not a straightforward one. Whereas Arendt appears opposed to some Kantian formulations particularly involving transcendence, in others she seems to fully embrace his ideas. “Purposiveness without purpose” (*Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*) is arguably one of Kant’s most important philosophical notions. Kant writes in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that “Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end.”⁹³ This formulation allows Kant to inscribe certain ways of thinking with a movement that occurs *as if* the thought was moving towards something, an aim, a goal, an end, where the purpose remains indeterminate. Thus, there is determination (*Bestimmung*) or drive (*Trieb*) without a determinate goal (*Zweck*). This way of judging gives movement to the formulation but leaves open the possibilities of the end, thus leaving open the possibility for new, unexpected, and varied thinking. Arendt seems to embrace the notion of purposiveness without purpose, since the space of appearance also, at its most fundamental level, is purposive without a purpose other than to be.

The notion of purposiveness without purpose is implicit in Arendt’s work. But there are many Kantian themes that Arendt adopts more explicitly. One example is her explicit use of Kant’s notion of a sense for the common (*sensus communis*).⁹⁴ Another is her use of the notion of genius.⁹⁵ Kant’s notion of an “enlarged mentality” was also one that Arendt leaned

⁹³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:236.

⁹⁴ See, Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 274–75. For specific reference to Kant and *sensus communis* see, Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1982), 70–72.

⁹⁵ See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 210–11. For specific reference to Kant and genius see,

upon: “To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to go visiting.”⁹⁶ Annelies Degryse offers a convincing account of the way that Arendt tended to “de-transcendentalize” these Kantian formulations.⁹⁷ While Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy discuss the sphere of the political life in different terms, they also draw upon Arendt, and in particular her “de-transcendental” reading of philosophy. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue that the sphere of political life is retreating. When Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy discuss the Derridian term the “retreat” of the sphere of political life, they do so in at least two senses of the word “retreat” (*retrait*). Firstly, there is the re-treat, the treating again of the sphere of political life, the repetition of the act of treating the political. Then there is the retreat, or the flight of the sphere of political life, its fleeing or disappearing. Thus, there is a clear sense of chasing the political as it continually moves out of reach. The claim is that the retreat of the sphere of political life *demand*s that we continually re-treat it, in an attempt to have it re-appear. The demand is what is significant. It provides the movement and momentum of the activity of the political. The retreating of the sphere of political life is thus the holding open of the possibility of the reappearance of this sphere. Or, in other words, it is the holding open of the “question”. According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, “The obligation is more simply, more modestly, one of *maintaining* [*garder*] the *question*, as a question.”⁹⁸ In other words, it is the question in itself, unconditioned by the answer, that leaves open all possibilities in terms of reply, that does not violate the holding open of the space of appearance, and that therefore offers the possibility to keep the space of appearance open.

Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 62.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁷ Degryse, “Sensus Communis as a Foundation for Men as Political Beings: Arendt’s Reading of Kant’s Critique of Judgment.”

⁹⁸ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, 39.

The re-treat is, for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, the retreat of something that may never have actually occurred. In other words, it may be the retreat of the always already retreating. This means that there was never an actual occurrence that marked the beginning of the retreat, no actual event in the world that caused the political to begin retreating and demanded the re-treat. This is worth keeping in mind in terms of Plato's *Apology*. The beginning of the antagonism between philosophy and politics need never have taken place in actuality. It may be that this antagonism was always already beginning, insofar as philosophy may have always been attempting and failing to capture politics. According to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy,

Such a retreat makes something appear or sets something free. At the very least, we sought to question ourselves not according to the rule of a nostalgic lamentation for what would have *drawn* back (we *subscribe* to the verdict of the 'immense failure'), but according to the hypothesis that this retreat must allow, or even impose, the *tracing* anew of the *stakes* of the political. And first of all on the basis of the fact that what *drew* back perhaps itself never took place.⁹⁹

The physicality and the creativity that seems to be at play in this passage is difficult to ignore. Drawing, scribing, tracing, and laying out stakes, that is, drawing new limits, evokes a sense of both the (unrealized) potential for new ways of retreating the political, as well as the mark that will be left behind every time a retreat is attempted. For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy the political is the always already past trying to be present-ed, or re-presented, it is a past to which human beings, however futile the endeavor might be, try to return. This is why it

⁹⁹ Ibid., 131. All emphases added.

always emerges as the uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*). The uncanny feeling of the political is felt when there is a relation without relation, like the child's relation to the mother.

Freud *gave himself*, which, like the whole of philosophy, he *presupposed*, this relation of a subject to subjectivity itself in the figure of a father implies, in the origin or the guise of an origin, the *birth* (or the *gift*, precisely) of this relation. And a similar birth implies the *retreat* of what is neither subject, nor object, nor figure, and which one can, provisionally and simplistically, call 'the mother'.¹⁰⁰

The "without relation" discussed in *Retreating the Political* is a relation that does not need to be established. It is an always already past, always already established, relation. It is always already there because it has always already happened (thus there is no event that marks a coming into relation of the without relation). For example, the love of the mother appears (is felt), or is presented, to the child as always already there. There is no moment in the history of the child at which he or she is not in relation with the mother. Her *love* is the presenting of that always already past, or the bringing of the intimacy of being one with her body into the world in which the child is no longer a part of her. After birth the child is ec-static, where ecstasy, a word Schelling borrows from the Greek, means to stand outside oneself.¹⁰¹ The child finally stands on its own two feet, outside of the mother. The child, for the first time, *returns the gaze* of the mother. (Recall that the actor returns the gaze of the spectator.) And the retreat of the mother becomes more and more pronounced as the child grows. As the child becomes more estranged from the mother (first birthed, then weaned, finally leaving the home

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 119.

¹⁰¹ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 203.

altogether), the urge to return to her (to re-treat her) grows. The uncanny is this unfamiliar familiarity; this un-homely homeliness. It is the clash of the familiar and the unfamiliar that is uncanny, creepy, different; that both compels us to her and repels us from her, like Malloy's mother in Samuel Beckett's *Malloy* and the mother in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*.¹⁰² These men cut lonely figures; displaying an ambivalence towards their mothers out of the drive to part from the mother. And yet these men visit their mothers daily, they tend to them, even to the most abject elements of their daily suffering, to the cleaning of their mothers, as their mother had to them. *This* is the relation without relation. It consists of both an attraction and a revolt.

The concept of the mother can be extended to signify the mother in general and therefore "common humanity" in general. Human beings are already related simply by virtue of being human. This is to say immediately, without thinking: you are like me and I am like you, and this has always been the case and will always be the case. On this level there is no necessity to establish a relation. This would be the human beings' coming together in a polis without quite knowing why they do so. This is an unconscious drive for togetherness that is always already past, that is always already unable to be fully instantiated today, but is perpetually chased.

The uncanny appears as that which does not quite appear. This is why the figures of Malloy and Michael K strike the reader as so strange. They re-present the "relation without

¹⁰² Samuel Beckett, *The Beckett Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, ed. Patrick Bowles (London: Pan Books, 1979); J. M. Coetzee, *Life & Times of Michael K* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

relation". They try to live in a past where they were cushioned by their mother. Michael K seeks nourishment from the earth, his pumpkins. He wishes to be closer to his mother, to the past, to the earth (the phrase Mother Earth comes to mind), though he cannot. He *is* this anxiety between the two worlds, the embodiment of the anxiety that constitutes the appearance of the retreat. This anxiety springs up as the retreat almost appears, as the "relation without relation", in disaccord. It alerts one. Michael K barely speaks. He goes along with everything. He wants to go home, but the more he attempts to go home, the more estranged from anything homely, anything human, he becomes. Militarization encroaches. Seeking the sphere of the political life can be understood in relation to Michael K as that which there is no choice but to attempt, and that which is impossible to fully achieve. It is that which nourishes and sustains human life and that which is never a secure source of nourishment. The political demands to be sought, but will not ever be found. It is thus from the seeking itself that meaning must be derived.

Seyla Benhabib identifies a similar concentration on the feeling of homelessness and the search for a home in Arendt. Benhabib shows that Arendt felt this displacement.

Arendt, in one of the nicest turns of phrase in the history of twentieth-century philosophy, interprets Husserlian phenomenology as an attempt to "evoke magically a home again out of the world which has become alien" (p.36).¹⁰³

Arendt's centering of homelessness has two sources, as Benhabib illustrates. First is Arendt's

¹⁰³ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 48–49. The reference is Benhabib's, and it refers to Arendt's essay, "What is Existenz Philosophy?"

place in history. Arendt was, first of all, made physically homeless by the rise of the National Socialist Party on January 1st, 1933, and in late 1933 Arendt fled their persecution and her homeland, and took up residence in a foreign land, in France. (Arendt later found refuge in the United States.) Not only as Jewish but also as a woman, Arendt was homeless, or always treading in the home of another. Although, as Benhabib notes, Arendt never explicitly acknowledged her homelessness as a woman,¹⁰⁴ there is certainly a hint towards this feeling when Arendt states in the passage from the interview with Günther Gaus that she has never felt accepted or a part of the circle of philosophers (made up, especially during her time, mainly of men). The feeling of alienation in Arendt arose both out of the historical events of the 20th century and the philosophical tradition itself (namely Kant's absolute separation between essence and existence, which was discussed in Chapter 1). This feeling of alienation is also what grounds the modern anti-heroic characters of Malloy and Michael K, and is central in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's instantiation of the sphere of political life. It particularly pertains to Arendt's notion of the "right to have rights".¹⁰⁵ How does one find the protections that the home provided once one has lost their home? Any new home could only be an unhomey home. Such a home would only be possible through embracing the anxiety of the loss of the home. Again, an apparent antimony appears, between home and homeless. The actor in the space of appearance is constantly anxious because revealing oneself in the space of appearance carries with it constant risk. Will one find a home there? Or should one give up the idea of the home altogether? What remains is the question of how to work through the anxiety of the actor (whereas Kant attempts to resolve the anxiety of the spectator). One way

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 1–2.

¹⁰⁵ Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man," in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 3rd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967).

of eliminating the conflict between the actor and the spectator would appear to be to relinquish the metaphysical as the home of the subject. The question remains: is such a relinquishing possible?

2.4 The problem with Arendt's account of the sphere of political life

At the time of her death, Arendt was beginning “Judging”, the third and final volume of *The Life of the Mind*, which was to be her collection of works on thinking, as opposed to acting. In Arendtian scholarship today, it is generally assumed that “Judging” would have provided the answer to some of the questions asked above, in particular it is thought that “Judging” would have provided the final link between thinking and acting.¹⁰⁶ While Arendt never completed “Judging”, she did give a lecture series on political judgment in Kant’s political writings. In the *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* Arendt expounds upon the role of judging in Kant’s political philosophy. Full of ideas that may have reappeared in “Judging”, had it been completed, the *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* have become the focal point for contemporary discussion of judgment in Arendt’s political theory. However, it remains unclear just which elements of Arendt’s lectures would have been included in “Judging”, especially given that they were lectures that give an original reading of Kant. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to tell which ideas are endorsed by Arendt and can be included in her own political theory, and which parts of the lectures are there simply for the benefit of her students’ understanding of Kant. Even with these observations taken into account, it is fair to say that many commentators persistently find Arendt’s reliance on the Kantian account of the political troublesome. As already mentioned, Annelies Degryse

¹⁰⁶ Ronald Beiner, “Hannah Arendt on Judging,” in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

defends Arendt by arguing that Arendt “de-transcendentalizes” Kant’s *sensus communis*, turning it into a community sense, that every human being has and which attracts human beings into communities, but within the empirical realm. I agree that this sense of community, and the continual drive back to community, is a significant element of the sphere of political life. However, in grounding the political only in the phenomenal, or the non-transcendental, Arendt still faces the problem of theorizing political judgment and society.¹⁰⁷ As Benhabib writes,

If we insist that we must treat all humans as beings entitled to the right to have rights, on the basis of which philosophical assumptions do we defend this insistence? Do we ground such respect for universal human rights in nature, in history, or in human rationality? One searches in vain for answers to these questions in Arendt’s text.¹⁰⁸

In a similar tone Andrew Norris argues that Arendt struggles with the formality that thinking requires. According to Norris, if Arendt wishes to ground human beings as beings existing in the plural, then she needs a metaphysical framework that accounts for the workings of judgment in this realm of plurality. As Norris writes:

In the end, Arendt’s difficulty is a conceptual one ... It is precisely this common reason that requires a theoretical explication ... Without any understanding of

¹⁰⁷ Degryse, “Sensus Communis as a Foundation for Men as Political Beings: Arendt’s Reading of Kant’s Critique of Judgment.”

¹⁰⁸ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 82.

what an impartial but non-objective judgment would entail, revelatory political action remains not just miraculous, as Arendt always insists, but unthinkable.¹⁰⁹

Some answers to these questions *can* be found in Arendt's text. Rather than a complete lack of answers, the problem is that Arendt gives various answers to the question of the role of judgment in her political theory. For example, the spectator features heavily in the *Lectures*. The question is, how can the tension between Arendt's to revert back to philosophy and her insistence that action in the space of appearance be wholly phenomenological be reconciled? In a slightly different vein, Majid Yar has concluded that:

The two would seem wholly incompatible, an antinomy that cannot be resolved. For if the spectator judges as an actor, he/she loses the standpoint which grants him breadth of vision; and if the actor judges as a spectator, he/she forsakes the capacity to be in the world with others as an agent. We might see this failure of reconciliation as the triumph of plurality or as the defeat of unity.¹¹⁰

We might also read this antinomy as the necessarily conflictual ground of the sphere of political life. This is what is being developed. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy attempt to deal with this problem in the *Retreating the Political*. They distinguish between the political and politics and the philosophical and philosophy. "Philosophy" then becomes that which is closed or dead, because it embodies the metaphysically grounded subject. By declaring

¹⁰⁹ Norris, "Arendt, Kant, and the Politics of Common Sense," 191.

¹¹⁰ Yar, "From Actor to Spectator: Hannah Arendt's 'Two Theories' of Political Judgement," 23.

philosophy closed off in such a way, the relinquishment is supposed to have occurred.

While Arendt's, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's claim to relinquish the metaphysical ground of the political may appear at first reasonable, it opens onto a range of responses. Firstly, there is Arendt's claim that she must be a political theorist, not a philosopher, because she could no longer remain politically neutral. The thing to note about this is that philosophy grounded metaphysically was never neutral. Every philosophy has a subject, one or more philosophers, behind it. Neutrality is impossible in philosophy. Philosophy is thought by people, about people, for people. Philosophy, even traditionally understood, is always already a system of philosophies, and thus a politic of philosophies. That is, philosophy is many philosophies in dialogue with one another. None of these philosophies achieve absolute objectivity, though again (and this relates to what has already been noted about the retreat) they try, despite the knowledge that this objectivity cannot be fully achieved. Philosophies in the plural, and thus in relation, tell the story of what it means to be a human being. Those who claimed that philosophy justified their actions during the Holocaust were not doing so neutrally. Eichmann was not neutral, he was implicated precisely by his refusal to think, and he was hanged for it. Nor did Heidegger really have a claim to neutrality, he chose himself a place, and the place he took was the lofty realm of philosophers. In relation to genocide it is impossible to avoid implication. Philosophers philosophize in the real world. No philosopher, and no human being in general, ever achieves pure neutrality. Philosophy only strives for a neutrality that can never be fully achieved. As such an awareness of the "as if" of the neutrality involved in philosophy is crucial.

The attempt to eliminate all philosophies except one, in order to hold that one as

higher than the others, is what leads away from philosophy and into the realm of ideology. An attempt to instigate one ideology is a step towards totalitarianism. It is quite right to refer to this as the death of philosophy. But no matter how some human beings may attempt to annihilate all philosophies in order to legitimate their one philosophy (ideology), the fact remains that at philosophy's emergence it was already political, it was a plurality of philosophies (viewpoints or ways of thinking), and as such was only made possible by the differences between philosophical systems. One thing to point out, then, is that Arendt's refusal of philosophy stems from the conflation between philosophy traditionally understood and ideology, but that philosophy is not necessarily ideology.

What the National Socialist Party's misappropriation of elements of philosophies showed (perhaps for the first time so explicitly) was philosophy's capacity to succumb to hijacking. The way that Friedrich Nietzsche's work was taken up in anti-Semitic circles comes to mind here. Until Walter Kaufmann published *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Nietzsche was seen as the philosopher of Nazism. His ideas were uncritically presented by his sister, Elizabeth Förster, who was a Nazi sympathizer, with particular concepts such as the *Übermensch*, adding convenient intellectual grist to Nazi propaganda. Today Nietzsche is celebrated in wildly different circles, after Kaufmann's book began to set the record straight.¹¹¹ However, the revelation of this fault in philosophy does not automatically mean that philosophy must be relinquished, in the same way that a mother who is greatly flawed and disappointing is not then relinquished. She may be "dead to me", if I choose to *distance* myself from her, but that does not stop her from knocking on my door,

¹¹¹ See, Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

ringing my telephone, and generally making her presence known. The mother is always already there, a fact proven by my (our) existence. This is the nature of the relation “without relation” that Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy discuss. In other words, it is not simply a matter of the escape from metaphysics. Metaphysics dogs the human being, because human beings are metaphysically thinking beings. This is the ground that makes the activity of thinking philosophically possible.

While Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wish to try to escape the metaphysical ground of the political, in an attempt to eliminate the conflict between judging and acting that we have been exploring, the fact is that the point of view of the scholar, the historian, the philosopher, and thinking in general, must play an essential role in thinking the sphere of political life. This thinking must always be marked by the tradition that has preceded it. It is not possible to escape the inherently metaphysical language of philosophy. Arendt, in claiming her own departure from philosophy, remains part of that tradition. It is inescapable. Arendt’s move simply becomes the most recent philosophical move in the history of philosophy. Does this resolve us to endless repetition, or is there still a way out, to a genuinely new (and old) way of thinking about the sphere of political life?

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy’s vignettes on the retreat of the political also require the metaphysical. Since they denounce a metaphysical ground from which to pursue the political, there is the sense in which the writers struggle to discuss fully discuss the sphere of political life. In the end, the most useful elements of the vignettes seem to be precisely those which discuss the work of Freud, Derrida, or Heidegger closely. Coincidentally, behind each of these thinkers’ works lies a sense of the subject as grounded in the metaphysical. Perhaps the

lack of metaphysical groundwork in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's *Retreating the Political* is what led to the closure of the shortly lived "Center for Philosophical Research on the Political", where the discussions in *Retreating the Political* took place. The metaphysical provides a measure, a point of departure, and a point of reference upon which to return and assess theoretical endeavor. Arendt alternatively grounds her project in a kind of philosophical anthropology. (Again, it appears Arendt did not really leave philosophy behind.) For Arendt, human beings are acting beings first and foremost, and action only takes place with other human beings who can see and hear that action. Thus, for Arendt, human beings are primarily inter-relational beings. Even thinking, for Arendt, should never be done outside of a relation to others. Thus spectatorship, for Arendt, is never a matter of the solitary spectator, but of an audience of spectators, who share their ideas and judgments amongst one another (in fact, the same is true for the spectator in Kant, who, as was seen, is never solitary, but is defined by being a part of a public of spectators). Sometimes Arendt lectures about Kant in a thoroughly de-transcendental way, such as:

Impartiality is obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account; impartiality is not the result of some higher standpoint that would then actually settle the dispute by being altogether above the melee.¹¹²

What Arendt fails to do is tell us exactly how impartiality is achieved without a metaphysical subject. What Arendt lacks is the means to explain how it is that human beings transition from being a spectator (in the plural) to being an actor on the stage, or in a revolution, as it were (also in the plural), in the actual world. Even if we do not accept the absolute primacy of the

¹¹² Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 42.

rational spectator, as was suggested in Chapter 1, how does the actor, even just metaphorically, jump out of the melee in order to judge as a spectator, which for Arendt means impartially, and then presumably jump back in to enact that judgment? Being impartial while taking part is Arendt's rendition of the apparent antinomy that was introduced in terms of the Kantian spectator at the very beginning of Chapter 1. How is the tension between these two ways of being, that is, judging impartially while being a part of the political event, to be thought?

As has been intimated, what is in question in the writings of Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is the *primacy* of reason. David Ingram, writing on community and totalitarianism in Nancy's work, writes that, "Maybe it is not metaphysics or reason that is to blame for the rise of totalitarian social formations but the inherent dynamics of a combined economic-administrative system whose provenance – at least in part – resides elsewhere."¹¹³ In other words, it is not the fault but simply the risk of reason and philosophy traditionally understood that allows for totalitarianism (ideology) to take hold. To suggest this is to reject not the importance and necessity, but the *absolute* primacy of reason (absolute primacy would amount to supremacy). Embarking on the path of reason entails the risk that reason will be co-opted, or that it will not be able to withstand the forces brought about by human being's social (as opposed to communal) world. Rather, it must negotiate them and face that risk head on. How, then, should the conflict between judging and acting in Arendt be solved?

¹¹³ David Ingram, "The Retreat of the Political in the Modern Age: Jean-Luc Nancy on Totalitarianism and Community," *Research in Phenomenology* 18, no. 1 (1988): 117.

2.5 Can thinking the political life today incorporate the metaphysical?

The primacy of reason can and must be relinquished as superior to all other ways of thinking, and to nature itself. This much is conceded to Arendt, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. But it is maintained here that the sense of relinquishment discussed at the beginning of this chapter in relation to Malabou is not possible. What must be established is not a matter of the metaphysical being superior to the physical, but a matter of there being no other way, or no better way, available to think *qua* a human being; reason is simply the way that human beings think. This thinking seems to occur hierarchically, but this hierarchy is only an illusion of thinking – a necessary illusion. Thus, there is a primacy of reason necessary to *thinking*, but thinking is not the only fundamental element of being human. Human beings are also acting beings. Despite this, a metaphysics of the subject is still necessary to explain how it is that one can think and therefore speak of the sphere of political life at all. Philosophy must occur via a subject, and so there needs to be a metaphysical account of that subject. This is, again, the sense in which, *contra* Arendt's assertion, philosophy is never neutral (even if some philosophers believed it to be). Philosophy (metaphysics) is always already implicated by the very subjectivity that it seeks to take account of. What must be thought, therefore, is the contingent (rather than absolute) necessity of the primacy of reason for thinking and judging, in relation to the human being as initially acting beings.

2.6 Conclusion

As this chapter closes, it is necessary to return to the notion of conflict introduced in both the Introduction and Chapter 1. Arendt recognizes the conflict involved in being a human being in the sphere of political life. She recognizes the difficulty involved in being an actor who also judges impartially. However, ultimately she does not manage to theorize the

sphere of political life as one that is fundamentally caught up in this difficulty. Rather, she reduces the sphere primarily to the sphere of the actor, in which the actor inexplicably manages to judge impartially while being caught up by the feeling of the without relation in the space of appearance. What Arendt really does, I submit, is write a theory of the foundation, but not the full instantiation of the sphere of political life. This will henceforth be referred to as the sphere of communal life. In writing the theory of the sphere of communal life as the foundation of the political, what Arendt achieves is a thinking out of how it is that human beings come together in order simply to be together. She explains the activity of the sphere of political life, but not the judgment that is also involved. The sphere of communal life does not need to be thought out: it is felt. What Arendt does is eliminate one side of the antinomy between acting and judging, naming acting as primary and judging as secondary. This sphere of communal life, then, is to be thought of as opposed to Kant's sphere of social life (while acknowledging that Arendt clearly incorporates many Kantian elements in her work, often first de-transcendentalizing them). These are two different ways of thinking out humans being together. Being together in the sphere of communal life is a being together of individuals who are already in relation, and that therefore does not need to be thought out. Being together in the sphere of social life is a being together of individuals who must be placed together, and this requires thinking and judging. What has still heretofore not been fully approached is what this thesis set out to approach, that is, the sphere of political life. What remains unaccounted for is a convincing account of the co-incidence of the Kantian spectator and the Arendtian actor. The third possibility of dealing with the antinomy between acting and judging is taken up in Chapter 3. Namely, the question is one of whether the problems experienced by both Kant and Arendt can be solved by allowing the conflict between acting and judging to remain, rather than trying to deny it. The first question, though,

is where to look for such a way of theorizing the sphere of political life.

In the Chapter 3 there is a reconsideration of Schelling, in order to demonstrate the benefits of the Schellingian framework for an understanding of the political as conceived by Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. Thus, what is undertaken here in this thesis is the re-treat of the sphere of the political life in terms of the reconsideration of Schelling's philosophy, which is founded upon the ineliminability of conflict. The hypothesis is that Schelling will provide an account of the sphere of communal life put forward by Hannah Arendt and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, without rejecting Kant's account of the sphere of the social life. What is argued, towards the end of Chapter 3, is that the political must be re-cognized as the *clash* between the sphere of the social life and the sphere of the communal life, where the social is that which attempts to publicly bring people into relation, and community represents that mode of being that is always already in relation. In the same way that two tectonic plates rub together and push the land upward, with jagged mountains reaching higher, the political is "higher" than the social and the communal precisely because of its imperfect quality. The political exists, to borrow Žižek's words, "as if the intersection of the Perfect and the Imperfect is more perfect than the Perfect itself."¹¹⁴ When the perfectly immediate unity of the communal and the imperfect attempt at unity of the social *clash*, the result is more perfect, because the result is that rare and fragile ultimate being of the being of being human. What is taken from Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe, then, is a lively account of the sphere of communal life. The re-treat of the sphere of political life is the human power to bring about this conflict, to push for the conflict, to initiate and become

¹¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London; New York: Verso, 1996), 62.

aware of the healthy state of anxiety (or “ecstasy” in Schelling’s words) that facilitates the appearance of the sphere of political life.

Chapter 3: Schelling, the sphere of political life, and conflict

3.1 Introduction

How is an idealist/romantic relevant to thinking the sphere of political life today? What is it about the figure of F.W.J. Schelling that causes him to continually fall into the footnotes of philosophy, and what justification is there for pulling him out of obscurity? In other words, what justification is there for reconsidering Schelling? On a slightly different note, why investigate the sphere of political life through the philosophy of Schelling, a philosopher who, unlike many of his contemporaries and forbearers, never wrote his own political treatise? The answers to these questions are addressed below. With these preliminary and important questions dealt with, this chapter goes on to outline the framework of Schelling's negative and positive philosophies. It then turns to one of Schelling's specific applications of the positive philosophy. This involves a close reading of paragraphs from *The Ages of the World* (1815) and Schelling's *Historical Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, which first appeared as a series of lectures given in Berlin in 1842. The ultimate task of this chapter is to weave a thinking of the sphere of political life out of these insights in such a way as to avoid the problem of eliminating one side of the conflict between acting and judging, as has been illustrated through the juxtaposition between Kant and Arendt. This way of thinking the sphere of political life will be shown to emerge out of the conflict between the sphere of social life discussed in Chapter 1, and the sphere of communal life discussed in Chapter 2. It is shown that, with the centrality of conflict as that which is ineliminable, Schelling can be thought as the missing link in the history of thinking the political philosophically.

3.2 Why reconsider Schelling on the sphere of political life?

This section addresses the following question: What is the justification for reconsidering Schelling in relation to the sphere of political life? As already noted in Chapter 2, in *Retreating the Political* Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy discuss Freud, Derrida, Bataille, Heidegger and Arendt. What do Freud, Bataille, Heidegger, and Arendt, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy all have in common in terms of the history of many of their ideas?¹¹⁵ F.W.J. Schelling. The figure of Schelling in the history of philosophy has been as elusive as the theorization of the sphere political life itself seems to be. Many of the thinkers who influenced both Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy and Arendt are themselves heavily indebted to the thought of Schelling. For example, the fact that Schelling contributed to the founding of the concept of the unconscious, the uncanny, and other themes known today as Freudian is uncontroversial.¹¹⁶ On that theme and specifically in relation to Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write that:

One must note, first of all, that since 1929, since the inaugural lecture at Freiburg,

¹¹⁵ On Bataille and Schelling, see Jason M Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 195–206.

¹¹⁶ For a variety of in depth accounts of the nature of Schelling’s influence on Freud, see Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*; Joseph Carew, “Reading Schelling Psychoanalytically: Žižek on the Ground of Consciousness and Language,” *Symposium* 19 (2015): 39–51; Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling’s Philosophy of Mythology, SUNY Series in Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); S J McGrath, “Schelling on the Unconscious,” *Research in Phenomenology* 40, no. 1 (2010): 72–91; Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Unheimlichkeit (let us render it as dis-orientation, the un-canny, the unusual or the un-accustomed, even, because the 'logic' to which I have just alluded obviously does not exclude what Freud, using Schelling and dictionaries as excuses, thought of as an 'ambivalence': uncanny familiarity - but it is better not to try to translate) - since 1929, therefore, Unheimlichkeit defines the 'relationship to' being or the 'revelation' of being, and that is to say the fundamental ordeal or experience, the Grunderfahrung, in anxiety, of the nothing.¹¹⁷

This is the only moment in *Retreating the Political* that mentions Schelling: as an “excuse”. This is typical of Schelling’s treatment throughout the history of philosophy. Schelling almost always appears as a footnote or as though he is tangential or accidental. Schelling played an influential role on Heidegger’s own thought.¹¹⁸ Arendt was heavily influenced by Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, the psychiatrist and philosopher who was also deeply influenced by Schelling’s work.¹¹⁹ It is reasonable to say that Arendt had at least some knowledge of Schelling even though she rarely references him, as she had a large number of volumes of Schelling’s *Werke*, as well as a copy of Heidegger’s lectures on Schelling (*Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*) in her library, which is now held in Bard College, New York. Nancy himself wrote his dissertation, published as *L’expérience de la liberté* (*The Experience of Freedom*) on freedom in Kant, Schelling and Heidegger. Moreover, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy wrote repeatedly on Romanticism, in which Schelling

¹¹⁷ Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, 64.

¹¹⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985).

¹¹⁹ See especially, Karl Jaspers, *Schelling: Grösse Und Verhangnis* (Munich: Munich, R. Piper, 1955).

always features. The fact that Schelling does not make it into these thinker's works as a serious philosophical figure regarding the sphere of the political life could be because even though Schelling's *Werke* is dotted with brief politically related overtures regarding society, law and the state, and community, Schelling, unlike his contemporaries, never wrote an explicitly political treatise. Despite this fact, I submit that Schelling offers the opportunity to provide a more robust groundwork on which to consider the ideas of Arendt and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy on the sphere of political life, while retaining some of the more appealing elements of Kant's sphere of social life.

While Schelling has been overlooked consistently during his life and since his death, his work is currently experiencing a renaissance.¹²⁰ Now that Schelling's work is gaining traction, it can be viably expanded into fields in which he himself did not explicitly take it. In terms of the relation between Schelling, a philosopher who never wrote a political treatise, and the sphere of political life, it is worth noting that this subject is not entirely uncharted territory. In recent literature on Schelling the concept of the political has begun to emerge. Jared McGeough writes that, "though Schelling does not articulate a determinate political position, this ontology could structure new ways of envisioning political life."¹²¹ In *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, Matt Ffytche argues that it is wrong to focus merely on

¹²⁰ 2013 saw the first publication of *Schelling Studien* in Germany. See: Lore Hühn, Paul Ziehe, and Philipp Schwab, eds., *Schelling Studien* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2013). New Schelling societies such as the *Internationale Schelling-Gesellschaft* (<http://www.schelling-gesellschaft.de/>), The North American Schelling Society (<http://schellingsociety.org/>) and the UK Schelling Research Project (<http://schelling.org.uk/project/>), to name just a few, are examples of the thriving community of Schelling scholars.

¹²¹ McGeough, "Schelling 'After' Bakunin: Idealism, Anarchism, Post-Anarchism," 81.

Schelling's philosophy of art, separating him "from the ideological anxieties of liberalism and nineteenth-century social philosophy."¹²² In *The Political Theology of Schelling*, one of the most sustained engagements with Schelling on the political, Saitya Brata Das concludes that "Schelling's tragic philosophy remains for us an indispensable moment in the conversation to come – that we might linger on the conditions in which we live, without the consolations that the 'sovereign referent' of the world would provide."¹²³ In other words, judgment is no longer enough. Thinking and judging is no longer enough to guarantee what Arendt called the "right to have rights".¹²⁴ Arendt is correct in her assessment of the disintegration of the guaranteed protection that rationally thought out society was supposed to achieve. But Kant is also correct. An important part of the tragedy of the sphere of the political life is that we cannot simply relinquish the metaphysical. It must remain, even if it does not do the work it once did (that is, guarantee justice, and guarantee a place in the world). The metaphysical lingers. Neither the metaphysical nor the physical are escapable.

It would, moreover, be presumptuous to claim that Schelling had no interest in what are here being called political themes. While Schelling never formulated the sphere of political life in so many words, there are many instances throughout his works that hint in the general direction of the sphere of political life. Themes of tumultuous times and feelings, of anarchy, as McGeough notes, of conflict, of seeing, of displeasure, of community, and of world-view, all appear in his later writings. These themes are explored in what follows, and it

¹²² Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*, 75.

¹²³ Das, *The Political Theology of Schelling*, 242.

¹²⁴ See, Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man."

is argued that an understanding of them is essential to thinking the sphere of political life. Schelling offers a unique point of reference when thinking about the sphere of political life, because he maintained a Kantianism and empiricism at the same time. For Schelling, philosophy constitutes an “accidental” way of being human. In other words, there is a necessary contingency involved in doing philosophy. Philosophy is triggered by experience, in such a way that if there had not been this experience, philosophy would have been otherwise. Philosophy is therefore necessary only after the fact of experience, because although it could have been otherwise, it was not otherwise. Schelling therefore emphatically refused the *absolute primacy* of the metaphysical, but did not relinquish the metaphysical altogether. For Schelling philosophy was always already political, because since its first instantiation it was implicated in and therefore dependent on the struggle against something else for its survival. Yet Schelling also makes it clear that he does not see his positive philosophy as that which replaces negative (Kantian) philosophy, but rather as that which expands upon negative philosophy. Importantly for this thesis, Schelling refutes those who argue that he is trying to relinquish Kant:

Ich lehre auf die Meinung zurück, welche einige setzten, als sie aus der Ferne von positiver Philosophie hörten, dass sie nämlich ganz an die Stelle der negativen treten, diese also verdrängen und aufheben sollte. So war es nie gemeint, so leicht gibt sich auch eine Erfindung nicht auf, wie die jener Philosophie, die sich inzwischen für mich zur negativen bestimmt hatte.¹²⁵

I return to the opinion that some have formed as they heard from afar of the

¹²⁵ Schelling, “Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung,” 89.

positive philosophy, namely that it should take the *place* of the negative entirely, and should thereby supplant and nullify [*aufheben*] the latter. Thus was it never intended, and so easily will a creation like that of this philosophy never surrender, a philosophy that since then has determined itself for me as the negative.¹²⁶

The positive philosophy is intended to do what reason itself struggles to do, that is, to ground reason. It will be seen that the positive philosophy offers an inversion of the Kantian forms, now called archetypes, an inversion of Kantian principles, now called powers, and, as will be argued at a later stage of the thesis, an inversion of *Weltanschauung* into *Weltansicht*. This “system” of positive philosophy, is really an anti-system, that is, the ground of the system that must be anterior to the system itself. Why are human beings judging beings? What is this grounded upon? It is grounded upon action. Human beings judge in order to act and act in order to judge. The circular nature of this formulation is explored as the chapter develops.

It is also worth exploring the methodology involved in unearthing reticent political themes in Schelling. In particular, rediscovering Schelling on the sphere of political life seems to be in accord with Arendt’s own methodology. Seyla Benhabib writes that there are:

two orientations that run like a red thread through her [Arendt’s] work. On the one hand, she practices the method of fragmentary historiography for which Walter Benjamin was her prime example ... Such a “fragmentary” approach to history would involve a remembering, in the sense of a creative act of rethinking and reappropriating the past, just as a collector or as an artist might do ... On the other

¹²⁶ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 151.

hand, Arendt's thoughts are also influenced by the phenomenological attempt to find an originary state of the phenomena as being the privileged one.¹²⁷

Benhabib focuses the beginning of *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* with a commentary on Arendt's study of Rahel Varhagen, whose Berlin salon Schelling knew, and shows precisely how Arendt herself practiced the selective remembering strand of her work. As Benhabib shows, for Arendt this becomes a narrative building exercise. It is an exercise in weaving in and out of the past and of being selective in what one remembers, by bringing the past into a kind of "conflict" with the present. This means the presenting of the past in such a way as to acknowledge that one tells the story most accurately precisely by not always telling it as it occurred. Thus Benhabib notes that Arendt sees many of her own struggles or personal characteristics in Rahel's life; not only does Arendt confront Rahel but Rahel confronts Arendt. The reflection, in both directions, that is at the heart of this confrontation, is what knits the narrative. Precisely in bringing the one up against the other a space opens into which the narrative can be born. This "fragmentary" approach to remembering, as Benhabib calls it, at the same time embodies the feeling of the "chase", and thus recalls the re-treat of the political as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy envision it. Benhabib also discusses Arendt as a melancholic thinker, and Freud must come to mind. There is the feeling in Arendt, that comes to the fore more fully in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, of a pull backwards, a pull towards the past, and a sense in which there is a chase for a lost political, where the political fully conceived continually eludes the seeker. This unconscious chase for this historically located sphere of political life is the re-treat of the political. This corresponds to an idea of the fall from the perfect sphere of political life and the desire to return to it. This is what Benhabib

¹²⁷ Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, x–xi.

identifies as the phenomenological search for the “originary state” of the political. Benhabib associates this thread of Arendt’s work with the influence of Heidegger.¹²⁸ But the fact is, that these two strands of thinking what was called Arendt’s sphere of communal life in Chapter 2 are already evident in Schelling. What is un-covered is that which was covered in the past and partly in virtue of the fact that it was covered or left unexplored, is worthy of being brought to light today; dis-covering it, so to speak. The main point for now is that it is precisely in keeping with Arendt’s own methodology that a return to past thought, and an uncovering of past thinkers, is possible.

3.3 Schelling’s negative philosophy

To make this way of thinking the sphere of political life clearer, it is necessary to explicate the framework of the later Schelling’s philosophy. This is done below, beginning, as Schelling does, with the negative philosophy and moving into the positive philosophy. In *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy* lecture series, given in Berlin in 1841, Schelling outlines the negative and positive philosophies in more detail than he previously had done. In these lectures, Schelling writes that,

*Erst die recht verstandene negative Philosophie führt die positive herbei, und umgeklappt die positive Philosophie ist erst gegen die nicht verstandene negative möglich. Diese wenn sie in ihre Schranken sich zurückzieht, macht jene erst erkennbar, und dann nicht bloß möglich, sondern notwendig.*¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Schelling, “Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung,” 80.

only the correctly understood negative philosophy leads to the positive philosophy; conversely, the expounding of the positive philosophy is first possible only in contrast to the correctly understood negative. Only the latter's withdrawal back into its limits makes the former discernable and then, not only possible, but necessary.¹³⁰

The negative philosophy is Schelling's reading of Kant. It is an *a priori* science that begins with the empirical and, through a process of abstraction and elimination, reaches a final result, which is, for Schelling, "not nonbeing" (or "absolute essence", to borrow the term from Yashua Bhatti).¹³¹ Thus the negative philosophy does not work with the empirical, but is prompted by the empirical. It is *a priori* despite this, because the absolute essence itself is not found empirically, what is found empirically is only that which alerts us to the *a priori*. Negative philosophy achieves this process in a series of "movements". With every elimination of a concept there is a backwards (or upwards) movement to the next concept, until it is excluded and there is a backwards movement to the next until the absolute essence is reached. This is the dialectic of the negative philosophy. Diagram 1, below, illustrates this movement, where the curving line portrays the back and forth of the negative dialectic, moving upwards to the highest, supersensible concept, which had been there, *a priori*, all along, but which required the sensible in order to be recognized.

¹³⁰ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 145.

¹³¹ Yashua Bhatti, "Schelling's Non-Conceptual Grounding," *Review of Metaphysics* 67, no. 3 (2014).

Essence



Existence

Diagram 1

As Schelling makes clear, the negative philosophy is only one side of the equation if we want to fully comprehend human life in the world. The negative and positive philosophies limit one another. This is an important point. Negative philosophy, properly understood, is one that recognizes its own limits (which is where the positive philosophy begins). The moment of this recognition is one of sublimity in the Kantian sense of the word. According to Kant,

The quality of the feeling of the sublime is that it is a feeling of displeasure concerning the aesthetic faculty of judging an object that is yet at the same time represented as purposive, which is possible because the subject's own incapacity reveals the consciousness of an unlimited capacity of the very same subject, and

the mind can aesthetically judge the latter only through the former.¹³²

Amid this sublime tremor, reason can do one of two things. Reason can either shrink back into the dialectic and be content with itself as negative. This, of course, would be an unsatisfied contentment, ephemeral because of the constant re-ignition of reason's will to re-approach and reconsider the limit. Or, reason can leave its fear aside and leap across the limitation, into the realm of the positive philosophy. Schelling calls this moment reason in ecstasy. As was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, the word ec-stasy is taken from the Greek, *ek-stasis*, where *ek-* means outside of, and *stasis* means standing, hence ecstasy refers to reason's standing outside itself. The leap from the negative philosophy to the positive means that the positive philosophy begins with what reason discovered at the conclusion of the negative philosophy. That is, with absolute essence. The function of the leap is important. That is because it allows Schelling to liberate absolute essence from its negative root, so that the positive philosophy can begin positively, entirely independent of the negative.

The negative philosophy derives the conditions of possibility of experience, that is, what a thing would be, were it to exist. But the negative philosophy cannot show *that* it exists. Schelling argues that showing simply what God would be, that is, the conditions of possibility of God in his absolute essence, if God were to exist does not necessitate *that* God exists:

Was existiert; oder bestimmter, was existieren werde, (denn das aus dem Prius abgeleitete Seiende verhält sich gegen dieses Prius aus kann ich also fragen, was sein werde, was existieren werde, wenn über Haupt etwas existiert) - dies ist

¹³² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:259.

*Aufgabe der Vernunftwissenschaft, dies lässt sich a priori einsehen, aber dass es existiert, folgt daraus nicht, denn es könnte ja überhaupt nichts existieren. Dass überhaupt etwas existiere, und dass insbesondere dies Bestimmte, a priori Eingesehene in der Welt existiere, kann die Vernunft nie ohne die Erfahrung behaupten.*¹³³

What exists, or more precisely, what will exist (for the being derived from the *prius*, therefore, I can ask what will be, what will exist, if anything at all exists) is the task of the science of reason, which allows itself to be realized a priori. But *that* it exists does not follow from this, for there could very well be nothing at all that exists. That something exists at all, and, particularly, that this determinate thing exists in the world, can never be realized a priori and claimed by reason without experience.¹³⁴

This is the point on which Schelling criticizes Kant's positing of the existence of God. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant writes that "it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God."¹³⁵ This is the conclusion Kant reaches as a result of his discussion of the highest good in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. According to Kant, if God did not actually exist it would not be possible for action to ever achieve the highest good, that is, the "best possible world."¹³⁶ God obliges one to seek the best possible world. This would be a world in which one is so virtuous that ordinary laws, etc., are not necessary. One would automatically follow

¹³³ Schelling, "Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung," 58–59.

¹³⁴ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 129.

¹³⁵ Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason," 5:125.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

the moral law. Since one ought to seek the highest good, where God is the “original highest good”, reaching the highest good must be possible. The argument hinges upon the idea that what we should do must be possible to achieve.¹³⁷ To tie this claim into the discussion in Chapter 1 of the metaphysically grounded spectator’s relation to the political event it is necessary to briefly return to *The Conflict of the Faculties* to reconsider the themes of progress and the moral law. What does such an understanding of the existence of God mean for the relation between the spectator and the revolution? For one thing, it could be said that when Kant argues that the revolution brings out progress towards the moral law, he does not argue for this assertion, he simply plucks this notion out of the world, rather than landing upon it through any *a priori* deduction. This leap from ought to actuality in Kant’s argument for the existence of God (this can be extended to his assumption of the existence of the moral law in the revolution) has puzzled readers, including Schelling, since the publication of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Schelling finds Kant’s argumentation lacking. According to Schelling, Kant posits the existence of God dogmatically. That is, he takes it precisely from the world, from experience, and from belief.

*Kant hatte Gott als den letzten, zum Abschluss der menschlichen Erkenntnis notwendigen Begriff bestimmt. Er hatte aber auch diese höchste Idee eigentlich nur aus der Erfahrung, aus der Tradition, aus dem allgemeinen Glauben der Menschheit, kurz nur also einen vorhandenen aufgenommen, er war nicht methodisch bis zu diesem Gedanken fortgeschritten.*¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid., 5:124-126.

¹³⁸ Schelling, “Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung,” 72.

Kant had determined God as the final concept *necessary* for the consummation of human knowledge. However, he had taken even this highest idea really only from experience, from tradition, from the widespread belief of humanity, in short, only as a given idea: he did not progress to this thought in a methodological manner.¹³⁹

What Schelling thinks Kant fails to do is show that the absolutely unconditioned God really does exist.¹⁴⁰ Post-Kantian thinking sees it as necessary to show that the unconditioned exists in its own right, rather than being assumed in order to round off the system. What is sought is the existence of the absolute essence, as the fundamental ground of the system itself. In order to round off the system with an unconditioned, for example God or an ideal humanity, and therefore avoid an infinite regression, that unconditioned must actually exist, and be shown to actually exist in its own right. *Contra* Kant, just because something ought to be, does not necessitate that it actually exists. It simply means that if God were to exist, he would be something like the original highest good. Diagram 1, which explains the essence of the human being as the unconditioned, which is the condition of the possibility of all knowledge, thus remains only one side of the story of a being who actually exists. Showing the actual existence of the absolute essence is the role of the positive philosophy. The section below details Schelling's approach to the problem.

3.4 Schelling's positive philosophy

The section above discussed the limitations of the negative philosophy. Since the

¹³⁹ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 138.

¹⁴⁰ Schelling, "Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung," 72; Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 138.

negative philosophy starts with experience and seeks the *a priori* conditions of possibility of experience, it is not able to identify the ground of that experience. What follows outlines the most important aspects of the positive philosophy. Once this has been outlined, it will be possible to apply the positive philosophy to thinking the sphere of political life and to show how the theories of Kant and Arendt, previously juxtaposed, might be effectively combined. This will show that, the relation between the spectator who is above or apart from the world, and the actor who takes a stand in the world, is mostly appropriately thought as a relation grounded in the ineliminability of conflict.

With the positive philosophy freedom is inserted into the world. The absolute essence is, Schelling says, an absolutely free Will. The absolutely free Will can only be so if it is able to freely choose whether it posits a *prius* outside of itself or remains the only and absolute *prius*. Prius is a word used by Schelling seemingly in contrast with the word prior often used by Kant (and used by Schelling in the negative philosophy). In order for something to exist absolutely freely it must have been free to be and not to be. Why is there something and not nothing?¹⁴¹ One way to answer this question, for Schelling, is to say that there is something and not nothing *because there is something*. There could, however, have been nothing. However, Schelling's insight goes beyond the banality of this answer. As Carew argues, Schelling recognizes that "why?" is not the correct question. Just as a child watching Alice in

¹⁴¹ Schelling writes: "*Gerade Er, der Mensch, treibt mich zur letzten verzweiflungsvollen Frage: warum ist überhaupt etwas? warum ist nicht nichts?*" ("It is precisely man that drives me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?") Schelling, "Einleitung in Die Philosophie Der Offenbarung," 7; Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures*, 94.

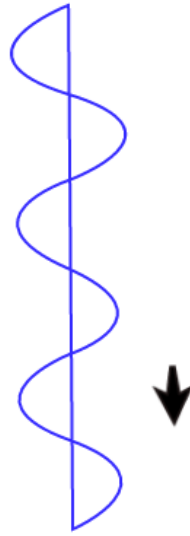
Wonderland finds no answer to their “Why?”, philosophy cannot answer “why did it come to be” regarding reason. Rather, reason itself must be grounded. The question becomes “how?” If God exists, how did this God come to exist? If reason exists, how did it come to be? Or in relation to the sphere of political life, if human beings exist in the sphere of political life, how does/did the sphere of political life come to exist? If the sphere of political life is taken to be the condition of being human, as it is an Arendt, then the answer to the question – How does or did the sphere of political life arise? – is of paramount importance.

According to Schelling, “*Alles Göttliche ist menschlich, und alles Menschliche göttlich.*”¹⁴² (“Everything divine is human and everything human is divine.”¹⁴³) The divine is the eternal freedom to be or not to be, to reveal itself as absolutely free to reveal itself, as well as absolutely free not to reveal itself. Thus, everything human is also bound up with the freedom to appear or not to appear; to reveal or not to reveal; to be or not to be. Yet this freedom manifests differently in the divine and the human, because these are different modes of being: unconditioned (divine) and conditioned (human being). The following diagram (Diagram 2) illustrates the movement of the positive philosophy:

¹⁴² Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 291.

¹⁴³ F. W. J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. J M Wirth, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany: SUNY, 2000), 67.

Essence



Existence

Diagram 2

In contrast to the negative philosophy, in the positive philosophy the curved line represents the actualization of the essence, not through elimination (as in the negative dialectic, where each new movement upwards meant that the previous concept should be disregarded, so as to move upward), but through succession, so that each new actuality encompasses the previous. Schelling is able to formulate the positive philosophy in such a way because of his complex theory of time. This is described below, before Diagram 1 and Diagram 2 above are combined into Diagram 3.

Schelling works out his theory of time in the following way. At first there must have been eternity, because if there is time, that time must come from somewhere, in order to be distinct and identifiable as time. This eternity must be the absolute essence, since eternity

must be absolutely unconditioned in order to be eternity at all. The absolute essence (God, or absolute humanity) is free to be. As Sean McGrath notes, “in Schelling’s theory of predication the copula is both conjunctive and disjunctive (= is also ≠).”¹⁴⁴ As absolutely free, the absolute essence must be both free to reveal itself or not to reveal itself.¹⁴⁵ Schelling describes this as the eternal Yes and the eternal No. The absolute essence is eternally free to say yes or no to revelation. Eternal freedom is the absolute freedom to be or not to be, to reveal or not to reveal. Schelling wonders how this eternal freedom, the “eternal Yes” and “eternal No,” could *be* at the same time. This is the eternal contradiction.

*Hier ist also der höchste denkbare Widerspruch, der nicht etwas dadurch auszugleichen ist, dass Gott als eins von beiden (als Ja oder als Nein) schon von Natur untergeordnet sei, und also gegen das andere das Verhältnis des nicht-wirkenden annehmen könne. Denn Gott ist gleich wesentlich beides; er muss also auch Schlechtdings als beiden wirkend sein.*¹⁴⁶

Here is the highest conceivable contradiction. This is not going to be reconciled, for instance, by claiming that God is already subordinated by nature as one or the other of the two (as the Yes or as the No) and hence, with respect to the other, could assume the relationship of the non-active one. For God is at the same time essentially both of them. Hence God must be absolutely active as both of them.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ S J McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious* (Hove; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 149.

¹⁴⁵ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 301; Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 75.

¹⁴⁶ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 301.

¹⁴⁷ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 75.

Schelling does not solve the contradiction by positing one (the Yes or the No, the rational or the animal, the unconditioned or the conditioned) as primary. Schelling recognizes that the potential or freedom to be requires contingency, that is, the potential not to be. Schelling writes,

*Und doch konnte, wenn sie frei beschloss sich zu offenbaren, der Zweck ihrer Offenbarung kein anderer sein, denn sich zu offenbaren als die, die frei war sich zu offenbaren und sich nicht zu offenbaren, als die ewige Freiheit selbst.*¹⁴⁸

If the Godhead freely decided to reveal itself, the goal of its revelation could be nothing other than to reveal itself as that which was free to reveal itself and free not to reveal itself, as eternal freedom itself.¹⁴⁹

This is the eternal contradiction. Schelling must resolve the contradiction, while allowing it to, in a sense, shrink back into itself, so that it remains, in the same way that reason shrinks back into itself in order to overcome its own limitations in the Kantian sublime. The contradiction must be allowed to rear itself again, otherwise the whole system would collapse. This “shrinking back” of the contradiction allows the contradiction to enter the world, but, contradictorily, remain outside of existence as well. Schelling resolves the contradiction in the following manner:

¹⁴⁸ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 301.

¹⁴⁹ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 75.

*Allgemein ausgesprochen also lost sich das Verhältnis des Widerspruchs durch das des Grundes, wonach Gott als das Nein und als das Ja seiend ist, aber das ein ist als Vorausgehendes, als Grund, das andere als Folgendes, Begründetes.*¹⁵⁰

The contradictory relationship is resolved through the relationship of the ground by which God has being as the No and the Yes, but one of them as prior, as ground, and the other as posterior, as grounded.¹⁵¹

Schelling posits eternal freedom, the principle of all existence, as an alternating priority and posteriority. The positing reorders the contradiction outside of the circular and unresolvable eternal contradiction. Now, the Yes and the No are given different values. By entering the world of existence, the Yes and the No are “presented” in the present.¹⁵² This presenting is a framing or limiting of the Yes and the No, which alters their relation. They are no longer circular and alternating. They are no longer held in an immediate unity, but are successive. Whereas in the eternal contradiction everything is circular, never changing, and repetitious, the decision inserts freedom into a world in which this freedom can gain traction. Freedom latches onto the world, the human world where it can affect actual change. This positing is the positing of freedom outside of eternity, and into the realm of human being. Schelling writes that, “*Dabei bleibt aber immer, dass, wenn das eine Seiend ist, das andere nicht als dasselbe seiend sein kann.*”¹⁵³ (“As such, it always remains that if one of them has being, then

¹⁵⁰ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 301.

¹⁵¹ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 76.

¹⁵² See Alistair Welchman and Judith Norman, “Creating the Past: Schelling’s Ages of the World,” *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 4, no. 1 (2010): 23–43.

¹⁵³ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 301-302.

the other cannot have the *same* being.”)¹⁵⁴ The “eternal Yes” and the “eternal No” can therefore both have being at the same time, yet they cannot have the same quality or mode of being at the same time. Schelling, in positing the prior (ground) and the posterior (grounded), posits two modes of being, and freedom can dwell in both at the same time without contradiction. In other words, in overcoming the contradiction within the eternal Yes and the eternal No, Schelling rethinks the origin of time. According to Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman:

What this means is that the past and present occupy different planes of existence, as it were. Schelling rejects the notion, almost universally held since Aristotle, that the past is a past present – something that used to be a ‘now’ but no longer is. For Schelling, the past was never a present or a ‘now’, it has always been the past, it is always already past.¹⁵⁵

This “always already past” is possible because the eternal past, that is, eternal freedom, simultaneously has and does not have being. It exists, for Schelling: “At the same time, *in different times*. For different times (a concept that, like many others, has gotten lost in modern philosophy) can certainly be, as different, at the same time.”¹⁵⁶ [*“Denn verschiedene Zeiten (ein Begriff, der, wie viele andere, der neueren Philosophie gänzlich abhanden gekommen) können als die verschiedenen wohl zumal sein.”*]¹⁵⁷ Schelling seems to address the Kantian use of the phrase *zugleich* here. As was discussed in Chapter 1, *zugleich* is translated into

¹⁵⁴ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 76.

¹⁵⁵ Welchman and Norman, “Creating the Past: Schelling’s Ages of the World,” 37.

¹⁵⁶ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 76.

¹⁵⁷ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 302.

English as “at the same time”. This at-the-same-timeness is used often by Kant. For example, for Kant the human being is rational and an animal *at the same time*. As was seen in the first chapter, this at-the-same-timeness (evident, for example, in participating at the same time as not participating) is possible because of the dominance of the rational in Kant. For Kant the two ways of being: as rational and as animal, can, as qualitatively different, be at the same time. Rationality is antagonized by the animal in order to recognize its own superiority over the animal. But ultimately this at-the-same-timeness is only possible because the rational eventually dominates and controls the animal. Schelling’s system, which at its core must be un-systematic but historical, demands of Kant the ground of the qualitative difference between the rational and animal that makes this at-the-same-timeness possible. Under the eye of Schelling, Kant’s “at-the-same-timeness” becomes a mere distraction; a suave equation that does not work out.

Schelling locates difference not in the opposition between rational and animal, but in the different times in which being takes place. For Schelling, time could not be without presupposing eternity and eternity is “unprethinkable” without time, for if there were not different (successive) times, there would be no conception or knowledge of eternity. Schelling writes that, the contradiction only breaks when it “posits a succession of eternities (eons) or times. But this succession of eternities is precisely what we, by and large, call time. Hence, eternity opens up into time in this decision.”¹⁵⁸ (*“Eine Folge von Ewigkeit (Aeonen) oder Zeiten setzt. Aber eben diese Folge von Ewigkeiten ist es, was wir insgesamt die Zeit nennen. In dieser Entscheidung also schließt sich Ewigkeit in Zeit auf.”*)¹⁵⁹ The contradiction remains

¹⁵⁸ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 302.

as contradiction up until it reaches such an intensity (confliction) that it must posit something outside of itself in order to preserve itself.¹⁶⁰

Schelling frequently uses the opposing terms cision (*Scheidung*), meaning a separation, and de-cision (*Ent-scheidung*), meaning a kind of bringing together. In the Schelling passage in the paragraph above, the de-cision occurs at the point in which reason and the totality it collates is primary, and the particular, the different, is subsumed beneath it. As a result of this formulation of the founding of time, there is a sense in which there are two beginnings in Schelling. The first is always already beginning. It is the eternal beginning, an eternal becoming and eternal contradiction. This is the “eternal”, “original”, “primordial”, (these are various ways in which Schelling describes the contradiction) always already there, beginning. Then there is the de-cision to break free of the eternal beginning, not sublating it but positing the second beginning outside of the first. In this positing the eternal contradiction appears, not as contradiction but as a tumultuous conflict. Recall that in the *Ages of the World*, Schelling writes that at the very foundation of all life there is ferocious conflict. According to Schelling:

*Alles, was wird, kann im Unmut werden, und wie Angst die Grundempfindung jedes lebenden Geschöpfs, so ist alles, was lebt, nur im heftigen Streit empfangen*¹⁶¹

Everything that becomes can only become in displeasure, and as anxiety is the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., VIII301; Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 75.

¹⁶¹ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” 698.

grounding sensation of every living creature, so too is everything, that lives, only born [or received] in ferocious conflict.¹⁶²

The eternal contradiction must posit times in the plural, that is, a succession of times, rather than one time, because this is the only way it maintains its own freedom. It cannot posit its absolute other – simply “time” – this would lead to incommensurable contradiction. Rather it posits the founding, creative conflict (the conflict between times).

Schelling resolves the contradiction, while allowing for the contradiction to achieve a sublime-like shrinking back into itself, so that it remains, in its original state (as contradiction).¹⁶³ The contradiction must be allowed to rear itself again, otherwise the whole system would collapse. This anti-systematic contradiction, which is anterior to the system, is what grounds the system. This “shrinking back” of the contradiction allows the contradiction to enter the world, but remain as outside of existence as well. The discussion above displays the basic workings of Schelling’s positive philosophy. Already this framework can be related to the sphere of the communal life, which, as established in Chapter 2, is the realm of the actor. Revelation is a particularly persistent theme in Schelling’s late philosophy. The way that, after revealing itself, the absolute essence also shrinks back into the eternity from whence it came, echoes the mysterious retreat of the political in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. There is also a particularly poignant passage in *The Human Condition* that discusses revelation. Arendt writes that the “revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore

¹⁶² My translation.

¹⁶³ In fact, Heidegger accused Kant of shrinking back from the abyss. This is a Schellingian accusation. See, Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time*, 82.

where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness. Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure”¹⁶⁴ in order for the actor to stake a place all. Recall that Schelling writes that “Everything divine is human and everything human is divine.”¹⁶⁵ In terms of the sphere of political life, what makes a human being human is the freedom to reveal or not to reveal themselves to one another in the space of appearance. It is also worth reemphasizing that Schelling does not propose that the negative philosophy be relinquished. Thus, the framework of action provided by the positive philosophy does not attempt to relinquish that Kantian spectator, who is above or apart from the action. The alternating priority and posteriority described by Schelling can in turn describe how it is that within the existence of the same subject it is possible to have alternating modes of being, namely, the spectator and the actor, who conflict with one another, and succeed one another so that at one time one is dominant, and at another time the other is dominant.

The alternating priority and posteriority that results in succession is only possible in light of the “asystasy” of Schelling’s conception of time. Schelling’s *Werke* is often referred to as tripartite: the early, middle and late Schelling. *Interpreting Schelling: critical essays*, edited by Lara Ostaric, divides the development of Schelling’s philosophy into four periods: transcendental philosophy and philosophy of nature, system of identity, system of freedom, and positive philosophy.¹⁶⁶ I think the most sophisticated interpretation of the development of Schelling’s work, which also provides an indication as to how Schelling’s work can be

¹⁶⁴ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 180.

¹⁶⁵ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 67.

¹⁶⁶ See the Page of Contents in, Lara Ostaric, “Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays” (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

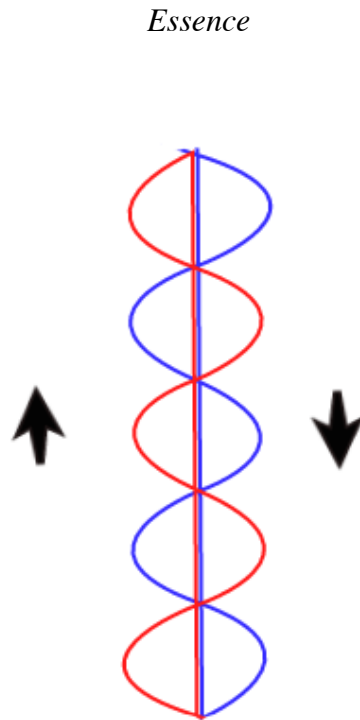
meaningfully approached, is provided by Tilottama Rajan and Sean McGrath, who argue that “the current Schelling Renaissance sees the work, in its very difference from itself, as an integrity ... it has become clear that this ‘asystasy’ is not inconsistency, but a new way of doing philosophy, and that the different areas and ‘stages’ of Schelling’s philosophy need to be consistently thought through each other.”¹⁶⁷ This method is not left unattended in this thesis.

It is precisely such a method that allows a reconsideration of Schelling in relation to thinking the sphere of political life as founded in creative conflict. Time is conceptualized in Schelling as “asystasy”, which means, a-systematic or, as Tilottama Rajan writes, “deeply but creatively disturbed.”¹⁶⁸ The strands of time continually interweave like a twist of hair (as Diagram 3 below suggests). On the positive side of the diagram, the strands descend (succeed) so that at each moment one strand appears while the other remains behind, only to appear once again, in a continuous successive cycle. The past, which is characterized by eternal freedom, continually disrupts the present. The two sides of Diagrams 1 and 2 show no fundamental evidence of conflict when viewed separately. The positing reorders the contradiction as conflict, outside of the circular and unresolvable eternal contradiction. This positing is the positing of freedom outside of eternity, and into the realm of human being. Yet the eternal contradiction remains in the world in the form of the grounding conflict. By combining Diagram 1 and Diagram 2 above, one sees (a simplified version of) how

¹⁶⁷ Tilottama Rajan and Sean J McGrath, “Introduction: Schelling After Theory,” *Symposium* 19 (2015): 6.

¹⁶⁸ Tilottama Rajan, “Excitability: The (Dis)Organization of Knowledge from Schelling’s First Outline (1799) to Ages of the World (1815),” *European Romantic Review* 21, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 321.

Schelling's new philosophical system works. This new illustration of the interaction of the negative and positive sides of philosophy can be seen in the following diagram:



The actual flow of the potencies would be more chaotic and unpredictable than the three diagrams portray. However, Diagram 3 above does grasp the significance of Rajan's insistence of reading Schelling's work as one of "asystasy" (grounded in inner conflict). Viewed together in Diagram 3, the conflict, and the toss and tumble for dominance between two ways of being (in essence and in actuality), becomes apparent. Most of the time there is no confrontation. The lines sway in and out freely. However, occasionally when the two lines come together, there is a clash. They push in separate directions and it is uncertain which side

of the diagram will eventually be dominant.

Eternal freedom shrinks back into itself and thus posits itself as the eternally past, what Schelling calls “unprethinkable” (*unvordenklich*). That which is “unprethinkable” only becomes thinkable post-factum, and only *qua* always past. The term *Vordenker* literally means fore-thinker, a person who thinks forward, both as predictor and creator, but is used in ordinary language to mean mentor, prophet or mastermind. Thus, the “thing in itself” is the un-masterminded, the un-propheted, that which is not constructed or created but is creative and constructing. For Schelling, reason could always have been otherwise. This is because of the necessary contingency of the revelation. The concept of eternal freedom necessitates the contingency of revelation. There must be the freedom to reveal or not to reveal. Thus, the actualization of the rational world hinges on the contingency of the de-cision. Since the relation between rationality and the sphere of social life has been established in Chapter 1 of this thesis, it can be said that society is contingent upon the de-cision of the absolute essence. I am going to call this absolute essence (in relation to the sphere of political life) unconditioned humanity (where humanity is the essence of the human being). The cision (unconditioned humanity as immediately unified) is de-cided into a common humanity. This is a humanity relative to the human being in the world, it is unconditioned humanity that has been inserted into the world. Peg Birmingham writes that “Self-described as one who has joined the ranks of post-metaphysical thinkers, Arendt has formulated a notion of a common humanity that is rooted not in an autonomous subject or in nature, history, or god; instead, she finds this principle in the anarchic and unpredictable event of natality.”¹⁶⁹ For Arendt natality

¹⁶⁹ See Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and the Right to Have Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility*, 3.

is one of the conditions of being human. “The most general condition of human existence [is]: birth and death, natality and morality.”¹⁷⁰ Natality is the limitlessness of starting anew. It is the always possible beginning, and the birthing of the unexpected. Mortality is natality’s opposite; it is human limit, it is the absolute, expected limit. The place of human beings is in between birth and death. Living is a moment of agitation and conflict between life and death, natality and mortality. In what follows this is theorized through Schelling’s archetypes.

3.5 Archetypes as the inversion of the “ideas”

In many ways, the positive philosophy is the inversion of the negative philosophy, and it is therefore necessary to consider equivalent of the inversion of the Kantian “idea” in Schelling’s philosophy. Schelling aims to reclaim the thing in itself from the faux-existence it is allowed by Kant, as discussed earlier in this chapter. He does so in the manner elicited above, through the re-working of time such that there are multiple eternalities: namely, the eternal past, the eternal present, and the eternal future. Into this framework Schelling reinserts the “idea” (*Idee*). Understanding the idea in Schelling is essential to applying the positive philosophy to the sphere of political life.

The philosophical term “idea” (Greek: εἶδος, *eidos* and ἰδέα, *idea*; German: *Idee*) dates back to the ancients. For Plato, the ideas are substantial but non-visible universals in which particulars take part. (The notion of partaking again reminds one of the sympathy of the spectator in *The Conflict of the Faculties*.) Moreover, for Plato the ideas depend upon sight. The universe must be seen before it can be thought, in other words before its essence can be sought. Yet the Schelling of the *Ages of the World* criticizes Plato’s account of the ideas or the

¹⁷⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8.

forms. Plato is, for Schelling, unaware of the true philosophical import of sight, and the true importance of the “event” which gives a people its sight.¹⁷¹ That is, the lingering conflict involved in the overcoming of the original contradiction. In the *Timaeus* Plato argues that sight allows for the investigation of the “nature of the universe,” and the “idea of time”. In other words, sight is the beginning of science. The Platonic forms are static and must remain uninfluenced by the appearance. Appearances in the world merely take part in the forms. As Plato’s Diotima orates in *The Symposium*,

It [love] is not anywhere in another thing, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else, but itself by itself with itself, it is always one in form; and all the other beautiful things share in that, in such a way that when those others come to be or pass away, this does not become the least bit smaller or greater nor suffer any change.¹⁷²

The Platonic forms are already whole. They do not deplete or grow when objects take part in them. Schelling agrees with the notion that sight is prior to science, but for Schelling sight is even more fundamental. For Schelling the ideas must show the conflict through which they came into being. Schelling criticizes Plato:

Das von den Griechen an uns gekommene Wort Idee sagt seiner Urbedeutung

¹⁷¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Markus Zisselsberger and Mason Richey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 218n1.

¹⁷² Plato, “Symposium,” in *Complete Works*, ed. John M Cooper, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 211a-b.

*nach wirklich nichts anderes als unser deutsches Wort Gesicht, und zwar in beiderlei Verstand, da es sowohl den Blick, als was im Blick vorübergeht, bezeichnet.*¹⁷³

The word “idea,” which came to us from the Greeks, actually denotes, in accordance with its original meaning, nothing other than our German word “Gesicht”, and, indeed in both senses that the word designates: the glimpse and what passes by in the glimpse.¹⁷⁴

The glimpse and what passes by in the glimpse (what exists and is seen and what exists and is not seen) appears immediately to the subject. This is the “event” for Schelling. What is clear is that Kant and Schelling have very different conceptions of the notion of the “event”. As the translators of *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, Richey and Zisselsberger, note, the German term for “event”, “*Ereignis*,” is etymologically descendant from the German word for eye, “*die Auge*”. They write that, “The sense of ‘event’ in German thus carries the strong connotation of something empirical.”¹⁷⁵ They go on to note how well this fits with Schelling’s understanding of the event.

Schelling offers an understanding of the term “event” that is truer to the origins of the German word because he offers an alternative conception of the role of conflict in the event. Kant posits the antinomies to build his system, but then must posit the primacy of reason in an

¹⁷³ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 289.

¹⁷⁴ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 66.

¹⁷⁵ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 218n1.

attempt to overcome the contradiction. In contrast, Schelling argues for the original priority of existence and the necessity of the conflict that remains. Thus the priority can alternate according to which mode of being this subject is engaged in (spectatorship or acting). The “thing in itself” (the object outside of a relation to the subject) for Kant, is the element of the object that does not appear in the appearance and which therefore cannot be known. It is the part of the object that the form leaves behind in Kantian critical philosophy. It is the intuitable part of the object that is not captured rationally by viewing the form of the object. In other words, it is the part of the object that can be seen even though it is not visible. The existence of an object is not generalizable in the same sense that the form of the object is, because it is experience dependent. What is not seen appears anyway; by being felt. This feeling is not a feeling in the sense of the moral feeling in Kant, that triggers the subject to orientate themselves rationally towards the moral law, but is rather a ground of everything else, including reason. In terms of the eternal contradiction, and the emergence of time, what passes by in the glimpse is the eternal past. As Norman and Welchman put it, Schelling’s notion of eternity, or a time that was always already past, allows Schelling, through the archetypes, to present the past.¹⁷⁶ That which was always past (and therefore never experienced rationally) is felt. For Schelling, the forms, which he calls “archetypes” (*die Urbilder*), and sight are mutually dependent. Schelling describes the emergence of archetypes as “*ein notwendiger Moment in der großen Entwicklung des Lebens*”¹⁷⁷ (“a necessary moment in the great unfolding of life.”)¹⁷⁸ These archetypes are successive in the sense that they neither remain as fully formed nor change completely. Each archetype succeeds the last, so

¹⁷⁶ Welchman and Norman, “Creating the Past: Schelling’s Ages of the World,” 37.

¹⁷⁷ Schelling, “Die Weltalter,” VIII 290.

¹⁷⁸ Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 66.

that each new instantiation always retains something of the original.

Schelling's archetypes "flow from the interior of creative nature"¹⁷⁹ and are therefore open to vitalizing change. This is what makes action possible. This change, or what Arendt would call "natality", that is, the possibility for the new to enter the world, is what allows the succession. The change and movement of the archetypes consists in the tumultuous downwards tumble for potency described above. The successful archetype succeeds but only ever in relation to what has already come before it. What remains, that originary negation, that first split which set everything after it in motion, can be sensed in all that follows. The archetype represents the relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned. The prefix *Ur-* translates from German as original and *Bild* translates as picture, symbol, pattern, image, view. Thus what flows through the archetype is the unconditioned in the realm of conditions, or what is here being called a common humanity. It is in relation to this formulation that Schelling can claim that everything human is divine.¹⁸⁰

The archetypes continue to be shaped by worldly conditions, hence they are constantly becoming, moving and generating. The glimpse shows both the face and what is beyond the face. What is seen in a face or a vision? It is that utterly human attribute: feeling. This amounts to an immediate judgment: an emotive, unmediated, uncontemplated, ir-rational (but also not irrational) response. It just happens. The archetypes correspond to what is seen on the face, showing not only what is on the face, the appearance, but revealing the flow of what is not. Emotions of the face are never static, they are constantly becoming. What is seen

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

immediately by looking at the face is unconditioned humanity, the overcoming of the original contradiction, the first contact with the world, the first painful recognition of the necessity of conflict, and the contingency of unity that is thought rationally (society). Being human means recognizing that one is part of a story, a web of interrelated moments, each marked by the original event, that is, by conflict, before which nothing can be thought. It is as archetypal beings that human beings are historical. The archetypes connect actually existing particular human beings though a common humanity to the original unconditioned humanity. It reveals actualized humanity in the world.

3.6 Political themes in Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology

With Schelling's negative and positive philosophy, as well as some of Schelling's motivations for constructing these philosophies outlined, the Schellingian passage that sparked this investigation into Schelling and the sphere of political life remains to be addressed. This is where Schelling begins to speak about themes that are commonly associated with the sphere of political life. In the *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, which Schelling presented as a lecture series in Berlin in 1842, and which was Schelling's first attempt at applying his positive philosophy to the world, Schelling lectures:

Denn zuerst, was ist doch ein Volk, oder was macht es zum Volk? Unstreitig nicht die bloße räumliche Coexistenz einer größeren oder kleineren Anzahl physisch gleichartiger Individuen, sondern Gemeinschaft des Bewusstseins zwischen ihnen. Diese hat in der gemeinschaftlichen Sprache nur ihren unmittelbaren Ausdruck; aber worin sollen wir diese Gemeinschaft selbst oder ihren Grund finden, wenn

*nicht in einer gemeinschaftlichen Weltansicht, und diese wieder, worin kann sie einem Volk ursprünglich enthalten und gegeben sein, wenn nicht in seiner Mythologie?*¹⁸¹

First of all, what is a people, or what makes it a people? Undoubtedly, not the mere spatial coexistence of a greater or lesser number of physically similar individuals, but rather the community of consciousness between them. This community has only its immediate expression in the common language. But in what are we supposed to find this community itself, or its ground, if not in a common world-view; and then this common world-view – in what can it have been originally contained and given to a people, if not in its mythology.¹⁸²

This passage undoubtedly has political undercurrents. Schelling excludes the concept of spatial coexistence as the condition of possibility of a people's existence. The political is certainly not simply a matter of human bodies in one place. Schelling argues that although spatial proximity, and the commerce, agriculture, legislation etc., that comes with it, is related to the concept of a "community of consciousness", these activities do not found a people. Legislation, agriculture, commerce, government, etc. are produced, and Schelling argues that community of consciousness cannot be produced.¹⁸³ This is consistent with Schelling's claim

¹⁸¹ F. W. J. Schelling, "Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie," in *Schellings Werke Sechster Band*, ed. Manfred Schröter (München: C. H. Beck, 1959), XI 62.

¹⁸² Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 48. Schelling, "Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie," XI 62.

¹⁸³ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 48.

that mythology itself is not invented, nor is it simply the poetic invention of a few individuals, such as Homer and Hesiod. Rather, a mythology and a people emerge simultaneously. It is useful to make note of Schelling's method of argumentation in the passage above. Schelling uses the phrase "*in what, if not*" (*wohin, wenn nicht*) twice in the passage. This argument is similar to an inference to best explanation. Schelling often relies on such a method, as Fred Rush writes,

Some have argued that inference to best explanation is not a particularly solid form of inference since it loosens the hold of truth on holding-true. But Schelling's Positive Philosophy is not after truth – he is very clear on this point. It is, rather, an interpretation of how the weight of discursive success in the world is to be felt.¹⁸⁴

The political is to be felt. The archetypes are found in the un-conscious (that is, they are not produced consciously). According to Schelling, mythology is also grounded in the un-conscious. For Schelling, the unconscious consists of ir-rational thought. It does not consist in madness, in the sense in which that term is used to describe mental illness. Thus, the Schellingian unconscious is not "mad" or "irrational". Rather, the Schellingian unconscious consists of un-reasoned, non-conceptual thought. This is completely free thought, unhindered by reason and the logical relations that it must develop. It is unconscious thought that opens up the possibility of the new in the realm of action (in the sphere of the communal life).

¹⁸⁴ Fred Rush, "Schelling's Critique of Hegel," in *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays*, ed. Lara Ostaric (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 236.

Sean McGrath acknowledges the importance of the concept of community in Schelling's discussion of the unconscious. In *The Dark Grounding of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*, McGrath writes that, "The logos is refracted through the consciousness of a particular people, the mythological world-view of a historical community that defines a people's identity, first by granting them a language, for the first forms of language are the tales of the gods, then an ethics of religion. The collective mind of man does not produce a common mythology; it rather produces a plurality of mythologies revolving around certain recurring motifs (that is, archetypes)."¹⁸⁵ It is when these archetypes appear, and are able to be differentiated and named as such, that a community of consciousness emerges. Through the archetypes a people recognizes its common humanity, and then its own place in relation to unconditioned humanity. As Schelling writes, "*Ohne diese Eigenschaft wäre das unleugbar Zweckmäßige im Einzelnen und Ganzen, ihr allgemeiner und besonderer Technicismus völlig unbegreiflich.*"¹⁸⁶ ("Without this characteristic, the undeniable purposiveness in the singular and the whole, their universal and particular technicity, would be fully incomprehensible.")¹⁸⁷ This is what allows action to take place. With the community of consciousness human beings are no longer act in an ahistorical void, but rather have an immediate feeling of togetherness in a relation without relation.

The word *Weltansicht* also needs to be investigated. When Schelling wrote the philosophy of mythology "*Weltansicht*" was not the only German word available to him to describe "world-view". In his book *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*, James Underhill

¹⁸⁵ McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*, 163.

¹⁸⁶ Schelling, "Die Weltalter," VIII 290.

¹⁸⁷ My translation.

discusses the term “world-view” in its German, French, and English uses. He makes particular note of the terms *Weltansicht* and *Weltanschauung*. He argues that even though they can both be translated as “world-view,” the terms *Weltansicht*, coined by Wilhelm von Humboldt, and *Weltanschauung*, a term used by Kant, are in fact distinct. Since Schelling himself wanted to draw the distinction between the negative and positive philosophies, and, since he was a contemporary of von Humboldt and in many senses a Kantian, Schelling’s choice of vocabulary in this case does not appear to be accidental. According to Underhill,

Weltanschauung is sufficiently clearly defined as meaning man’s intimate need to produce language in order to develop his intellectual forces and to realize a conception of the world, a process which requires the clarification of his own thoughts in his speech with others. *Weltansicht* operates at a far more fundamental level and refers to man’s first contact with the reality of the world, a visual or sensory contact. *Weltansicht* therefore precedes the forming of a *Weltanschauung* which can include various beliefs.¹⁸⁸

According to Underhill’s analysis, *Weltanschauung* is tied up with a process of production. It produces language in order to better understand the world. (Recall that in Chapter 1 it was argued that society is produced through synthesis.) Schelling does not use the word *Weltanschauung* here, although he does elsewhere. Thus it is striking that he uses the relatively less common word at the time, coined by a contemporary, to describe the foundation of a people. The existence of a people today, according to this analysis, is only

¹⁸⁸ James Underhill, *Humboldt, Worldview and Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 18.

made possible by its first contact with reality. This, it will be argued, must be thought of as a deeply conflictual first contact with difference in the actual world.

In fact, according to Schelling, “It is unthinkable that a *people* – *would be* without mythology.”¹⁸⁹ Reason discovers the conditions of possibility of a people, but has not shown that a people or many peoples actually exist. This, Schelling argues, can be shown through an examination of how a mythology came to be, which in turn allows him to develop a philosophy of mythology. According to Schelling “*im Innern der Menschen eine geistige Krisis vorausgehen musste.*”¹⁹⁰ (“A *spiritual* crisis in the *interior* of man had to precede the emergence of peoples.”)¹⁹¹ “Crisis” is taken from the Greek and means decision. It is a turning point, or a point of no return. According to Schelling, mythology is not just storytelling, it is not allegory, or symbolism. Rather, it had to be lived and experienced as truth, although it is not *the* truth. The people must have believed it to be true. If this were not the case, the mark left by the exit from mythology and solely communal living would not have been painful enough to leave the archetypes in the unconscious mind of human beings universally. If no crisis had taken place, mythology would not be actually found in different forms in every culture in the world.

Die Mythologie ist keine bloß als successiv vorgestellte Götterlehre. Ein Kampf zwischen den aufeinander folgenden Göttern, wie er in der Theogonie vorkommt, würde sich unter den mythologischen Vorstellungen gar nicht finden, wenn er

¹⁸⁹ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 47–48.

¹⁹⁰ Schelling, “Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie,” XI 101.

¹⁹¹ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 74.

*nicht im Bewusstsein der Menschheit, von der jedes Volk ein Teil ist.*¹⁹²

Mythology is not merely a doctrine of the gods *imagined as successive*. A struggle between the gods succeeding each other, as happens in the *Theogony*, would not at all exist among the mythological representations if it had not *actually* taken place in the consciousness of *peoples* who know of it, and to that extent in the consciousness of humanity, of which every people is a part.¹⁹³

From this it can be taken that succession and conflict are an actuality, or an objective fact, of the human consciousness. Thus, mythology actually did (or does) contain and give an actual *Weltansicht*, which was given to the people through a tumultuous and successive conflict between the gods and which they themselves lived out and experienced, and thus fully believed in. As a result of the successive process, the *Weltansicht* that is given to the people can never be the absolutely unconditioned *Weltansicht*. It is the unconditioned *Weltansicht* inserted into the world of conditions that becomes a common world-view of humanity and that is the founding of a people.

Mythology contains and gives a people its world-view. When Schelling discusses the original or primordial event, he means the moment in which the absolute indirectly posits itself. A people's view of reality, the way in which they interpret reality, was originally (*ursprünglich*) contained (*enthalten sein*) and given (*gegeben*) in the system or history of the gods. That which was original and primordial is thus always already there: contained as

¹⁹² Schelling, "Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie," XI 125.

¹⁹³ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 89.

unconditioned. The language of containing a giving is significant and should be thought in terms of the revelation of the absolute (the Yes and the No) that was discussed earlier in this chapter. The language of containing and giving certainly reflects the movement involved in the positive philosophy. Through the first positing it indirectly posits itself, and the succession that follows is forever more conditioned by the original moment. According to Tyler Tritten, this is “the primordial accident, an anarchic deed without ground or reason, primordial contingency.”¹⁹⁴ Mythology could, in other words, have eternally contained, and not given, the common world-view. Given the fact that peoples exist, mythology explains how this came to be, given that its existence is contingent, that is, not necessary. There could just have equally have not been peoples. The existence of a people is therefore utterly contingent on the revelation of the original contradiction: the freedom to reveal and not to reveal. Thus Schelling’s framework gives the sphere of political life the element of vulnerable contingency that Arendt wishes to afford the fragile, ephemeral space of appearance.

3.7 Creative conflict and the sphere of political life

So far this chapter has outlined Schelling’s negative and positive philosophy, and highlighted the discussion of various politically related terms in Schelling’s first attempt to apply his positive philosophy, that is, in the philosophy of mythology. It is now necessary to relate this more closely with the sphere of the political life more generally. With the “asystasy” of Schelling’s system in mind, Schelling’s philosophy begins to mirror an Impressionist painting: particular strokes applied singularly are incomprehensible, each brush

¹⁹⁴ Tyler Tritten, “After Contingency: Toward the Principle of Sufficient Reason as Post Factum,” *Symposium* 19 (2015): 31.

stroke un-contextual and therefore lacking meaning, yet nonetheless necessary. For that is what the Impressionists coveted in their paintings: the appearance of a chaotic movement that is the fundamental characteristic of life. Only in this dynamic, interwoven relation does the painting depict a scene as alive. Each stroke is just as important as the next, for each stroke antagonizes *and* compliments the next. In the *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling writes:

*Denn entweder denkt man es mit den unterscheidenden Eigenschaften eines wirklichen Volks, so kann es nicht mehr die Einheit enthalten, die wir suchen, und es setzt bereits andere Völker außer sich voraus; oder man denkt es ohne Eigentümlichkeit und ohne alles individuelle Bewusstsein, so ist es nicht ein Volk, sondern die ursprüngliche Menschheit selbst, die über dem Volke.*¹⁹⁵

For either one conceives of it with the differentiating qualities of an *actual people*, such that it can no longer contain the *unity* we are seeking, and such that it already presupposes other peoples besides itself; or one conceives of it without its own uniqueness and without any individual consciousness, such that it is not a people, but rather the original humanity itself, that is above the people.¹⁹⁶

The passage above is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it reinforces the juxtaposition

¹⁹⁵ Schelling, “Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie,” XI 87.

¹⁹⁶ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 64.

between Kant and Arendt and the metaphysical/physical distinction that has underpinned the whole thesis. To extrapolate upon Schelling's passage, if one examines the political event merely physically (that is, empirically), one will be struck by the sheer difference of the manifold, and the synthesis is too difficult, one's theory struggles to pull the different individuals into relation (this is where Arendt's finds herself, although she is aware of the problem). Or, if one examines the political event without including its actuality, that is, the particular characteristic of a given political event, such as the French Revolution then one misses the uniqueness of that particular event. All one accounts for is the universal, original humanity, not the common humanity that really is in the political event. Secondly, and to expand upon the first point, the passage above illustrates why the realm of life, the sphere of political life in particular, cannot be perfect or unconditioned. For if it were, it would be none other than God, it would be indistinct, simply an eternity, or a "perpetual peace". It would be indifferent and there would, most notably, be no possibility for Arendtian natality. Natality is "the miracle that saves the world."¹⁹⁷ The sphere of political life only appears as imperfect, it must be a clash between unity and difference, natality and mortality. It must incorporate both the Kantian spectator and the Arendtian actor in creative conflict.

When mythology gives the unconditioned world-view to a people, this world-view is exposed to conditions, worldly concerns such as relative poverty or wealth, relative customs, language, and culture that one encounters when, or even before, one enters the world. Thus it becomes the common world-view. This is a world-view that allows for action in the sphere of political life. It is felt and not thought rationally. The first contact with the world is an unconscious first contact, since, even before we are born we are already marked by the world.

¹⁹⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 247.

The *Weltanschauung*, in contrast, is that which one has come to believe is true. It dances before one on a stage, in a show (*die Schau*) in all its “perfection”. It is a show that has been produced. Once one has come to believe the ideology, then one begins to try to shape the world and everything in it so that it conforms with the ideology. This is clearly not what Schelling means by *Weltansicht*. Whereas *Weltanschauung* gives the connotation of the show, and of distance, *Weltansicht* is immediate. *Weltansicht* includes the word *Sicht* – sight, opinion. There is a certain knowledge that can be gained simply through seeing, without thought. Hans Jonas, who, along with Arendt, was one of Heidegger’s students and who attended Heidegger’s Schelling seminars in Marburg, writes of sight in his article “The Nobility of Sight”:

Sight is par excellence the sense of the simultaneous or the coordinated, and thereby of the extensive. A view comprehends many things juxtaposed, as co-existent parts of one field of vision. It does so in an instant: as in a flash one glance, an opening of the eyes, discloses a world of co-present qualities spread out in space, ranged in depth, continuing into indefinite distance, suggesting, if any direction in their static order, then by their perspective a direction away from the subject rather than towards it ... Sight is unique already in beholding a contemporaneous manifold as such, which may be at rest.¹⁹⁸

Jonas’ article examines the role of sight in relation to its role in intuiting both the particular

¹⁹⁸ Hans Jonas, “The Nobility of Sight,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 14, no. 4 (1954): 507.

and the universal in one glance. However, it is Kantian in an unfortunate sense.¹⁹⁹ Namely in the insistence for the preference of distance over closeness when viewing an object. For example, Jonas writes that,

Indeed, sight is the only sense in which the advantage lies not in proximity but in distance: the best view is by no means the closest view; to get the proper view we take the proper distance, which may vary for different objects and different purposes, but which is always realized as a positive and not a defective feature in the phenomenal presence of the object.²⁰⁰

Distance plays a role in all viewing, no doubt. For distance is still distance even when one only stands a pace away from the object. Distance, then, simply means here to be apart from the object, to see the object as distinct. There remain tinges of the Kantian disdain for proximity in Jonas' claims that seem to be an exaggeration. There is no necessary gain from the subject being situated a long distance from the object. When the subject is too far away (both literally and metaphorically, the latter being a reference to Heidegger's perception of himself as distanced from the political atmosphere of his time) objects become hazy. With too much distance one does not see the movement, the life, the "integration" (difference and sameness), to use Jonas' word, of objects. Just as one does not see the strokes in an Impressionist painting if the subject is too far away, nor can the movement and life of the painting be seen when the subject is too close. Thus the appropriate standpoint must always be a proximity that is somewhere in between distant and very close. This is a standpoint that

¹⁹⁹ As Chapter 1 demonstrated there are many benefits to displaying Kantian tendencies.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 517–18.

is fluid and open to change. While the Kantian spectator of the revolution, who is at a distance from the revolution, may be able to generalize about the revolution, and judge the manifold, political judgment would not be needed at all if there were not the proximity of the actor to the displeasure, to pain, to suffering. It is the actor who is close enough to see what is on the face of other actors in the revolution. The participation without participating of the Kantian spectator is not sufficient. It would be interesting to consider the artist here, who, it seems, would be both spectator and actor. The artist spectates insofar as he or she can sufficiently distance themselves in order to judge their own work meaningfully with universal and disinterested judgment, and hence within the greater context of other works of art, but he or she also acts, the artist is the very person whose hand wields the paint brush, and who brings something new into the world. It may be that the artist who attempts to understand and show the event is very much analogous to the conflict between the actor and the spectator within the same subject in the sphere of political life. Here Schelling's notion of having being *at the same time (zugleich) in different times* would come into play. The artist, initially steps back and thinks and judges an event universally and disinterestedly. Then the artist, once he or she has conceptualized the generalizable meaning of the event, steps forward to the canvas and engages with it, enacting the piece. Afterwards, or at given intervals during, the artist can step back again to judge the process. But the arts will always be caught up in a conflict between these two modes of being, between stepping back and forth. The meaning of the final artwork will thus be a mixture of the judgment of the spectator, from a distance, and the judgment of the actor, who must make quick decisions on a particular part of the canvas, without being able to see the whole. The artist who represents the event is in conflict between this judging and feeling, and whichever medium between these the artist reaches is shown in the artwork.

The negative philosophy can be thought of as moving upwards like in the Kantian sublime, through the fear of not being able to synthesize the manifold; through a distanced sight; through the ideas; towards the transcendent. On the other hand, seeing from a positive point of view, from the point of view of the positive philosophy, the movement is more akin to the “free play” of the “faculties” in Kant, which is immanent and non-rational (reason holds itself above the imagination and understanding²⁰¹), and thus the judgment of the beautiful. As becomes clear in Jonas’ article, both the sublime and the beautiful need sight to function at all, and sight has both mediate and immediate uses. This is an important point. It is particularly interesting in relation to Arendt’s own use of Kant’s *sensus communis*.²⁰² One possibility would be that in terms of thinking the action of the political philosophically Kant can call upon the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful. (Arendt does call upon this judgment in her own work on action.) The sublime could then fill in the theory of political judgment that Arendt seems to lack, namely the theory of the role of the political judgment of the spectator.²⁰³ Transcendence and imminence are both crucial to thinking the sphere of political life. Schelling’s focus on the primordially of sight, shows the necessity not just to see the revolution as a manifold, but, in order to act, to see the pain and what passes by on the face, that is, freedom (the conditioned and what passes by, that is, the unconditioned, in the glimpse).

²⁰¹ Note that in this role reason is not relinquished, it is simply held above the imagination and understanding.

²⁰² See, Degryse, “Sensus Communis as a Foundation for Men as Political Beings: Arendt’s Reading of Kant’s Critique of Judgment.”

²⁰³ Lyotard takes up the application of the Kantian sublime to political thought in Jean François Lyotard 1924-1998, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

Schelling's notion of sight and the relation between *Weltansicht* and mythology is also significant in that it distances Schelling from the mythology and world-view that the German National Socialist Party attempted to appeal to. A *Weltanschauung*, an ideology, contrasts with a *Weltansicht*, that is, an original and unconscious view of the world. Whereas a *Weltanschauung* is used to try to shape the sphere of social life, Schelling argues that there is an original and unconditioned *Weltansicht* that shows a particular people, through their difference, the point of view of the original and unified humanity. Thus there is a sense in which mythology contains (withholds) and gives a community its eyes. There is only sight, for Plato and for Schelling, if there is also darkness. Mythology emerges out of a dark and primordial origin. This dark place is thus the birth place of the sphere of political life. From there, mythology immanently contains and gives the world-view. Schelling writes that it is in "the first beginnings of religion and of civil society, or the sciences and arts, [that] ultimately we always encounter that dark place, that *χρόνος ἀδηλος* [*cronos adélos*, or "dark time"], which is only occupied by mythology."²⁰⁴ This dark place, for Schelling is a place that harbors all that is eternally unknowable. It is a space of "timeless time,"²⁰⁵ as Schelling says. This dark place is the foundation upon which all civil society is built. Or as the Greek entails, it is a "dark time". An unseeing time, that is, eternity. It is "only" occupied by mythology because humanity has not yet distinguished itself from mythology. Society emerges contingently when mythology (immediate community) ceases to be lived out.

The result of an exit from mythology is an exit from the living out of immediate togetherness, of living through an immediate, unifying world-view. Mythology immediately

²⁰⁴ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 165.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

holds a people together, despite their differences, in the sphere of communal life. With the painful exit from mythology, and hence from this immediate sphere of communal life, the sphere of social life becomes the dominant sphere of human being together. The sphere of the social life is an attempt at a world-view after exiting the immediate world-view of the sphere of the communal life. This can be exemplified through a comparison with Fichte. In 1794 Fichte gave a series of lectures titled, *Some Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar*. In one of these lectures he stated that “It is man’s *destiny* [*Bestimmung*] to live in society [*Gesellschaft*]; he *ought* to live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self.”²⁰⁶ For Fichte, human beings improve themselves rationally by bringing themselves into relation with other rational beings in society.²⁰⁷ Recall that for Schelling, everything rational is merely accidental. It could have been otherwise. The important shift that occurs from Fichte to Schelling is one from the rational grounding of society, to the non-rational grounding of society. Society (the sphere of social life), is grounded in community, which is felt not rationally thought.

What happens to community after mythology, given that for Schelling community and mythology are so closely bound up? Mythology becomes ultimately objectified and untransformable from the moment of the exit from mythology. To think this event with Schelling beyond Schelling, the sphere of communal life after mythology is that which only occurs in flashes, via the unconscious. It must be re-treated even though it eludes. This retreat would be the conscious attempt to delve into the unconscious, where the past immediacy of the sphere of communal life remains, in the form of the archetypes. Again, the retreat of the

²⁰⁶ Fichte, “Some Lectures Concerning the Vocation of the Scholar,” 156.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

political in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is, I submit, really the retreat of the sphere of communal life. The exit from mythology has taken place, and mythology is therefore always already past, and as such is set in stone and unchangeable. Yet the archetypes, those eternal forms in the unconscious mind of the human being that allowed for mythology in the first place, remain, and they remain in their asystasy. After mythology, these archetypes become the only way in which human beings are able to weave in and out of the common world-view, which presented the common humanity.

On a Schellingian plane, it becomes clear that *life* in a community cannot be reduced to organized society. Community is a rare and fleeting occurrence. Nobody feels a sense of community all the time. It arrives in flashes and starts, it is never completely able to be grasped, and it must be taken up by rational thought – by society – in order to affect lasting change. Schelling's concept of community (the sphere of communal life) explains why public protests and uprisings happen unpredictably, infrequently and with varying success. This feature is very much at home in Arendt's own thought. Occupy Wall Street, for example, was a movement that cannot have been rationally based. Why did Occupy Wall Street happen when it happened, and not earlier? If it were merely rational, then the people would have been able to organize earlier and act earlier. And why did Occupy Wall Street ultimately fail? Because it was not sufficiently thought out in society before the momentum caused by the feeling of togetherness within the sphere of communal life, through the archetypes, dissipated. A people, for Schelling, "has received the law of its life and its existence – the law from which all laws appearing in the course of its history can only be developments – with its concrete being *as a people*. But it can have obtained and preserved this primordial law [*Urgesetz*] itself only with the world-view innate to it as a people, and this world-view is

contained in its mythology.”²⁰⁸ But the archetypes must not be seen merely as a well from which to draw arches of humanity and togetherness, which are then transformed by rationality, and can then become a matter of society. Just as important is the role of an unconscious mode of being politically (that is, through the archetypes) in challenging societal norms. Community, as a “relation without relation”, aids the building of society, but it also conflicts with society, holding it to account, through its emotive, affective nature. The conflict between society and community is what results in the emergence of the sphere of the political life.

This feeling for community is universal, despite the different forms of community, the different world-views and mythologies, and the different cultures and languages of the world. As Schelling writes,

*Allein die Mythologie ist nicht bloß Sache Eines Volkes, sondern vieler Völker, und zwischen den mythologischen Vorstellungen derselben ist nicht bloß eine allgemeine, sondern eine bis ins Einzelne gehende Übereinstimmung. Hier trete sie denn zuerst hervor, die große und unwidersprechliche Tatsache der inneren Verwandtschaft zwischen den Mythologien der verschiedensten und sich übrigens unähnlichsten Völker.*²⁰⁹

mythology is not merely a matter of just one people, but of many peoples; and the agreement of the mythological representations between them is not merely a

²⁰⁸ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 49.

²⁰⁹ Schelling, “Historisch-Critische Einleitung in Der Philosophie Der Mythologie,” XI 61.

general one, but rather goes down to the smallest detail. Here, then, initially comes into prominence the great and irrefutable fact of the inner affinity between the mythologies of the most varied and otherwise most dissimilar peoples.²¹⁰

The mythologies that once sustained a people may have scattered, but the point stands that human beings are still archetypal beings. “The meaning of *mythology* can only be the meaning of the *process* by which it emerges into being.”²¹¹ While mythology may not be lived out today, and while there is the requirement today to form constitutions, and when the automatic acceptance into a group is no longer a surety, the archetypes through which these mythologies once formed remain. It is by seeing through an unconscious form-like power that human beings *remember* and *narrate* their search for a home in the midst of unhomeliness. This is what Coetzee’s Michael K looks for in the midst of a society that rejects him and a mother, a past, who cares little for him. In the deep isolation that society can enforce, Michael K is never really able to find a community, that, like the pumpkins he painstakingly cares for against the harsh environment, would sufficiently nourish him *qua* human being. This is also what Arendt sought. Schelling gives us the philosophical framework with which to think community in the midst of society. It is in this way that Schelling can be considered the missing link in the history of thinking out the sphere of political life.

3.8 Conclusion

What Schelling offers is an alternative thinking of the history of the sphere of political life via a de-formalization of the event, whereby the event is historicized outside of a relation

²¹⁰ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, 46.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

to the subject. That is, Schelling's framework can think the sphere of political life independently of Kant's spectator. Just as rational thinking is a universal and generalizable human trait, so too is the ir-rational sense of community felt through the archetypes. For Schelling, everything begins with conflict (*Streit*), for nothing could become if there were nothing to overcome. Thus, time overcomes eternity. Eternity is the "time" in which there is no distinction between times, that is, no distinction between past, present and future. Diagram 3 illustrated the continual, deep conflict involved in living a human life, which means having the capacity to choose to reveal one's self or not in the sphere of political life. Life *is* only if it is grounded in conflict. Therefore, conflict must be maintained in the maintenance of life. This anxiety is an unhomey home in a time in which a home is no longer guaranteed. This conflict is original insofar as it occurs in that first step outside of the monoculture, the first time difference is introduced. This is so painful and fearful that the anxiety of it remains in the human collective unconscious, in the form of conflict (as opposed to violence), which manifests in the archetypes. It is the archetypes that, as the foundation of community (which is a "relation without relation"), through their successive development, clash, with the ascending ideas of society. The source of action (the *arché*) clashes and conflicts with the aim of judgment (the idea).

This is a thinking out of action through *arché*, that does not relinquish judgment. If everything that is alive only is so in virtue of the anxiety and displeasure that emerges with conflict, then the sphere of the political life, which is the most alive human sphere, must also emerge out of conflict. To say that the sphere of political life is founded upon conflict would have to be to say that at the very moment in which the political life appears, it appears only in virtue of the fact that there were other ways of being that could have appeared in its place

(including not being at all). There must always have been an alternative. The decision to reveal the human life as the political life must have been a difficult and risk-ridden one. Again, Arendt's notion of natality comes to mind. Every attempt at natality, at the radically new and unexpected, risks mortality, that is, death. The sphere of the political life is a space in which human beings appear to one another in a being together simply for the sake of being together. The conflictual founding of the political, then, produces unpredictable results in regards to the relation between being and non-being (revelation and not revelation). In other words, it is never known exactly what the actualization resulting from the conflict will achieve. What this being together will produce is never prethinkable – to borrow from Schelling's vocabulary of the unprethinkable²¹² This is a being together communally simply for the sake of being together that is not primarily concerned with consequences.

Ferocious conflict plays two roles. In one role it is the foundation or origin of all life. On the other hand it is also that which provides the stimulus for continued becoming once the creature is born (after the original founding conflict). Schelling locates the foundation of all life within the realm of experience. All life is founded upon that first experience of sensation. But that first feeling is never an immediately pleasurable one, since the first sensation occurs at birth, where the creature (he or she) is born out of their own sheltered and ignorant existence contained in a whole, and into a world in which he or she is distinct, limited, and limiting. The ferocious conflict is that final push into the world, which takes that ultimate risk of the revelation, and it is so disturbing and unsettling that it marks all future becoming. Hence the two roles of conflict. The ferocious conflict, as the foundation of all life, continues to limit all future attempts at becoming. It would be pertinent to distinguish between a ground

²¹² This was discussed briefly in Chapter 3.

and a foundation here. A ground is to be understood as the essence of a being, and therefore is the condition of possibility of the being. A foundation, in contrast, is the result of the act of founding, is contingent upon that act. Since it is contingent it could have been otherwise. The term foundation already implies an act from which everything else begins. The foundation of a house is decided upon and built. That first act that drives the shovel into the earth puts everything that follows into motion. In contrast, nothing acts to bring about the ground, the ground is there whether or not there is an actual being. Thus in discussing the foundation of life, life itself must be thought as contingent upon that founding act. Life (even human life) could have been otherwise. It is the point at which being and non-being clash, such that what is actualized in the world is a combination of being and non-being. As a result of this clash, that which becomes is never actualized to its full potential. Conditions in the world prevent this. Actuality and potentiality collide. The founding sensation of displeasure or anxiety is therefore the feeling that coincides with the recognition that one is an acting being who is only so because of the ineliminable founding conflict between revealing and not revealing oneself. The feeling of the sphere of the political is therefore the feeling that comes with the realization that every act will, in one sense, be a failure, because, as the result of the continuing conflict between being and non-being, no act can fully actualize what was envisioned, coupled with the fact that being human means one must try anyway.

Conclusion

One of the commonalities between Arendt and Schelling is their refusal of system. However, Schelling also had an explicit awareness of the inescapability of systemization. Despite this inescapability, both Schelling and Arendt wanted to write beyond the system. Both thinkers wanted to account for the actual; actuality, act, activity, action. What Schelling offers is a thinking of the sphere of political life that retains the metaphysical element of Kant's thinking of the sphere of social life as the ground of judgment and which gives a mark and a measure against which to judge, *and* allows for the action originating from the sphere of communal life as occurs in Arendt.

Only in the state of agitation described in this thesis is the genuine sphere of political life experienced. This is why one can be part of a community and never experience the political, or be part of the social and never experience the political. Not everyone lives in times of upheaval, natality, re-birth, revolution. A Schellingian sphere of political life is to be thought as a process of selective, collective remembering: the remembering of community. In this process reason has the role of regulator, in a sense similar to the role of reason in Kant's judgment of taste. In this role reason does not direct the process consciously. That is, reason oversees this selection of memory, but does not participate in it. Reason thus acts as a guard so that this remembering does not become dogmatic, so that the memories (myths) that are remembered do not violate what is appropriate to the sphere of political life. What is appropriate to the sphere of political life is speech and action that is universalizable and disinterested. Reason, judgment, upholds this criteria of universalizability consciously. Human beings must be aware of both the power and pitfalls of reason. Reason allows

constitutions to be written, new technological advancements to be made, moral judgment to be reached, and justice to be obtained in law. When it is time for reason to dominate it is important that the archetypes remain withdrawn, in order to allow reason to synthesis human beings in the sphere of social life. But the archetypes are also capable of interrupting rational ideology when it begins to violate human freedom to be with others for no other reason than simply being together. In other words: feeling interrupts reason, and reason keeps feeling in check. This is the way in which reason and mythology, society and community, ideas and archetypes, and, therefore, spectators and actors must be related for the sphere of political life to appear at all. This thesis has proposed that there are three distinct modes of being in the world with others. It is apt to explicate these briefly, to be sure that this distinction has become absolutely clear in the course of the thesis, before making some final comments to conclude the thesis. The three modes of human being occur in:

The sphere of communal life

This is the sphere in which human beings are together in common (with emphasis on sameness) by virtue of having a universal sense for the common, and belonging in terms of a “relation without relation” in a group. This does not mean that one must be born into a community in order to belong. As ever, this is not about human bodies being in the same place at the same time. Rather, what this mode of being together has tried to capture is that, via the archetypes, one is unconsciously drawn to community, which is really the realization of a relation that was always already there.

The sphere of social life

This is the sphere in which human beings are together in difference (with emphasis on

difference), and are together by virtue of synthesis and discussion. Reason, which is the purview of philosophy, is what achieves this placing together of human beings, often through the use of institutions such as law, education, health provisions and so on.

The sphere of political life

This is a turbulent and rare moment of being together in solidarity in our differences and our sameness. This political being, I submit, occurs out of the clash between the communal and the social, in between the pull backwards into the past of the communal, of the “relation without relation”, and the pull forward towards the social, of the synthesis. Much of the time the social and the communal appear to function separately, in the same way that the public and private is often presumed to be separate. But sometimes, when, as Arendt would say “the chips are down”²¹³ – that is, when the very being of being human is at stake – there will be a clash between these two modes, and only then, in the fear of total annihilation, will the genuinely political realm emerge. This is the significance of the sphere of political life. It is therefore a matter of life *and* death.

The actor and the spectator are the catalyst of this life and death tumble. They must continually interrupt one another, within the same subject. The relation between the spectator and the actor, then, to answer the question posed at the very beginning of this thesis, is a relation of asystasy. To expand upon Schelling’s positive philosophy, these two conflicting ways of being (as spectator and as actor) must be, at the same time (*zugleich*) in different times. As such, when the actor acts, he or she’s capacity for judgment is still there but it is

²¹³ Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations,” *Social Research* 38, no. 3 (1971): 446.

quiet. This may change at any moment, and if judging becomes the dominant mode of being, then the actor must stop and think. A revolution (or other political event) is only meaningful insofar as action and judgment are intertwined. Action is the “why” of judgment, and judgment is the “why” of action.

I wish to round off the thesis with some brief comments regarding hospitality. For it might be protested that arguing that the sphere of political life is founded in an original community is exclusionary. What about the multicultural societies we live in today? Can the formulation of the sphere of political life given here account for the variation and difference that we value today? The answer lies with the archetypes. The archetypes, as endlessly succeeding, changing and responding to the world, no longer lock foreigners out in the way that a community, because of language, custom, or religion, might have been exclusionary before the exit from mythology. The archetypes, outside of the living out of mythology, allow a person to see both the manifold and the particular at once. In fact, a human thought process that does not think (rationally) but feels a common humanity is wholly compatible with the theme of hospitality. Arendt’s search for the “right to have rights” is similar to the question of when and on what grounds should another human being, someone who is not from here, wherever here may be, have the right to be accommodated in the home of another, that is, to be treated with hospitality.²¹⁴ It is precisely the foreigner, especially the refugee, who finds themselves outside of the system, who, as outside the system, grounds the very system itself. That which is not the system, that is, is the anti-system, grounds the system. The refugee challenges the system, the status quo. How is this, apparently altogether foreign, person to be dealt with? He or she is to be dealt with on the grounds that while this human being may share

²¹⁴ On the theme of hospitality and the foreigner see, Derrida, *Of Hospitality*.

different world-views (*Weltanschauungen*), they also have a fundamental first world-view (*Weltansicht*) in common. Which pertains to an original humanity, the most fundamental view of humanity. The appeal, through archetypes, to a common humanity, to an original being together, provides this safety net, and what is then needed is for reason to conform to this common humanity, to organize it and institutionalize it within society. Arendt writes that,

For many years now we have met Germans who declare that they are ashamed of being German. I have often felt tempted to answer that I am ashamed of being human. This elemental shame, which many people of the most various nationalities share with one another today, is what finally is left of our sense of international solidarity and it has not yet found an adequate political expression.²¹⁵

We are all implicated in the actions of others, because we are all human, and thus we are all capable of the same actions as others. Thus the Holocaust still speaks to us, in lands as remote as Australia and seventy years after the event: we are all implicated by it. In response to this collective shame there is no longer any choice but to act. As Arendt writes, “A life without speech and without action, on the other hand – and this is the only way of life that in earnest has renounced all appearance and all vanity in the biblical sense of the word – is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.”²¹⁶ An illustration of Arendt’s formulation has occurred recently in Australia. In this particular event, 23-year-old Iranian refugee, Omid Masoumali, self-immolated on the island of Nauru, which

²¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility,” in *Essays in Understanding*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 131.

²¹⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176.

houses one of the offshore detention centers run by the Australian government. After being flown to Brisbane, Omid died later in hospital from the wounds he had sustained during the incident.²¹⁷ This event illustrates Arendt's words all too well. This young man was tucked away on a tiny island amidst a total media ban.²¹⁸ He was not able to be seen or to be heard, not by those deciding his fate, that is, voters and politicians in Australia. His political being was, for all intents and purposes, stifled. Without being able to be seen or heard, activities which, according to Arendt, constitute being alive as a human being, and therefore which constitute the fundamental state of being human at all, Omid was "literally dead" in Arendt's terms. The blood may flow through the veins, but for all human intents and purposes the person is dead. They may as well not be there; it makes no difference to the world. This self-immolation was the only way in which Omid Masoumali could live (in Arendt's sense of the term). This man was put into such a position that he had to die in order to live (in the Australian consciousness, for a short period). Somehow, to be "alive" to others for that short time was worth more than the living out of a life. Omid was not simply protesting; he was exercising his humanity in the only way available to him. His action was not only resistance, a resistance towards authority, an annoyance to those in power. It was, as the video representation of the event streamed onto computer screens, the only way that Omid Masoumali could pull himself out of the cluster of faceless and nameless "boat-people" or

²¹⁷ Michael Edwards and Peter Lloyd, "Omid Masoumali Set Himself on Fire after UNHCR Told Him He Would Remain on Nauru, Asylum Seekers Say," *ABC News Online*, May 2, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-02/refugee-set-himself-on-fire-after-unhcr-meeting:-asylum-seekers/7377396>.

²¹⁸ Ben Doherty, "Immigration Detention Doctors Challenge Border Force Act's Secrecy Clause in Court," *The Guardian*, July 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/jul/27/immigration-detention-doctors-challenge-border-force-acts-secrecy-clause-in-court>.

“illegals”, and say “look, I am here, and I am human. You are human too. You are implicated.” Omid was pushed into such a corner that the only way to live was to die. *This* is the significance of being seen and heard in Arendt’s work, and of what is at stake when there is a failure to uphold a marker in which to judge in the sphere of political life.

Violence (*Gewalt*) is not the only means of extinguishing the sphere of political life. Boredom is also conflict’s opposite. Boredom is capable of doing as much violence to the sphere of political life as a tyrannical ruler. The apathy that permeates the scene today – the scene of politics – is currently the most threatening force seen in relation to politics in Australia. Politics today rarely breaches the sphere of political life. Boredom is a kind of death. And it only leads to more death (of those who citizens within the society were too comfortable within their own lives to defend). Comfortable citizens who are bored do not readily feel the political and stand up in the sphere of political life for a common humanity.

The thinking of the sphere of political life that has been outlined in this thesis is grounded historically but capable of “natality” to use Arendt’s vocabulary, where subjects are autonomous and capable of action that affects real change, but that also acknowledges the deep affect that the past, that tradition, that mythology, that community standing and differences, can have on these actions, and which recognizes that a satisfactory political position within a group of others is not guaranteed simply through rationality and being a part of society (history has shown that simply being a part of a society does not guarantee one the protections that citizenship has traditionally been assumed to invoke). Nor does it ward off boredom. What is fleeting but offers the cure to boredom are the archetypes, which are what still remains of the first sensation of the ineliminable conflict. The communal which just

happens through affect, and the social which must be carefully thought out, are in opposition. Every time human beings feel the clash between these two distinct ways of being together, that is, the pull of the sense of the common while being a participant in the social, new instantiations of the political are created, and thus a third way of being together, that is, politically, materializes. Together these modes of being together make up the full instantiation of what it means to be a human being. The sphere of political life looks different every time it is newly instantiated. It is never exactly the same as the last time it materialized. This is how it is possible to think the sphere of political life as that which is spontaneous, but retreatable, as a realm of natality, and of expiry, and as that which must be continually reinstated, rather than that which is always there in actuality. What really happens in a revolution, then, when the political genuinely emerges in the instantiation that has been the crux of this thesis, is that within the one subject there is a warring of two ways of being, a creative confliction that brings about a new, fragile, ephemeral way of being together in the world. Political events come and go. They may or may not exact long term change: but what is vital is that the sphere of political life facilitated by the “asystasy” (ineliminable conflict) at the foundation of the relation between the spectator and actor, remains.

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