

ALLOWING THE WORLD TO RESIST: A POSTCONSTRUCTIVIST ENLARGED MENTALITY

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Abstract

Contemporary democratic theory focuses primarily on questions of intersubjective and intergroup negotiation, participation and deliberation. The politics of environmental and technoscientific issues are increasingly revealing the limitations of this intersubjective focus. Attention to the fairness of democratic procedure, or to the norms of deliberation, is necessary but insufficient when the ‘facts of the matter’ play such a central role in political judgement and debate. The limiting emphasis on intersubjectivity exists despite the marked influence of Hannah Arendt, for whom legitimate political judgements arise from the perspective *of* the world, not from subjective attitudes towards it. This thesis argues that Arendt fruitfully focuses on what she called the ‘enlarged mentality’ as ensuring the representativeness of political judgements, and the thesis further contends that the concept of ‘enlarged mentality’ has been incorrectly adopted by subsequent political theorists as a *subject-oriented* rather than an *object-oriented* principle.

Enlarging the mind requires exposure to, and acceptance of, multiple object-oriented stories in which a thing or event in the world is revealed from a mediated and situated viewpoint. The novelty of every occurrence, as revealed in this particular type of storytelling, has the potential to break through various forms of intersubjective anaesthesia or habituation toward the world so that it can be accepted and judged as it is. Even when read as an object-oriented principle, however, Arendt’s enlarged mentality is still limited in its capacity to approximate the perspective of the world because of her anti-modern tendencies. Taking up pragmatistic, postphenomenological and postconstructivist insights, it is clear that politically-relevant stories are told by everything and about everything, inclusive of technoscientific domains. The thesis proposes that the ‘facts of the matter’ can be restored, in democratic theory and practice, through a postconstructivist reformulation of the enlarged mentality, in which democratic judgement is responsive to multiply situated and mediated stories that can detect and consider the resistance of the world to the preconceived desires of the privileged.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of the candidate's knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

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ALLOWING THE WORLD TO RESIST:
A POSTCONSTRUCTIVIST ENLARGED MENTALITY

Introduction

Contemporary democratic theory, in both its deliberative and agonistic forms, focuses on the interactions of people and groups and the conditions under which their voices can be heard, agreements can be reached, decisions made, and violent conflicts of ideas and values averted. This work is strongly influenced by Hannah Arendt's account of the capacity for an enlarged mentality to be adopted in political judgement. For Arendt, however, legitimate political judgements arise from the perspective *of* the world, not from subjective attitudes towards it. Accordingly, this thesis argues that Arendt's notion of enlarging the mind in political judgement has been incorrectly adopted by contemporary political theorists as a *subject-oriented* principle. This becomes a major drawback when considering the responsiveness and legitimacy of political action taken in relation to environmental and technoscientific issues. For the past decade or so political theorists, especially in response to the politics of climate change, have been claiming the need for an epistemic turn in democratic theory.¹ Ecological politics have brought the role of science to the foreground as a key political actor. Attention to the fairness of democratic procedure, or to the norms of deliberation, is necessary but insufficient when the 'facts of the matter' play such a central role in political judgement and debate.

To ensure that political judgement remains proximate to the perspective of the world, this thesis argues that the enlargement of the mind must involve exposure to, and acceptance of, multiple stories of a particular, *object-oriented* kind – those in which a thing or event in the world is revealed from a mediated and situated viewpoint. Arendt's work on political judgement rests on a reading of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and especially on her argument that the enlargement of the mind (the 'enlarged mentality') demanded of the Kantian aesthetic judge is a suitable resource for thinking about how political judgements can obtain their specifically representative legitimacy.² Because this

¹ For example, David Estlund, 'Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: The Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority', in Thomas Christiano (ed.), *Philosophy and Democracy: An Anthology* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 69-91.

² Arendt's retrieval of the Kantian 'enlarged mentality' for political judgement can be found most explicitly in Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Exp. edn.; London: Penguin, 2006); Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977); Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003); Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005).

idea, albeit in an overly subject-oriented form, underlies the major theoretical attempts to derive norms for democratic decision-making, any attempt to redirect democratic theory must start with Arendt's argument for a capacity to adopt an enlarged mentality when making political judgements. This thesis thus seeks to reformulate the enlarged mentality as an object-oriented principle while also calling upon pragmatistic, postphenomenological and postconstructivist insights to counter the tendency for democratic theorists to confine their attention to the fairness of procedures for the negotiation of the intersubjective. The enlarged mentality is reformulated through the elaboration and intersection of four main themes: *sensus communis*, reflective judgement, storytelling, and resistance.

Sensus communis and political theory

The first major claim of this thesis is that the enlarged mentality is primarily concerned with allowing the novel elements of a thing or event to anchor a plurality of responses toward it. The enlarged mentality has been largely subsumed to the genre of political philosophy that is primarily concerned with the negotiation of individual and collective interests and desires. This style of political thinking follows from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's attempts to distinguish the general will from the aggregate of particular wills.³ The enlarged mentality then tends to be taken, in a subject-oriented fashion, as a democratic principle whereby the values and opinions of other people (often, those affected by a decision) are identified and taken into account when a decision is made. Whether this process aims at a lasting consensus or a temporary and unstable *modus vivendi* depends on the specifics of the theory; in all cases, however, the goal is to narrow, for the purposes of agreement, the presumed plurality of opinions and values held by a number of disagreeing individuals and/or groups. Attention is lavished on the 'problem' of *narrowing* the gap between individual and communal opinions and desires.

Arendt's work on judgement does not fit so easily into this schema. Kant claims that the phenomenon of aesthetic judgement presupposes a *sensus communis* (common sense) – something shared that gives our declarations of beauty a certain persuasive power over others.⁴ Enlarging the mind aims to ensure that the always-present potentiality of a *sensus*

³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract, and Discourses* (London: Dent, 1973).

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

communis is realised. Arendt regards the *sensus communis* and enlarged mentality as of political significance because they indicate that judgement is made amongst and as part of a community.⁵ A community of judges, however, is not assumed to be facing each other and negotiating their intersubjective disagreements into a consensus; rather they are said to be 'facing reality together' and thereby achieving a condition in which their various opinions about some thing or event can diverge meaningfully.⁶ Formally speaking, a multitude seeing the same thing all in the same way is a sure sign that the perspective of the world has been lost; in contrast, 'worldly' political judgement takes place when a collective see the same thing differently, but are nonetheless aware that they do see the same thing.⁷ Kantian aesthetic judgement does not look to secure the same response amongst a variety of critics; rather it seeks only to anchor a plurality of responses in relation to the identity of the object of judgement. Likewise, the Arendtian enlarged mentality does not look to tame plurality but rather to expand and guarantee plurality by anchoring it around some thing or event in the world. A *sensus communis* is not a bringing-together of subjective judgements; the aim is not to *narrow* but to *maintain* or even *widen* the gap between individual and communal opinions and desires, thus preserving a plural, political space, while ensuring that the world 'in-between' is shared.⁸

Reflective judgement and pragmatism

The second central claim of this thesis is that democratic theorists, when drawing upon the enlarged mentality, should not lose sight of Arendt's account of the political stance as one taken from the perspective of the world. The above reading of *sensus communis* takes a position against political philosophies that take the concerns of Rousseau as their point of departure. Most modern political theory imagines collectives to be achieved through a social contract binding individuals "by the force of words alone".⁹ A concern with seeing

⁵ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*.

⁶ The phrase 'facing reality together' is taken from Deborah Nelson, 'The Virtues of Heartlessness: Mary McCarthy, Hannah Arendt, and the Anesthetics of Empathy', *American Literary History*, 18/1 (2006), 86-101.

⁷ Hannah Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', in Jerome Kohn (ed.), *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 93-200 at esp. 167-76.

⁸ On the 'in-between', see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (2nd edn.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) at 52.

⁹ Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore, 'The Stuff of Politics: An Introduction', in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore (eds.), *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of

from the perspective of the world, rather than attempting to find a merely intersubjectively agreeable position, entails a reduced emphasis on the metaphor of contract, questions of sovereignty and the relation between the one and the many, the procedures for divining a general will belonging to the political community as a whole, and for bringing it into effect. It brings us closer to the view of democracy emerging from pragmatic philosophy – a view that is now experiencing a renaissance due to the work of Bruno Latour and his proposal for a pragmatistic ‘object-oriented democracy’.¹⁰ Latour sums up the pragmatistic instinct towards politics as follows:

We might be more connected to each other by our worries, our matters of concern, the issues we care for, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes, or principles.¹¹

We are to read ‘our worries’ here as referring not to the experience of being concerned, but to the objects of concerns themselves. If what Latour claims is true, then insofar as we remain within the realm of the (inter)subjective, our view of what constitutes a political community, and our debates over the relationship between the individual and the political community, can only lead us into confusion.

To investigate how the perspective of the world can remain at the centre of the enlarged mentality, this thesis looks at the type of judgement that Kant called ‘reflective’ and that Arendt found so useful in accounting for the peculiarities of political judgement. Reflective judgements retain a focus on the concrete particular without the merely

Minneapolis Press, 2010), ix-xl at xv.

¹⁰ The proposal for an ‘object-oriented democracy’ can be found in Bruno Latour, ‘From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik: Or How to Make Things Public’, in Peter Weibel and Bruno Latour (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.; Karlsruhe, Germany: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 4-31; Bruno Latour, ‘Emancipation or Attachments? The Different Futures of Politics’, in Terry E. Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee (eds.), *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity* (Duke University Press, 2008), 309-24. Works of political theory developing from this proposal include Noortje Marres, ‘The Issues Deserve More Credit: Pragmatist Contributions to the Study of Public Involvement in Controversy’, *Social Studies of Science*, 37/5 (2007), 759-80; Noortje Marres, ‘Front-Staging Nonhumans: Publicity as a Constraint on the Political Activity of Things’, in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore (eds.), *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), 177-209; Jane Bennett, ‘In Parliament with Things’, in Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen (eds.), *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 133-48; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010); and Latour’s own Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹¹ Latour, ‘How to Make Things Public’ at 4. Following recent convention, I employ the term ‘Pragmatistic’ here and afterwards to refer to the work of the early 20th Century philosophers of pragmatism (centrally, the American thinkers Peirce, James and Dewey) and their followers, in preference to ‘pragmatic’ which can be too easily confused with the dictionary term.

‘determinative’, or deductive, application of a pre-existing framework for understanding. Commonly, this is understood as a means for enabling intersubjective communication without the ‘interference’ of differing background beliefs, preferences and interests amongst the community. If *sensus communis* is read in the tradition of theory attending to the nature of political community by trying to find principles identifying the individual and the group, then this reading of reflective judgement serves the end of flattening out plurality and enabling consensus. Arendt, however, does not seek to bracket background beliefs on the basis that they separate people; rather, she is concerned that they bring people too close together.¹² It is the novel aspects of events in the world that give them the capacity to relate but also to separate by breaching any crystallised set of non-reflective understandings that might prevent a plurality of responses. When judging reflectively, the phenomenon is not easily subsumed into a category; rather it calls the categories themselves into question. Reflective judgement is therefore better understood as a principle for allowing the things of the world to participate in their definition and in the generation and alteration of classifications.

To this end, this thesis reads reflective judgement alongside the philosophical pragmatism of Latour and his forebears in James Dewey, William James and – especially – Walter Lippmann, with the latter’s insistence that a public gathers not around things that are shared in the sense of being agreed upon or taken for granted but on those aspects of issues that institutions and experts have not managed to settle.¹³ The pivot around which the public assembles and garners political weight is therefore their sharing of a disagreement about something that *resists* convention. What binds a community of judges are the aspects of those objects that upset taken for granted frameworks for understanding; the ‘glue’ is not their identification with collective interests but rather the shared acknowledgement of this resistance. While we busily survey what is going on inside people’s heads, it is the matters of concern that are anchoring the patterns of identity and connection that we are seeking, as Latour proposes:

There might be no continuity, no coherence in our opinions, but
there is a hidden continuity and a hidden coherence in what we

¹² Hannah Arendt, ‘Understanding and Politics (the Difficulties of Understanding)’, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994), 307-27.

¹³ Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (Library of Conservative Thought; New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1993) at 56.

are attached to.¹⁴

Following this logic, the only effective way to map a public space is to treat the object, 'what we are attached to', as that which binds and gathers political subjects. If so, then the sort of political 'realism' that centres its attention on contestation around the values, opinions and ideologies of individuals and factions will always be lacking in important ways. Because each of Lippmann's 'publics' is connected by that which they disagree about, to identify what they have in common our focus must turn away from the people themselves and towards the world. Discussion is political when it is about something other than mere taste, preference, or interest – on our own behalf or as an ascription upon others. The 'reflective' nature of judgement means that the enlargement of the mind is not a mere aggregation of subjective attitudes towards the world; it crucially captures also those aspects of the world that exceed, unsettle, or 'resist' subsumption to human conceptualisations and purposes.

Storytelling and postphenomenology

The third central claim of this thesis is that politically-relevant stories are told by everything and about everything, inclusive of technoscientific domains. Drawing upon the enlargement of the mind as a key influence, theorists of deliberative and agonistic democracy neglect the role that the things of the world play in anchoring disagreements and continuing to weigh upon political actors. Arendt's concern is not that political judgements are intersubjectively 'fair', but rather that they remain as attentive as possible to the realities of the facts and events under consideration.¹⁵ Enlarging the mind attains proximity to the perspective of the world through exposure to as many situated viewpoints as possible. What Arendt calls 'stories' are the particular artistic forms of publicisation in which situated viewpoints are revealed; stories here are to be understood as telling us something about the world, not about the storyteller.¹⁶ It is insufficient to take a 'narrative turn' without being able to distinguish between, on the one hand, narratives that encourage a plurality of responses through their revelation of a communicable viewpoint and, on the

¹⁴ Latour, 'How to Make Things Public' at 5.

¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, 'Truth and Politics', *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Expanded edn.; New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 223-59.

¹⁶ Ibid.; Arendt, *Human Condition*; Arendt, *Between Past and Future*.

other, narratives that obfuscate by dominating the events under description or, in a subject-oriented fashion, speak more of the narrator than of the world. Object-oriented stories speak of some event in the world in such a way that its particularity is not overshadowed by subjective feelings or reduced by being subsumed to a larger narrative.

It is important for the enlarged mind to be responsive to as many situated object-oriented viewpoints as possible. To realise this demand requires that we go beyond Arendt's framework in order to acknowledge that these viewpoints must include those that are technologically mediated to varying degrees. This acknowledgement jars with Arendt's phenomenology in *The Human Condition*, in which mediated experiences are portrayed as unworldly.¹⁷ Political decisions are regularly made about, and involving, events that are not accessible to the immediate sensory experience favoured by Arendt. Don Ihde's more recent postphenomenological approach shows the phenomenological preference for direct sensory experience to exclude the perspectives of things that can only be brought to human attention through amplificatory artefacts.¹⁸ It is necessary for a reconfigured enlarged mentality to acknowledge these postphenomenological insights so that the range of stories available can be expanded to include the perspectives of the world inscribed for us by machines and instruments.

Resistance and postconstructivism

The representativeness of political claims is tied to the amount of listening that has taken place, and to the type of stories that have been heard, but not to the speechifying capacities of the storyteller. The reason that a democratic politics requires maximum exposure to stories is that the *resistance* of things must be heard, felt, seen, and accounted for in order to realise the values of publicness and participation underpinning democratic ideals.¹⁹

¹⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition*. See also Hannah Arendt, 'The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man', *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Expanded edn.; London: Penguin, 2006), 265-82.

¹⁸ Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology: Essays in the Postmodern Context* (Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy; Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993); Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures* (Sunny Series in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences; Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Attention to 'resistance' is used hereafter as the most appropriate way to describe the detection of agency that crosses the human/nonhuman boundary. Similar alternatives would include Jane Bennett's 'thing power', Donna Haraway's 'response-ability' and Latour's 'learning how to be affected'. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Posthumanities; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Bruno Latour, 'How to Talk About the Body? The Normative

Postconstructivist insights are employed to show how these stories will always be told by and about hybrids. What Latour calls the increasing ‘hybridity’ of contemporary political issues breaks down the dichotomy of nature and society. As human-technological networks continue to proliferate and expand, it is difficult in the extreme to imagine that the future will see a more rigid separation of the subject from the object, despite the best efforts of humanists who feel it necessary to distinguish between different spheres of truth, action, or rationality. Distinctions such as these may very well sharpen in philosophical discourse, but if so this discourse will be increasingly detached from the world as our lives proceed amongst “imbroglios of science, techniques, and society *even more tightly* linked” than they are now.²⁰

However, an almost exclusive focus on the participation and deliberation of citizens has continued to prevent political thinking from dealing effectively with hybridity. Constructivism seeks to understand aspects of reality by reference to the constructive power of human subjectivity. Postconstructivism, in contrast, treats all realities as the products of collective work, where the make-up of the collective – whether it be human, non-human, or (most commonly) both – is of no particular significance. Democratic theory remains constructivist, with attempts to think the place of science in democracy tending to follow a Habermasian model under which most attention has been paid to the possibility of including a wider range of human voices (especially non-expert voices) through deliberative mechanisms such as consensus conferences.²¹ Efforts to realise these models have been made; Denmark has been at the forefront of attempts to institute citizen deliberation on technoscientific issues, through the Danish Board of Technology.²² Such models of public engagement based on the assumed virtues of participation alone, however, have a disappointing record.²³ A postconstructivist revision of the enlargement of the mind shifts

Dimension of Science Studies', *Body and Society*, 10/2/3 (2004), 205-209.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). Hybridity also relates to posthumanist attempts to rethink the human subject as a natural-technological hybrid; for the classic statement see Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s', *Socialist Review*, 80 (1985), 65-108.

²¹ For example, Braun and Whatmore, 'The Stuff of Politics' at xi; Patrick W. Hamlett, 'Technology Theory and Deliberative Democracy', *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 28/1 (2003), 12-140. See also the discussion in Braun and Whatmore, 'The Stuff of Politics' at xi.

²² Anders Blok, 'Experts on Public Trial: On Democratizing Expertise through a Danish Consensus Conference', *Public Understanding of Science*, 16 (2007), 163-82.

²³ See, for example, the UK-based research in Jason Chilvers, 'Deliberating Competence: Theoretical and

the normative locus from participation to resistance. The fourth and final central claim of this thesis is therefore a normative demand that democratic judgement be responsive to multiple differently situated and mediated stories about hybrid activities so as to detect and consider the resistance of the world – without prejudice toward people, nature, or things – to the preconceived desires of the privileged.

Practitioner Perspectives on Effective Participatory Appraisal Practice', *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 33/2 (2008), 155-85.

1. The enlargement of the mind

This chapter begins by exploring the concept of enlarged thought in Immanuel Kant. Enlarged thought, along with Kant's associated retrieval of the idea of a *sensus communis*, has exerted a strong influence on contemporary normative theories of democracy, especially via its appropriation by Hannah Arendt. In Arendt, and in subsequent democratic theory, the concept of enlarged thought is shifted out of its role in Kant's philosophy of aesthetic judgement and instead captures the transcendence of personal interest that is supposed to be a feature of political judgement.

It is clear that the sort of community implied by the enlargement of the mind can be interpreted across a spectrum from purely formal to empirical and substantive, but also that it must be understood consistently with Kant's focus on individual autonomy. With the width of this spectrum of possible understandings in mind, the chapter moves on to a review of some of the most influential understandings and critiques of the *sensus communis*, and concludes that the potential of enlarged thinking as a concept is limited in both substantive and formal interpretations. In substantive readings, the *sensus communis* is limited by the identification of common sense with shared human sources of meaning; in formal readings, it is limited by its identification with shared human mental capacities.

Despite her many shifts in emphasis vis-à-vis Kant's texts, Arendt points to a more useful understanding of enlarged thinking by focusing on the desire of Kant to establish objects in common around which meaningful judgements are able to be made. This chapter argues that the understanding of enlarged thought as a purely intersubjective principle has robbed it of its core of commonality and the centre of its significance – the object of judgement itself.

The 'subjective universality' of Kantian aesthetics

In order to carry out his critical project, Kant subjects particular faculties or powers of the mind, those he believes to be self-evidently operative, to an analysis of the necessary conditions for their successful functioning. By following this line of investigation, Kant hopes to demonstrate certain features of the inaccessible world beyond human cognition without metaphysical speculation, working only from the assumptions that all will share assuming fundamental insight into the nature of their own experience. When Kant is

working in the mode of the critical philosophy, his methodology is to refuse metaphysical speculation on what is, in favour of inquiry into the ordering principles of human experience. The first powers that Kant examines in this fashion are the powers of reason (undertaken in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) and understanding (undertaken in the *Critique of Practical Reason*).

The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is the third and final of Kant's three great Critiques, which Kant sees as necessary to account for the relationship between the empirical and the rational without privileging either.¹ Kant therefore seeks to explain judgement without recourse to either of two metaphysical tropes: firstly essentialism, the insistence that the empirical object of valuation has an objective property, a true essence of somehow different ontological status than its appearances; and secondly theology, the positing of an arbiter above the human whose judgement is beyond reproach. The second half of the *Third Critique* deals with teleological judgements, in which an end is posited so as to bring judgements of nature into the realm of practical reason. Of interest to this thesis is the first part of the *Third Critique*, which focuses on aesthetic judgements, further divided into judgements of beauty and of the sublime. While teleological judgements make an appeal to a regulative ideal, aesthetic judgements ought to be truly reflective; that is, no criteria are to be imported from outside of the object in order to determine its beauty or sublimity. Teleological judgement posits purposiveness to nature so as to import a guiding principle into nature from a transcendent position, often understood as the object of divine creation. In contrast, Kant's consideration of judgement in the absence of external criteria of even a regulative kind makes the first part of the *Third Critique*, concerned with aesthetic judgement, worthy of attention for object-oriented theory.

The part of *Third Critique* dealing with the power of aesthetic judgement is centred on a distinction between judgement and mere gratification. Gratification is a purely private reaction to a thing in immediate presence, felt as a sensation.² We may feel immediate pleasure or disgust when beholding some thing, but this sensation has an idiosyncratic quality and, while we can certainly express our feelings, there is little sense in

¹ The commentaries of Guyer and Burnham were especially useful in composing this account of Kant's critical philosophy. Douglas Burnham, *An Introduction to Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Paul Guyer, *Kant* (Routledge Philosophers; London: Routledge, 2006).

² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 91.

arguing to another person that he should have the same immediate response. Aesthetic judgement, properly so-called, involves reflection on our representation of the object such that the effects of any relationship of desire or need are eliminated. Only when we experience pleasure in the reflection, not merely in the sensing, are we in a position to make a judgement of taste. Desire, and even the desire for reflective pleasure itself, can carry no weight aesthetically speaking.

Having sidelined the aspects of our relationship to the object that are not shared, Kant claims that our reflective evaluations now constitute a claim on the reflection of others. The fundamental question of the analytic of the beautiful, as explained by Robert B. Pippin, is this: “By what right could one claim that another person ought to feel pleasure in the presence of certain objects?”³ Kant is wrestling with an intuition about the peculiarly general nature of aesthetic judgement – that we may profess that we like the taste of oysters without expecting that everyone should share this proclivity, but when we attach the label ‘beautiful’ to a flower or painting, we speak as though beauty is an attribute of the object itself, and therefore expect others to agree with our judgement. As Terry Eagleton pithily explains, “[a] portrait of cheese is not beautiful because I happen to enjoy eating the stuff”.⁴ From this intuition Kant holds that aesthetic judgements make a claim on others that they should come to the same judgement, provided they have reflected on their initial response so as to introduce the potential for agreement.⁵ It follows from the elimination of interest from the aesthetic judgement that a similar judgement can be expected from all other subjects.

Since there exist no private grounds for the subject’s satisfaction, “he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone”.⁶ The beautiful is therefore spoken of as if it was a property of the object itself, despite the fact that only a person’s representation of the object has been evaluated. We thereby move from a claim of personal gratification, in which we express a subjective preference for an object, to a claim that the object itself be characterised by a certain positive quality, of which beauty is Kant’s chosen example because of the very difficulty that it presents to any attempt at conceptual

³ Robert B. Pippin, 'The Significance of Taste: Kant, Aesthetic and Reflective Judgment', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 34/4 (1996), 549-69 at 549.

⁴ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) at 97.

⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 121.

⁶ *Ibid.*, at 97.

definition. If a purely aesthetic judgement is made, Kant argues, then an oyster, or an artistic representation of a piece of cheese, can be said to be beautiful regardless of one's ingestive preferences.

In order that an aesthetic judge might have grounds to expect others to share her pleasure in beholding the object under evaluation, the power of judgement exercises “a broad-minded way of thinking”, in which:

a man ... sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and reflects on his own judgment from a universal standpoint (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others).⁷

Because ‘so many others’ are trapped inside a narrow-minded way of thinking, the ‘universal standpoint’ cannot arise from empirical agreement. While a proper judgement of taste includes a “*claim* to subjective universality”, the judgement can only be formed autonomously and is to be pronounced a priori, not after conducting some sort of survey investigating the actual satisfaction of others in the object.⁸ We activate a communal sense by abstracting from personal interest, not in order that everyone will agree with us but in order that we can claim they ought to – if only they too would adopt an enlarged stance.

Because of Kant’s promotion of individual autonomy he denies any basis for our claim to the universality of an aesthetic judgement in the empirical agreement of a ‘thick’ community, and thus requires an alternative ground for judgements of taste. At the same time, Kant’s phenomenology of aesthetic response believes the feeling of beauty to be unspecifiable through concepts; it makes no sense, therefore, to say that something is beautiful because it fits certain predetermined criteria. What is the feeling of pleasure in beholding an object of beauty that we claim everybody ought to share despite it being an utterly personal experience? Kant’s answer is something he calls the ‘harmony of the cognitive powers’, an idea most succinctly explained by Anthony Seville:

A beautiful object is one which in virtue of its particular form lends itself to engaging the two active cognitive faculties of mind – imagination and understanding – in such a way as to cooperate in

⁷ Ibid., at 175.

⁸ Ibid., at 97, emphasis added; *ibid.*, at 163.

a notably harmonious and satisfying fashion.⁹

The beautiful object engages the two cognitive faculties in a particularly satisfying and prolonged manner, in which the imagination and understanding ‘play’ with various conceptual possibilities without settling. This cognitive excitement is held to be pleasurable for the subject.

In his exploration of judgements of beauty, therefore, Kant hopes to show that an aesthetic judgement will make a claim on the judgements that others would make if faced with the same object. To constitute this level of generality, however, the judgement of beauty must be pure in the sense of being disconnected from any personal feelings of gratification that would otherwise limit the capacity for sharing the harmony of cognitive faculties and the pleasure all people ought to feel in beholding a given beautiful object. In a formal sense, the enlarged mentality, or broad-minded way of thinking, attempts to capture the standpoint of an observer who has achieved this level of generality, or what Kant calls the ‘subjective universality’ of aesthetics.

The ‘enlarged mentality’ as collective epistemology

The apparently formal nature of the broad-minded way of thinking is complicated by its role in Kant’s philosophical anthropology. We have seen that it appears in the context of the communal sense presumed by the faculty of aesthetic judgement in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, however it is also central to the accounts of cognitive judgements presented in Kant’s *Anthropology* and the Jäsche compilation of his *Lectures on Logic*.¹⁰ Kant uses the phrase ‘*ein erweiterte Denkungsart*’ – variously translated as ‘enlarged thought’, the ‘broad-minded way’ of thinking, and the ‘extended mode of thought’ – as the second of three maxims of ‘common human understanding’.¹¹ The three maxims are listed as:

⁹ Anthony Seville, ‘Kant’s Aesthetic Theory’, in Graham Bird (ed.), *A Companion to Kant* (Blackwell Companions to Philosophy; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 441-54 at 445.

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 174; Immanuel Kant and J. Michael Young, *Lectures on Logic* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) at 563-4 (Jäsche Logic).

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952) at 152; Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 173; Immanuel Kant, Robert B. Loudon, and Günter Zöllner, *Anthropology, History, and Education* (1st edn., The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Kant and Young, *Lectures on Logic* at 563-4 (Jäsche Logic).

1. “To think for oneself” (to be ‘unprejudiced’);
2. “To think in the position of everyone else” (to be ‘broad-minded’); and
3. “Always to think in accord with oneself” (to be ‘consistent’).¹²

In the *Lectures on Logic*, an appeal to the ‘common human understanding’ is a means for checking one’s judgement against the judgements of others so as to avoid subjective interference; it gives reassurance that it really is the understanding, and not some flight of fancy, that has given rise to some proposed truth. Incompatibility with the judgements of others is a warning sign to aid in the detection of error.

The importance of minimising subjective illusion through reference to the judgements of others is a theme common to Kant’s practical and anthropological observations. ‘Logical egoism’, the belief that the isolated thinker can arrive at correct judgements without communicating with others, is an invitation to error and a conceit against the natural human inclination towards the communication of judgements of the understanding. Distinguishing truth from error requires one to be socially embedded:

The *agreement* of other men with our opinions, and the testing of our thought according to other men’s sentiments, is really a most outstanding logical test of our understanding by the understanding of others. Man needs this communication of his cognitions very much in order to be able to pass judgment on them rightly.¹³

Therefore, while Kant hopes to achieve a formal account of aesthetic judgement, he draws on a concept that appears in his own anthropology of cognitive judgement to require the presence of a substantive community of inquirers. Distinguishing between true and false requires us to know what actual others really think.

Kant’s insistence on the social nature of understanding grounds his advocacy for public reason and thus for freedom of thought and expression, promoted most explicitly in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where “freedom of critique” is a condition for “the very existence of reason”, and in his defence of uninhibited expression in ‘What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?’, where freedom of thought is said to be worthless without the capacity to write and speak one’s thoughts amongst a community of inquiring minds.¹⁴ For

¹² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 174.

¹³ Kant and Young, *Lectures on Logic* at 118 (Blomberg Logic), emphasis retained.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, ‘What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?’, in Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (eds.), *Religion and Rational Theology* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel

this demand to make sense, knowledge must be regarded as a collective endeavour in which truth is best obtained through critical conversation within a substantive human community.

The apparent clash between the substantive and formal communities presupposed by the cognitive and aesthetic uses of the enlarged mentality cannot be straightforwardly written off by a sharp separation between Kant's critical project and his practical and anthropological writings. When *eine erweiterte Denkungsart* appears again in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant explicitly applies enlarged thought to considerations of taste in the frustratingly opaque §40, entitled 'on taste as a kind of *sensus communis*'.¹⁵ This section is a discussion of the relationship between taste and common sense. Because (vulgar) common sense is incapable of grounding the sort of subjective universality demanded by reflective judgements of taste, Kant introduces the Latin *sensus communis* to describe the particular communal sense that the good judge demonstrates when he eliminates subjective illusions arising from considerations of utility and desire.¹⁶ It is here that Kant, admitting the oddness of the digression but claiming that it "can nevertheless serve to elucidate [the] fundamental principles" of the critique of taste, repeats the three maxims of the common human understanding – including, of course, enlargement of the mind.¹⁷

Kant's goal of limiting his critical philosophy to the *a priori* conditions of possibility of some common faculty is thereby challenged in §40 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Just as Kant insisted that enlarged thinking helps to prevent the subjective illusions of the imagination from obscuring genuine understanding, he now calls on the same capability to help prevent the subjective illusions of desire from obscuring genuine aesthetic value. Thus related, understanding and judgement both ask that a person occupy a mental space embedded amongst the (real or posited) thoughts of others. It is therefore legitimate, despite constituting a technical breach of Kant's critical methodology, to draw a direct link from the aesthetic concerns of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to Kant's apparent belief in a collective epistemology – that knowledge is attainable only in the context of a community of inquirers. Through the maxims of the common human understanding, the negative

Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7-18 at 16.

¹⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 173.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., at 174.

gain of eliminating gratification from an aesthetic judgement is brought into a relation with the positive gain of exposing oneself to the views of other judges in order to ensure one's understanding is oriented by an awareness of the common sense of what is true and false.

It is important to re-emphasise that, despite its relationship to common sense, the second maxim of the common human understanding does not advise that the thinker loses her own identity amongst the crowd of other judgements; neither egoism nor slavish obedience to common opinion are good servants to the understanding.¹⁸ This can be inferred, anyhow, from the tension between the first two maxims of common human understanding listed above. The maxim of thinking for oneself is consistent with Kant's promotion of autonomy and the motto of Enlightenment: "Sapere aude! Have courage to make use of your own understanding!"¹⁹ Kant's intention is to promote autonomy ahead of both egoism and its reverse, the unhealthy reliance on the thinking of others.

Yet the digression linking the *sensus communis* and enlarged thought sets up an irrefutable link from the purportedly formal power of aesthetic judgement to Kant's substantive concern with freedom of expression and the verifying quality of exposure to the real opinions of an empirical community of judges. Kant's analysis of taste was written at a time when taste was broadly understood as a particular way of knowing, significant to any situation in which shared meaning must be inferred from an individual case.²⁰ These epistemological concerns were far from being eliminated by Kant. Enlarged thinking asks that understanding and judgement be oriented by regarding oneself not as "the whole world" but as a person among others – a "mere citizen of the world".²¹ The subject facing some thing, be it an object of knowledge or appreciation, is asked to divest himself of mastery and to shrink into a one-amongst-many. In shrinking, however, he is emboldened. Retaining autonomy, the knower or judge now benefits from the common understanding, and, thinking within a domain occupied by those he seeks to impress, his opinion carries additional weight and becomes persuasive.

Kant's support for a broad-minded way of thinking is one example of where the

¹⁸ Kant, Loudon, and Zöller, *Anthropology, History, and Education* at 241.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant and Mary J. Gregor, *Practical Philosophy* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) at 17.

²⁰ Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001) at 1.

²¹ Kant, Loudon, and Zöller, *Anthropology, History, and Education* at 241.

methodological insistence on *a priori* conditions of possibility, demanded by the critical philosophy's avoidance of both the metaphysical and the 'merely' contingent, is distorted by anthropological observations. Anthropological allusions diminish both the methodological purity and the universality of the critical philosophy, and the *Third Critique* thereby presents a challenge to Kant's whole critical project – a challenge that Kyriaki Goudeli argues has been under-theorised. Readers who are generous to Kant's intentions want to see the third and final book of the critical philosophy as a closure of the project and thus tend to overlook the many points in his rambling exploration of judgement where the analytic distinctions demanded by the critical project are exceeded.²² What is found in Kant's *eine erweiterte Denkungsart* is a relationship of mutual reinforcement between two projects that Kant hoped he could keep separate – his philosophical anthropology and his critical philosophy. This awkward relationship lends 'enlarged thought' an extraordinary degree of interpretative flexibility and brings it outside of considerations of the nature and possibility of pure aesthetic appreciation and into the proper domains of political and social theory.

Readings of the *sensus communis*

Interpretations of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* vary in accordance with their reading of the central notion of *sensus communis*. This Latin phrase, sometimes translatable into the English 'common sense' but at other times specifically distinguished from it, has a long history across the fields of rhetoric and philosophy. In rhetoric it has tended to represent something akin to common sense as we know it in English: the body of knowledge that a speaker can safely assume his audience will share with him and with each other. In philosophy it has tended to represent something rather different – the universal possession of certain cognitive or perceptual capacities. Tracing this history to Aristotle's *koine dynamis* (the faculty uniting the senses) in philosophy and *endoxa* (the set of shared opinions and values) in rhetoric, John D. Schaeffer remarks that *sensus communis* always refers to something post-sensory but pre-rational.²³ It has thus become a crucial weapon in debates

²² Kyriaki Goudeli, 'Kant's Reflective Judgement: The Normalisation of Political Judgement', *Kant-Studien*, 94 (2003), 51-68 at 53.

²³ John D. Schaeffer, 'Commonplaces Sensus Communis', in Walter Jost and Wendy Olmsted (eds.), *A Companion to Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Blackwell Reference Online: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) at 2.

over how to situate judgement in a reflective space.

Hans-Georg Gadamer grounds his salvaging of the humanistic tradition from modern rationalism by way of a critique of Kant's adoption of *sensus communis* as a shared harmony of cognitive activity. According to Gadamer's genealogy, Kant strips the term of the substantive qualities of the Latin original and thus severs its relationship to the non-rationalistic truths embodied in tradition and culture. Gadamer contrasts Kant's *sensus communis* with the counter-Enlightenment use of the phrase in Giambattista Vico, who follows the rhetorical tradition. Vico turns to the concept to represent shared social and cultural traditions in opposition to theoretical speculation, thus calling into question the claims of the emerging modern scientific methods that they alone provide access to truth.²⁴ A range of judgements, along with various criteria upon which judgement is to be based, are already embedded in the *sensus communis* as Gadamer wishes it to be understood.²⁵ Gadamer's critique of Kant is that he has wholeheartedly embraced the philosophical meaning of *sensus communis*, turning it into a purely formal notion, a mere abstraction from subjective conditions to ensure the communicability of natural, shared cognitive powers.

If Kant had judiciously edited §40 out of his *Third Critique*, this is what a common sense would amount to – a particular type of cognitive activity that is shared by all but can be overlooked in favour of obscuring influences of a partial nature, or by feelings of mere gratification. Gadamer insists, in contrast, that only if it is understood, with Vico, as a moral sense of community and a “communal sense for what is true or right” can the *sensus communis* perform the hermeneutic function of binding actual or metaphorical interlocutors in a conversation oriented towards understanding.²⁶ The critical potential of the formal *sensus communis* is subdued in Gadamer by a conservative hermeneutics of tradition in which judgement is embedded in, and guided by, substantive communal values.

For the post-modernist, in contrast, a turn to the *Third Critique* as a means of theorising a substantive community of taste is akin to the proverbial flogging of a dead horse, at a time when any modern or pre-modern idea of community needs to be replaced by, at best, an idea of tentative and ever-shifting personal ties. For communal values to

²⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (2nd revised edn.; London: Continuum, 2004) at 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, at 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

serve a hermeneutic function, the identities of both the community and the individual judge would need to be fixed in a manner anathema to post-modern thinking, with its observation that there exists a multitude of overlapping communities and co-existing traditions of value that are themselves in a constant state of flux. The appeal of the Kantian aesthetic judgement to the post-modernist comes from its freedom from laws of understanding and the very difficulty that it presents to any attempt to explain exactly what it is. Eagleton's account perhaps best explains why post-modernists might find the *Critique of Judgment* fruitful:

Aesthetic judgment is then a kind of pleasurable free-wheeling of our faculties, a kind of parody of conceptual understanding, a non-referential pseudo-cognition which does not nail down the object to be an identifiable thing, and so is agreeably free of a certain material constraint.²⁷

Socialising aesthetic judgement challenges the indeterminacy at the heart of this reading. Hence, it is unsurprising that Jean-François Lyotard is perhaps the most prominent critic of Gadamer's correction of Kantian enlarged thought in the direction of a substantive body of shared understandings.

Lyotard regards consensus as an "outmoded and suspect value".²⁸ He thus emphasises Kant's focus on the possibility rather than the actuality of empirical concurrence, and warns us not to socialise the *Critique of Judgment*.²⁹ *Sensus communis* has nothing to do with culture; "it's not a question of an historical and social community which people of taste or artists, any more than people of science or will, form or want to form".³⁰ As part of his critique, Gadamer had regretfully dismissed the significance of Kant's linking of taste to sociability in the controversial §40, pointing out that no such link can play any role in Kant's deduction of pure taste and that it is therefore necessary to retrieve a pre-Kantian understanding of *sensus communis*. In a contrary mood of celebration, Lyotard agrees that the *sensus communis* has no relationship to any form of community:

... [*sensus communis*] is a region of resistance to institutions and

²⁷ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 85.

²⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) at 66.

²⁹ Jean François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant's Critique of Judgment, [Sections 23-29]* (Meridian; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994) at 18.

³⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, 'Sensus Communis', in Andrew E. Benjamin (ed.), *Judging Lyotard* (London: Routledge, 1992), 14-38 at 6.

establishment, where it is inscribed and hidden what happens
'before' we know what it is and before we want to make it into
anything at all.³¹

The enlarged mentality, a mere “purifying step”, is then the very method for the elimination of anything empirical that may prevent the (in principle) communicability of a judgement.³² Lyotard is pleased with the “virtual nature” of the *sensus communis*, described by Ulrike Kistner as a “fiction that can neither draw on nor generate an actual social context or common sense”.³³ The free play of imagination and understanding becomes, for the post-modernist, a sort of post-sensory but pre-conceptual noise, fortuitously upsetting any claim to the possibility of a fully rational understanding of what is given to the senses.

As if to ensure that Kant’s frequent slippages into discussions of a substantive communal sense do not pose any problem, Lyotard responds by associating postmodernism with the sublime rather than the beautiful. The section of the *Third Critique* dealing with feelings of sublimity, divided into sections on what he calls the mathematical and the dynamic sublime, addresses itself to phenomena too great, in magnitude or power, to be merely served up to the play of imagination and understanding. Because the sublime is, by Kant’s definition, unrepresentable, outside of the capabilities of cognition, there is no possibility for judgements of taste to settle into the common sense.³⁴ In the case of the sublime, with its “incommensurability of reality to concept”, there will never be a situation where taste becomes settled and therefore determinative.³⁵ The ungraspable nature of the sublime appeals to the postmodern sensibility. By adopting the sublime over the beautiful, Lyotard goes further than denying any grounding of taste in a substantive community by also denying any constructive role for taste in generating or fixing a communal tradition.

These two representative approaches to the *sensus communis* highlight two broad categories into which the social-philosophical conceptualisation of what lies between perception and reflection may fall. For the thinker who wishes to discipline raw perception

³¹ Ibid., at 25.

³² Ibid., at 23.

³³ Ulrike Kistner, 'Aesthetic Judgement Beyond Good and Evil: Of Morality, Taste, Common Sense, and Critique', *Neohelicon*, 34/1 (2007), 101-13 at 108.

³⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?', *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 71-82 at 78.

³⁵ Ibid., at 79.

by highlighting the effect of shared traditions of meaning, the *sensus communis* is a common sense; a ‘thick’, substantive set of concepts connecting a community through time and space and thus enabling common understanding. This presents as a promise to Gadamer’s hermeneutics but presents as a threat to Lyotard, who worries that standards of taste are thereby present, potentially rendering reflective judgements determinative.³⁶ For the thinker who wishes to emphasise the radical plurality of individual responses to a given perception, therefore, the *sensus communis* is a sense in common; a ‘thin’, formal feature of human beings that does not carry information and thus has no connection to any empirically verifiable sharing of values or meaning.

In terms of an accurate reading of Kant, both Gadamer and Lyotard are right to read the project of critical philosophy as the orienting figure for the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant does, Lyotard admits, hint at an empirical reading in the text.³⁷ In particular, the contents of §40 do seem to contradict the thesis of a purely transcendent *sensus communis*.³⁸ Just to be sure, Lyotard turns to the sublime in relation to which, he points out, Kant never refers to the *sensus communis*.³⁹ However, despite the above-mentioned blurring of the boundaries between the critical project and Kant’s anthropological observations, the spirit of the *Critique of Judgment* is fully in line with Kant’s critical project – a transcendental argument for something that must be there but can never be described as it is prior to experience. With its emphasis on the place of a critique of judgement as a mediator between concepts investigated in the previous critiques, the introduction to the *Third Critique* certainly reads as though Kant’s intention was to remain true to his critical methodology; the power of judgement is described therein as an “a priori legislative faculty”, demanding a principle that specifically cannot be drawn from experience.⁴⁰ The respective accounts of the *sensus communis* found in Gadamer and Lyotard nonetheless demonstrate the two poles of what is at stake when one’s opinion over what sits between sense and reason is deployed in theoretical debate.

³⁶ Ibid., at 76.

³⁷ Lyotard, 'Sensus Communis' at 11.

³⁸ Ibid., at 17.

³⁹ Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) at 104.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 64-66.

Hannah Arendt and the political relevance of enlarged thought

Hannah Arendt first carried the concept of enlarged thought into political theory in her essay 'Truth and Politics'. A distinctive feature of political thought, Arendt claims, is its representative nature. In forming a political judgement or opinion, we do not consider only our own interests or those of the group to which we belong; rather we employ our imagination to think ourselves in the place of others and ask how we would see the situation from their perspective.⁴¹ Arendt hints here at a distinctively political idea of impartial judgement, in which enlarged thought enables a situation to be seen from as many angles as possible – an alternative to the anti-political extremes of purely self-interested assertion, on the one hand, or a universal perspective brought into the situation from some place outside of all human perspectives, on the other. Arendt believes that Kant's appeal to *sensus communis*, as a response to his discovery that aesthetic taste is the opposite to the private satisfaction of fulfilling a personal desire, gives the *Third Critique* a political edge.

While judgement features prominently as a question throughout Arendt's work, we do not have a definitive text laying down her mature reflections on the topic. In Arendt's framework, judgement is situated as a faculty of the mind, alongside thinking and willing. Arendt intended her *Life of the Mind* to be made up of three volumes, each responsible for one of these three faculties. Only the first two volumes, *Thinking* and *Willing*, were actually written. Arendt died soon after beginning the *Judging* volume – of which the title page and epitaphs were discovered in her typewriter. The faculty of judgement must therefore be reconstructed along with her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, which is reasonably held to be an accurate indication of some of the content of the planned volume, given its compatibility with aspects of the *Thinking* volume. Nonetheless, any study of Arendtian judgement must be constructive to a large degree, and come with a considerable disclaimer warning that it may contradict some of what Arendt actually planned to write.

It is nonetheless clear that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and specifically the capacity for enlarged thinking, was to have played a significant role. Arendt's interest in Kant was not late in arriving, as confirmed by her friend J. Glenn Gray:

Throughout her life Kant served as her mentor and, as she often recounted, seemed to stand behind her shoulder at her writing

⁴¹ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237.

desk, inspiring and warning her alternately, a sort of Socratic daimon.⁴²

Arendt argues in 'Truth and Politics' that Kant discovered the capacity to enlarge the mind in his aesthetics but missed its implications for political thought.⁴³ This claim would later form the core of her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, where Arendt reads the *Third Critique* as being of specifically political significance because Kant finds himself needing to call on sociability, or, to use Arendt's terminology, 'men in the plural' rather than 'man in the singular', in order to account for the faculty of judgement in its function.⁴⁴ In doing so, Kant brings to modern philosophy a community sense that is missing not only from his other Critiques but also from his explicit political writings, centred as they are on the Doctrine of Right.

Arendt believes that the first part of the *Third Critique*, dealing with aesthetic judgement, represents Kant's 'hidden political philosophy'. To make this claim, she argues that the first part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is the only place amongst the three critiques that considers men rather than man, 'earthbound' men who are part of a society, "endowed with common sense, *sensus communis*, a community sense".⁴⁵ Furthermore, Kant's concern with aesthetic judgement means that he does not pay attention to those aspects of human cognition aimed at establishing the truth or falsehood of some proposition; aesthetic judgement is therefore in tune with Arendt's desire to protect the political as a sphere of opinion.⁴⁶ The judgements arrived at in aesthetics make a persuasive claim on a community of actual others without commanding their assent.

Arendt's retrieval of the enlarged mentality contrasts with Schaeffer's alternative alignment of the philosophical *sensus communis* with Aristotle's *koine dynamis*. Tracing common sense back to *koine dynamis* brings out Kant's emphasis on subjective universality arising from the potential for shared experience of the harmony of cognitive faculties. With the *koine dynamis*, Aristotle posits a faculty organising the data of each of the senses in order to explain how multiple sensory inputs can generate a single, distinct experience.⁴⁷

⁴² J. Glenn Gray, 'The Winds of Thought', *Social Research*, 44/1 (1977), 44-62 at 49.

⁴³ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237.

⁴⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 10-11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, at 13 & 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, at 13.

⁴⁷ Schaeffer, 'Commonplaces Sensus Communis' at 2.

As understood by Schaeffer, Kant's *sensus communis* follows in this philosophical tradition, adding the claim that pure judgements of beauty must necessarily involve a potentially shared pleasure in the subjective experience of this unifying faculty, understood as the free play of imagination and understanding.

By emphasising §40 of the *Critique of Judgment*, and thereby running *sensus communis* together with common understanding, Arendt politicises the enlarged mentality by associating the concept with Aristotle's *phronesis* rather than with the *koine dynamis*, even though the latter is its more obvious precursor. Arendt's controversial placement of *sensus communis* in the history of ideas as a restoration of Aristotle's *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, places it in opposition to *sophia*, or philosophical wisdom. While philosophical wisdom is practiced without reference to the situated views of other people, Arendt interprets *phronesis* as meaning:

nothing other than the greatest possible overview of all the possible standpoints and viewpoints from which an issue can be seen and judged.⁴⁸

Arendt claims that, by aligning common sense with the faculty of judgement, Kant continues in this tradition when he defines the enlarged mentality. While the *koine dynamis* and the formal reading of the Kantian *sensus communis* both posit shared inner faculties that are present even in solitude by the mere virtue of having a mind, the more substantive Arendtian enlarged mentality, seen as a type of practical wisdom, requires the judge to be embedded in the world and amidst a plurality of others.

Accordingly, Arendt pays little attention to the harmony of imagination and understanding in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. The idea that common sense could be nothing more than a matter of shared inner faculties had already formed a central part of her criticisms of modern philosophy in *The Human Condition*, where she traces common sense being transformed from a sense of the world being common to all into "an inner faculty without any world relationship".⁴⁹ Thus Arendt's interpretative emphasis falls onto enlarged thought, wherein the very possibility of having an aesthetic experience demands that we overcome personal desire via our integration into a community of perspectives. The judgements that a person makes from this position then sustain,

⁴⁸ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 168.

⁴⁹ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 280.

reconfigure, and revitalise the judging community.

Arendt's turn to the *Critique of Judgment* is illuminated by her ongoing concern with the "gulf between philosophy and politics".⁵⁰ In her lecture 'Philosophy and Politics', Arendt claims that this gulf opened with Plato's determination to distinguish truth from opinion in the wake of Socrates' failure to persuade the polis of his innocence. Plato's response, the *Republic* of the philosopher-kings, founds and continues to symbolise the danger of philosophical thinking – the desire to place the eternal truths revealed by the philosopher above the fray of political debate. Conflict and mutual suspicion then arises when the City responds by reasserting the value of *doxa* and rhetoric, thereby driving a wedge between truth and opinion. In the Fourth and Fifth Sessions of her *Lectures on Kant*, Arendt identifies the Kant of the *Critique of Judgment* as a rare exception to the general philosophical tendency to withdraw from the concerns of life as it is given and lived in the City.⁵¹ That Kant has an explicit political philosophy outlined in other texts is of no interest to Arendt insofar as these texts maintain traces of the philosophers' desire to legislate.

The tendency elsewhere in Arendt's work to associate political action with performance aside, Arendt retrieves Kant's association of aesthetic judgement with the enlargement of the mind as an exemplary moment when even the philosophers' philosopher had to accept that judgement is not the preserve of the isolated thinker in silent dialogue with universal truth. Aesthetic judgement is social, requiring the actual or imagined presence of others, and directs itself to an audience that it hopes to persuade rather than command. Because Kant presents aesthetic judgement as the model for reflective judgement in general, and because it can be traced so easily in §40 to more general concerns over the acquisition of knowledge and the conceptualisation of events, it is quite feasible for Arendt to broaden Kant's concern with aesthetics to her own concern with judgements passed in relation to political action.

Arendt reveals herself in *The Human Condition* to be fully aware of the "inherently paradoxical" nature of Kantian aesthetics, and the impossibility of Kant's formal approach ever capturing the worldly facts of aesthetic appreciation.⁵² Her politicisation of Kant's

⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt, 'Philosophy and Politics', *Social Research*, 57/1 (1990), 73-103 at 73.

⁵¹ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 22.

⁵² Arendt, *Human Condition* at 156.

aesthetics thus rests on an interpretative approach to the *Third Critique* that emphasises that book's subliminal anthropology over its explicit critical philosophy, without ever seeking to resolve the conflict. Whereas Gadamer promoted the hermeneutic value of a substantive community by rescuing the *sensus communis* from Kant's hollow formalisation, Arendt leaves out any extended analysis of the paradoxes that she knows to be easily uncovered in Kant's philosophy, preferring to simply promote the sociable thread of his thinking as a 'hidden political philosophy'. Even when made privately, aesthetic judgement anticipates the agreement of others, and complete isolation would render enlarged thought impossible.

Sociability and the cultivation of taste

David Ingram's thesis that Arendt "found hope in a purely formal idea of community" is therefore mistaken, reading the enlarged mentality as a mere adoption of the Kantian regulative idea.⁵³ In emphasising the concrete aspects of the *sensus communis*, Arendt embraces a thought that Kant attempts (rather weakly) to repress: in order to place ourselves 'into the standpoint of others', we must have a sufficient understanding of other perspectives. Kant stresses that his sense of 'broad-minded' is a "way of thinking", not a measure of ability, and is therefore not to be understood as the opposite of 'narrow-minded'.⁵⁴ He attempts to purify the critical methodology of the *Third Critique* by avoiding the implication that enlarging the mind requires a person to have experience of a wide range of points of view through empirical means such as learning, socialising, or travelling.

Nonetheless, anthropological allusions found elsewhere in the *Third Critique* suggest that cultivation is a prerequisite of good judgement. Taste is cultivated through an exposure to classical art and the development of a certain character that cares for the taste of others and understands the difference between pleasure and mere agreeableness.⁵⁵ Reading these sections alongside the lectures on anthropology, the sort of character that Kant has in mind becomes clear. The person of taste fits a familiar model of masculine restraint and dignity; the cultivated 'man' is described therein as "well-mannered,

⁵³ David Ingram, 'The Postmodern Kantism of Arendt and Lyotard', *Review of Metaphysics*, 42/1 (1988), 51-77 at 74.

⁵⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 175.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, at 227.

respectable, well-behaved, polished (with the coarseness planed down)".⁵⁶ Despite their differences, both Gadamer and Lyotard insist that this socialised reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is illegitimate. However, Kant's frequent asides into describing a specific culture of taste, cultivated or not in certain ages, peoples, and men, virtually invite the reader to draw connections between a broad-minded way of thinking and a broad-minded disposition.⁵⁷

For Kant, moral judgement does not ask for the enlargement of the mind because it is to be motivated only by the dictates of reason, exemplified in the categorical imperative.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, there is an obvious similarity between this portrait of the cultivated man of taste and the dutiful demeanour of the Kantian moral actor. Taste and morality ground each other because of their shared basis in sociability, and the associated desire to be liked and to experience pleasure in common with others.⁵⁹ Paul Guyer discusses the circularity of Kant's thinking about the relationship between taste and morality in an editorial footnote to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.⁶⁰ Kant seems equally willing to suggest, on the one hand, that the enlargement of the mind associated with taste increases the tendency to act in accordance with duty and, on the other hand, that an interest in beauty is enhanced by strong moral character. Morality and taste both seem to demand a willingness to censor the rough edges of one's character to ensure smooth participation in social intercourse.

Arendt's politicised reading of Kantian aesthetics is famously idiosyncratic. When Kant allows empirical considerations to bleed into his critical method he occasionally appends an apology, aware that the inclusion of *a posteriori* conditions contradicts his avowal of autonomy and the requirement of methodological discipline that he posit only *a priori* grounds. In her adoption of the 'enlarged mentality' as a concept for reflection on the political, Arendt deliberately concretises the Kantian aesthetic by focusing attention on the controversial §40 and pushing aside the demands of his critical method. On the

⁵⁶ Kant, Louden, and Zöllner, *Anthropology, History, and Education* at 347.

⁵⁷ For a further example, see Kant's discussion of a (paradoxical) "culture of the mental powers", towards which crude ideas need the addition of "breadth and refinement", at Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 229.

⁵⁸ Schaeffer, 'Commonplaces Sensus Communis' at 7.

⁵⁹ Kant, Louden, and Zöllner, *Anthropology, History, and Education* at 347.

⁶⁰ Paul Guyer in Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 387f19.

publication of Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Kant scholars expressed puzzlement at her rather loose reading of Kant. Robert J. Dostal, a writer sympathetic to Arendt's overall project, questions why she would turn to Kant when such a turn requires that she violate "not only the letter but the spirit of Kant's philosophy".⁶¹ Liberals still attached to Kant's explicit political writings, such as William A. Galston, wondered why Arendt would ignore these in favour of his aesthetics if not to narrowly pursue her (supposed) vision of a politics of hubris and spectacle ahead of reasoned deliberation on ends.⁶² Patrick Riley's review is more positive about the value of the interpretation, but still concludes that the liberty taken by Arendt in disregarding Kant's subsumption of politics under moral truth is a step too far.⁶³ The fear of the post-modernists, in contrast, is that a socialised *sensus communis* could easily become a conceptual tool for the smoothing out of difference by reference to communal values. Arendt's adoption of enlarged thought for political theory has thus been criticised from two directions: on the one hand, Kant scholars are puzzled over Arendt's eccentric reading of Kant; on the other hand, post-modernists such as Lyotard are concerned over the concretisation of concepts that they regard as properly considered to be inexpressible in terms of either rational or social consensus.

By emphasising sociability and the cultivation of taste ahead of the idea of universally shared powers of mind, Arendt departs from mainstream Kant scholarship. While claiming in the *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* to have identified a political philosophy in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Arendt proceeds in her lectures to pay most attention to the somewhat incongruent §40, and to otherwise draw liberally from many of Kant's letters and texts that are normally understood as external to his critical philosophy.⁶⁴ To point to this is not to suggest that the *Third Critique* does not itself contain

⁶¹ Robert J. Dostal, 'Judging Human Action: Arendt's Appropriation of Kant', *Review of Metaphysics*, 37/4 (1984), 725-55 at 727.

⁶² William A. Galston, 'Review: Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy', *The Journal of Politics*, 46/1 (1984), 304-06 at 306; for a standard 'Kantian' interpretation, see Howard Williams, *Kant's Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983).

⁶³ Patrick Riley, 'On Delue's Review of Arendt's Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy', *Political Theory*, 12/3 (1984), 435-39 at 439.

⁶⁴ As far as I'm aware, Diana Taylor's 'Thinking for Politics' is the only work that recognises the importance of the appeal to Arendt of the 'anti-traditional' (deviant from the critical philosophy) aspects of Kant. See Dianna Taylor, 'Hannah Arendt on Judgement: Thinking for Politics', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 10/2 (2002), 151-69 at 159. It is this appeal, I believe, that makes it so difficult for Kant scholars to understand Arendt's position.

seeds of an interpretation that pays heed to cultivation and socialisation – we need only refer to Kant's example of the young poet, who initially defends his own work against public approbation but comes to see the deficiencies later, when his powers of judgement have been refined.⁶⁵ The value of Arendt's reworking of the *Third Critique* as having significance for political thought is not, however, that it sheds any great light on Kant's theory of judgement. Its value lies in the association of politics with the *sensus communis* and the adoption of an enlarged way of thinking, and the tension between an earthly transcendence of one's own situated standpoint and the need to maintain a sense of autonomous judgement.

The *sensus communis* through thick and thin

Schaeffer concludes his history of the *sensus communis* by announcing its death. Twentieth Century philosophy has been left searching for procedural methods for consensus formation starting from the assumption that there is no common fund of values.⁶⁶

Alessandro Ferrara sees this breakdown of the *sensus communis* as a problem for Arendt's appropriation of it. Arendt's substantive reading of the *sensus communis* breaks away from a conception of common sense as the mere sharing of certain cognitive capacities or processes. But if the socialised enlarged mentality is then understood as a synonym for a communal fund of values and concepts, a 'lifeworld' or a pool of tacit knowledge, the *sensus communis* offers no transcendence, the commonality of values being reduced to an empirical question. This reading leads to a modern association of community with an empirically shared set of values and the resulting sense of hopelessness when universal meanings are unable to be identified. If Kant's intentions are more accurately recognised, and the *sensus communis* is regarded as a natural faculty shared by all human beings but with all substance eliminated, then it carries no weight.⁶⁷ This reading leads to a post-modern emphasis on difference and an understanding of community as an infinitely deferred possibility.

Drawing on Kant's suggestive analysis of the content of the feeling of aesthetic pleasure, Ferrara attempts to reconsider *sensus communis* as a common understanding of

⁶⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 163.

⁶⁶ Schaeffer, 'Commonplaces Sensus Communis' at 8.

⁶⁷ Alessandro Ferrara, 'Does Kant Share Sancho's Dream?: Judgment and Sensus Communis', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34/1-2 (2008), 65-81 at 70-1.

what furthers our *Beförderung des Lebens* – our ‘feeling of life’, or sense of what constitutes a flourishing life.⁶⁸ Ferrara follows Kant’s tentative suggestion that, while for a purely aesthetic experience the object must be purposeless, the beholder is pleased (or not) in accordance with the overlaid ‘purposeless purposiveness’ of the object’s contribution to the ‘feeling of life’ of human beings.⁶⁹ The feeling of aesthetic pleasure overcomes the merely subjective, for Ferrara, because it makes a claim that the object of judgement alludes to, without abetting, a certain set of commonly held pre-reflective desires that are fundamental to the human experience. Ferrara thereby pushes aesthetic judgement in the direction of teleological judgement. While the object under evaluation is considered aesthetically, without any reference to its utility, judgement itself nevertheless proceeds in response to a posited purpose that has a meaning to the human observer. That this meaning is felt, rather than understood, is supposed to embed it deeper within the human and closer to the raw fact of membership of the species.

The claim at the base of Ferrara’s reading is that all people have a sense of what it means (or what it ‘is like’) for identity to be enhanced or stifled; it is only the content of this sense that varies across cultures.⁷⁰ Ferrara’s reference to ‘feeling of life’ thus remains attached to the tradition of the philosophical *sensus communis* in that he seeks a universally common capacity of the judging human subject. *Beförderung des Lebens* is introduced by Kant in a subjectivising spirit: in aesthetics, “the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure”.⁷¹ We can also see here the basis for Guyer’s claim that the feeling of life and the harmony of the faculties can best be understood as synonymous.⁷² Subjective universality is attained by the knowledge that all human beings will experience a similarly pleasurable cognitive response to an object insofar as it enhances their shared sense of flourishing, provided, that is, that they overcome the influence of other desires that may limit the extent to which the claim of aesthetic worth can be said to be generalisable. The

⁶⁸ Ibid., at 76.

⁶⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 90. For an index and brief discussion of Kant’s contradictory beliefs that the feeling of pleasure is (1) unanalysable and (2) expresses an idea of the flourishing life, see Paul Guyer’s editorial comments in *ibid.*, at 366.

⁷⁰ Alessandro Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity: Rethinking the Project of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1998) at 48.

⁷¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 90, emphasis added.

⁷² See Guyer’s editorial comments in *ibid.*, at 366. Guyer also identifies the possibly contradictory claim by Kant that the feeling of aesthetic pleasure is unanalysable.

response remains subjectivist in the sense that the object's value is subsumed to a human interest, albeit an interest that is felt rather than known.

Ferrara is not alone in attempting to navigate the gap between the formal and substantive readings of Kant by identifying a shared sense or feeling through which the *sensus communis* can bind a community. Goudeli argues that the *sensus communis*, in its guise as a 'public sense', is to be regarded as a sense for what might enable social unity.⁷³ Goudeli thus aligns the *sensus communis* with the attempts of Plato and Rousseau to bring society as a whole and its constituent members into harmony. Kant's confusing discussion of the link between aesthetic pleasure and communicability, in which each appears to ground the other, lends plausibility to this interpretation. The public sense does not have to defer to tradition; Goudeli claims that it would allow for a critical stance against traditions, such as out-dated prejudices, that no longer serve cohesion.⁷⁴ On this account, a deeply embedded public sense will make us suspicious of any commonly held ideas that do not serve communicability.

In identifying an alternative intersubjective commonality, however, Ferrara and Goudeli pass over another alternative. My proposition, to be explored in more depth in the following chapter, is that the enlarged mentality and *sensus communis* are best thought of as an acknowledgement that the object is able to resist what is thought or said about it by human beings. The notion of resistance adopted here is taken from Bruno Latour's 'realist social philosophy', under which a feature of objects is their capacity, under certain conditions, to "object to what is told about them".⁷⁵ For Latour, the archetypical institution for detecting these objections is the laboratory, where experiments are set up in such a way as to capture things as they resist, or conform to, expectations. To seek a *sensus communis* only in the minds of the human community is to deny, in Idealist fashion, that things in the world are capable of resisting the existing set of human purposes and frameworks of understanding.

Communities do not form, disintegrate, expand or merge in a void, but are gathered in and around an array of objects, events, and deeds. If these members of the

⁷³ Goudeli, 'Kant's Reflective Judgement', at 67.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Bruno Latour, 'When Things Strike Back: A Possible Contribution of 'Science Studies' to the Social Sciences', *British Journal of Sociology*, 51/1 (2000), 107-23 at 115.

community are neglected, the modern reflex is to search in vain for some binding quality around and between the now naked collections of human bodies – or, worse, disembodied human minds. This reflex can take the conservative form of the reduction of autonomy through an appeal to shared traditions, as in Gadamer, or the progressive form of an appeal to some universal capacity, exclusive to the human species, as in Kant’s shared cognitive powers. The deconstruction of these ideas then appears to render the *sensus communis* empty, because the material world is not returned to its rightful place as the essential framework within and around which human relationships occur. By connecting the *sensus communis* to a specified but unconscious aim common to the human species, Ferrara and Goudeli sit between these two poles without overcoming them.

It is therefore premature to announce the death of the *sensus communis*. One (or both) of two subjectivist fallacies are committed in doing so: the gravedigger aligns the *sensus communis* with universal agreement over meanings and values, when it really only attempts to establish a position from which value can be meaningfully discussed, and/or he eliminates the objects of judgement from the picture, placing the *sensus communis* in an intersubjective void where there is literally nothing outside of the human mind to discuss. Arendt often falls into this latter trap, but the worldliness of her thought points us in another direction. According to Arendt, the *sensus communis* in Kant represents whatever it is that makes up the conditions of possibility for us to meaningfully discuss our judgements and seek to persuade others of their validity.⁷⁶ The most significant of these conditions of possibility is a sharing in common of the object itself. What binds Kant’s aesthetic judges together is ultimately the aspects of the object of judgement itself that exceed their common sense, with the enlarged mentality serving as an assurance that its adhesive qualities – those that are impervious to what any human individual or group may desire – are not diluted.

Conclusions

What Ferrara and Schaeffer regard as the dilemma of the *sensus communis* results from a denial of any role for the object of judgement itself. Arendt draws on the enlarged mentality to promote the idea that political thinking is representative, transcending the narrow domain of a person’s subjective desires or the aims of a group to which a person identifies as belonging. At the same time, Arendt’s enlarged mentality is earthbound, and

⁷⁶ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 68.

does not attempt to transcend the human condition of sharing the earth by imagining that one could obtain a god-like perspective above all perspectives. The capacity to enlarge the mind seems to require a commonality between people outside of their narrow group identities and the collective desires that may arise from their shared ends; denying the existence, or even the possibility, of such a commonality gives rise to the pronouncement that the *sensus communis* is empty. What ultimately binds a community, however, is not what they think but the world that they share.

2. Sharing objects of concern

The preceding chapter concluded with the suggestion that the material resistance of the object of judgement anchors the worldly *sensus communis*, as that which is neither generated in perception nor calculated on reflection. This chapter will make a more sustained argument for this position, with reference to the Kantian concepts of disinterest and communicability. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant attempts to establish the pseudo-objectivity of aesthetic judgements of taste by grounding the sense of beauty in feelings of disinterested joy. Kant's aesthetic is notoriously subjectivist. In what Eagleton calls a reversal of Kant's own self-described Copernican revolution, objectivity is secured but only by assigning aesthetic ideals, such as beauty, to an object via the deployment of powers housed in the mental capacities of the subject.¹ Having limited the ability of the subject to know the world outside of the ordering principles of its own faculties, Kant scrambles to restore objectivity by insisting on shared productive capacities.² With this psychologising reading placed to one side, however, disinterest is ultimately an attempt to consider how a multitude of judges are able to share an external referent in common and thus meaningfully communicate their judgements.

Reading both through and across Kant and Arendt, this chapter will explore the notion of disinterest and replace Kant's focus on faculties of the mind with an approach emphasising the role that the object plays in establishing a disinterested basis for judgement. Disinterest aims at recognising the particularity of an object, and thus allows an object to have an effect by resisting any pre-settled or determinative conceptual or interpretative renderings. It then becomes capable of playing the role of anchor inside a pluralist *sensus communis*. Through Arendt's reworking of the Kantian aesthetic for political judgement, the chapter will show that the disinterest required in order to posit a *sensus communis* consists of the material resistance that all objects maintain against what can be intersubjectively agreed about them.

¹ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 88.

² *Ibid.*, at 70-72.

Kant's *uninteressierten Wohlgefallen* and the 'mere representation' of the object

A pure aesthetic judgement requires that every judge see the same thing. As Eagleton explains, the contingencies separating subjects from one another must be eliminated.³ To this end, Kant introduces his first moment of the 'Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment' with the claim that "[t]he satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste is without any interest".⁴ Interest in the object must be eliminated from the relationship with the subject's gaze. The judgement of beauty is then made upon the pure representation of the object and based only on the satisfaction felt, ignoring the sway of any interested satisfaction that the object may contain for us. I can say of an object that it is 'beautiful' only if I experience *uninteressierten Wohlgefallen* – disinterested pleasure – and am therefore certain that I would still hold this opinion if the real counterpart of the image in my mind did not exist in the world. To constitute a pure judgement of beauty, to which all ought to consent, I am to feel pleasure only in the 'mere representation' of an object.

Since disinterest can only be fully understood in relation to its opposite, Kant goes on to explain his position by describing the 'kinds of interest' that may tarnish the purity of a judgement of taste. Kant works initially to exclude the faculty of desire from judgements of beauty; a pure judgement of taste will be posited without any interference from desires arising from immediate sensory pleasure. Gratification, or our satisfaction "in the agreeable", involves our desire for enjoyment and therefore our interest in being gratified by the object's presence.⁵ Our valuation of the object will be prejudiced by our needs, which are conditioned by contingent factors of which hunger, "the best cook", is Kant's most frequent illustration – even the most unappetising gruel will be relished by those who sit down to it with an empty stomach.⁶ Any appeal to others regarding the value of some thing that is being appreciated because of a person's present needs is unlikely to be generalizable to those whose needs have been sated.

The elimination of desire then requires Kant to turn his attention to eliminating considerations of utility. A pure judgement of taste will pay no regard to whether the

³ Ibid., at 93.

⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 90.

⁵ Ibid., at 91.

⁶ Ibid., at 95-96.

object in question is good for something. Otherwise the subject's reasoned willing of an end will prejudice the valuation, and the object's presence becomes an interest of the judge insofar as it contributes toward this end.⁷ Neither will it pay any regard to the judge's sense of whether the object is objectively 'good' – a sense arising, perhaps, from widespread popular approval or from critical acclaim.⁸ Therefore even the claim that an object is good in itself is not a pure judgement of taste if some influence lying outside of the mere representation of the object is being appealed to. Again, ideas of the good, of that which "is esteemed, approved, i.e. that on which [the judge] sets an objective value", will not be generalizable beyond the necessarily bounded sharing of objectives or, at best, a substantive community of worth.⁹

Kant's purpose in grounding aesthetic judgement in the 'mere representation' is to envisage a perspective on an object that is the same for every beholder. Since it is assumed that all observers will experience the same pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties in response to a given representation, disagreement can then be explained by the distorting effects of particular interests. Unanimity over the agreeableness of an object, or indeed over its value to achieve a given end, is certainly possible but is of limited interest.¹⁰ Such that different judges can all be said to be reflecting on the same representation, Kant eliminates relations of interest and desire to achieve a transcendence of the claim to mere taste – that something is good 'for me'. To judgements based on agreeableness we may respond with a remark in the form of 'each to their own'; to judgements based on the good we may respond, even more dismissively perhaps, with a remark in the form of 'well, you would say that'. Subjective universality is then elusive because communal consideration of the merits of the object itself is replaced by consideration of the (suspected or known) interests and desires of the evaluator. The agreeable, Kant says, is not disputable.¹¹ It can only be false in the sense that the subject could be pretending to like something that he really detests.

The claim that a judgement of beauty is passed upon the mere representation of the object aims to prevent this shift in focus from the judged to the judge. Therefore, in spite

⁷ Ibid., at 92-93.

⁸ Ibid., at 96.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., at 98.

¹¹ Ibid., at 97.

of the infamous subjectivism of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, by keeping Kant's desire to ensure a shared representation of a common object in mind it is reasonable to read 'disinterested pleasure' as an attempt to secure a certain type of objectivity – an objectivity that is compatible with his own promotion of autonomy. The properly aesthetic judgement is different from the mere claim of taste because, in the latter case, desires and interests of an individual or communal nature ground the judge's gratification.

Communicability

Crucial to Kant's desire to protect autonomy is his claim that it does not matter whether interests that may distort the 'mere representation' of an object are personal (as in the case of hunger) or consensual amongst some actually existing group (as in the case of empirical agreement over the good). Thus there is little to be gained by bracketing interests of a personal nature only to subsume them to the interests of the wider community. For Kant, communicability is supposed to be transcendental, whereas publicity and sociability are empirical and anthropological, respectively.¹² As we have seen, Kant does himself open up a fairly large space for a more socialised understanding of communicability, but in doing so he lapses from the essential reason that he employs the term, which is intended to ground the argument for a shared harmony of the faculties in the presence of beauty. This is explained directly in the 'Deduction of Judgments of Taste', where Kant writes, "... the fact that humans can communicate their representations shows that all human beings share the same subjective conditions of the faculty of judgment".¹³ Following this archetypical line of critical philosophy argumentation – taking an observed fact and deducing its conditions of possibility – we find ourselves at the overly formal and empty *sensus communis* identified in the previous chapter.

When considering the place of interests, socialising readings of the *Third Critique* tend to studiously avoid allowing personal interests to interfere with reflective judgement, while being less disturbed by the interference of group interests. In doing so they run the opposite risk to that of an overly substantive *sensus communis*, which would identify common sense with some particular judgement or other. Instead they run the formalist risk of identifying the judge with the judging community. Arendt's discussion of communicability

¹² Andrew Norris, 'Arendt, Kant and the Politics of Common Sense', *Polity*, 29/2 (1996), 165-91 at 188.

¹³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 170.

in the *Kant Lectures* illustrates this tendency. The negative gain of disinterest prepares us for judgement by detaching us from our sense of being gratified by the object in some way, placing the object at a distance from which impartial contemplation is possible. But when Arendt moves on to discuss the “actual activity” of judgement, the reflection itself, she brings the standards of the surrounding community into play.¹⁴ On Arendt’s reading of the Kantian notion of communicability, we reflect upon our feelings of pleasure and displeasure by reference to norms of appropriateness. While a destitute man may feel a certain private joy upon the death of his father, owing to the inheritance coming his way, on reflection he will not express this pleasure because, Arendt explains, “[o]ne is not overeager to express joy at the death of a father”.¹⁵ A feeling of pleasure is not communicable, it seems, when the community will not approve of one’s approval.

Technically, the *sensus communis* cannot be a justifying principle after a person has had an aesthetic experience – communicability, as Pippin argues, must itself be central to the aesthetic response and a condition of appreciation.¹⁶ Here Arendt glosses over one of the biggest problems that Kant presents to readers of the *Third Critique* – the order and relation of cognition, pleasure, and reflection – a problem that even two lifelong Kant scholars in Vandenabeele and Guyer find largely unresolvable without significant speculative work.¹⁷ To promote her thick conception of communicability, Arendt reads one of Kant’s many discursive remarks, in this case a section of the *Third Critique* where he attempts to distinguish an intellectual or practical approval from a mere gratification, as a description of the reflective process itself. Kant’s remark here attempts to distinguish mere pleasure and pain from satisfaction, and the inheritor does not approve of his own non-reflective gratification upon hearing of his father’s death regardless of the likely reaction of the community.¹⁸ What is presented by Kant as a rejoinder to an Epicurean reduction of all gratification to bodily pleasures becomes in the *Lectures on Kant* an explanation of the ‘workings’ of sociability.

¹⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 69.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Pippin, 'Significance of Taste', at 564.

¹⁷ Bart Vandenabeele, 'The Subjective Universality of Aesthetic Judgements Revisited', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 48/4 (2008), 410-25 at 422. Vandenabeele largely gives up on the task and simply refers to “a common web of interrelated constraints”.

¹⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 208.

Andrew Norris has criticised Arendt for this move of bringing three Kantian concepts: sociability, communicability, and publicity, to a point of ‘near-convergence’.¹⁹ By taking the alternative route of a substantive explanation of communicability, perhaps with the rhetorical goal of exaggerating the role of sociability in the *Third Critique*, Arendt places us back inside the dilemma of the ‘thick’ *sensus communis* outlined in the previous chapter – the dependence on a substantive community of value that led Schaeffer to pronounce the *sensus communis* dead. For this reason, Norris argues that the success of the *Critique of Judgment* relies on its pure formalism; as soon as interpreters weaken the formalism of aesthetic judgement they reintroduce the problems Kant was trying to solve.²⁰

Moreover, Arendt thereby also introduces a tension into her own work, since collapsing judgement into social convention seemingly negates the role of thinking in *The Life of the Mind*, where the distancing power of thought lays the foundations of judgement by liberating the judge from prejudice and the non-thinking comfort of tradition, convention, and cliché. Judgement loses its reflective character, reintroduces empirical notions of the good, and becomes non-critical and law-governed. Indeed, this reading of communicability challenges the desire at the core of Arendt’s writing to protect plurality, leading Jack E. Marsh to call for a “return to plurality” and to replace this apparent ethics of habit and custom with Emmanuel Levinas’ ethic of responsibility to the irreducible call of ‘the other’.²¹ The move of Marsh to locate the distancing power of disinterest in the other’s “absolute resistance to reduction to my concept or project” enables us, at least, to see judgement as a response to an always already existing plurality.²² In following Levinas, however, Marsh is interested only in the resistance of the “human and vulnerable”.²³ Our attention is diverted from the object or event being judged and focused instead on the event of an experienced ethical irruption, and thus from the objectivity of the ‘mere representation’ to an anthropocentric phenomenology of intersubjective living-together.

¹⁹ Norris, 'Arendt, Kant and the Politics of Common Sense', at 183.

²⁰ Ibid., at 184.

²¹ Jack E. Marsh Jr., 'Toward a Return to Plurality in Arendtian Judgment', *Kritike*, 2/2 (2008), 95-111 at 109.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., at 110.

Incentive, interest, and the work of the imagination

In his reading of the sections of Kant's 'analytic of the beautiful' that deal with desire and interest, Guyer recommends that we understand a representation of an object as a suspension of the object's relations to other things.²⁴ A pure judgement of taste would thus be one that holds even if we cut the object off from its worldly causes and effects. The manner in which the argument progresses is confusing, however, in that it can appear to recommend a particular aesthetic stance that excludes all incentives to take notice of an object and forbids a judge from entering into a relationship of concern. This kind of disinterested stance would seem to be available only to a person with no investment in the object of judgement – an outsider perhaps, a cynic, or *flâneur*. If the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is to form the basis of an account of political judgement, such a blasé attitude towards the object strikes an irresponsible tone.

Isabelle Stengers explains why the understanding of disinterest as akin to our requiring a detachment from issues is not sustainable – an issue needs “to be given the power to activate thinking among those who have relevant knowledge about it.”²⁵ Kant's definitions of 'interest' in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, however, make a distinction between interest and incentive, enabling an interpretation of disinterest that remains fully compatible with the presence of a concern, and an incentive to be concerned, about the object of judgement. Interest is therein defined as what promotes the exercise of a faculty of the mind, as distinguished from the mere conditions of possibility for such exercise.²⁶ More than a mere incentive, an interest is that “by which reason becomes practical”; interests transform reason into will.²⁷ An incentive must not necessarily be acted upon, but an interest, by Kant's own definition, must.

Fortunately, it is perfectly possible within the Kantian framework for disinterest to coexist with curiosity, incentive, and care. A person will always judge out of some need or desire to do so, otherwise the object of judgement will never be foregrounded. Disinterest

²⁴ Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1979) at 200.

²⁵ Isabelle Stengers, 'The Cosmopolitical Proposal', in Peter Weibel and Bruno Latour (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.; Karlsruhe, Germany: MIT Press ; ZKM/Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, 2005), 994-1003.

²⁶ Kant and Gregor, *Practical Philosophy* at 236.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, at 105 & 204.

is best conceived not as a lack of incentives, but as an added level of attention to prevent incentives from morphing into interests. Regardless of the extent of their incentives to appreciate an object, therefore, anyone is capable of aesthetic appreciation provided that they reflect on the grounds of their appreciation of an object.²⁸ Kant's critique only demands some freedom to judge in the absence of a "determining ground of approval".²⁹ Nick Zangwill labels as "unKantian" the many accounts of disinterest that call for a specific kind of detached and unaffected attitude.³⁰ Together with other Kantian scholars, Zangwill insists that desire and taste can co-exist provided there is some pleasure in the mere representation in addition to the pleasure involved in satisfying a desire.³¹ Disinterest can even be conceived as the opposite of indifference, in that something engages us in spite of its detachment from worldly relationships.³² George Dickie's influential critique of the 'aesthetic attitude' notes that ulterior motives that might cloud the purity of an aesthetic judgement are overcome not by distancing but by attending more closely to the object.³³ Again, the focus of attention must remain on the object and not the judge, whose incentive for liking some thing is not so much a hindrance as an irrelevance.

Detachment is not an attitude but rather an "attentiveness".³⁴ Arendt captures the suspension of relations by claiming that the foundation for communicable judgement is laid by calling a sort of 'time-out' on one's involvement with the object or deed in question:

[judgement] presupposes a definitely 'unnatural' withdrawal from involvement and the partiality of immediate interests as they are given by my position in the world and the part I play in it.³⁵

Having decided that something is worthy of attention we are asked to engage in an artificial and deliberate process of disentangling ourselves from any immediate relationship

²⁸ Bart Vandenabeele, 'On the Notion of "Disinterestedness": Kant, Lyotard, and Schopenhauer', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62/4 (2001), 705-20 at 712.

²⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 96.

³⁰ Nick Zangwill, 'Unkantian Notions of Disinterest', in Paul Guyer (ed.), *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 63-66.

³¹ See, for example, James Kirwan, *The Aesthetic in Kant: A Critique* (Continuum Studies in Philosophy; London ; New York: Continuum, 2004) at 14; and Zangwill, 'Unkantian Notions of Disinterest' at 64.

³² Vandenabeele, 'On the Notion of Disinterestedness', at 720.

³³ George Dickie, 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1/1 (1964), 56-65 at 64.

³⁴ Maria Pia Lara, 'Reflective Judgment as World Disclosure', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34/1-2 (2008), 83-100 at 86.

³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (One-Volume edn.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981) at 76.

with the object, lest our incentive transform itself into an interest upon which we might unthinkingly act. An incentive may very well serve to pique our curiosity or attract our attention; it may be the ‘occasion’ for reflection.³⁶ For Kant in the mode of the critical philosophy, detachment would then involve the stripping away of desires and interests so as to ground judgement merely in the *a priori* conditions for the possibility of subjective universality – the shared harmony of cognitive faculties. On Arendt’s socialised reading of the enlarged mentality, detachment would then involve the decentring of our own perspective on the object through the bringing to mind of the maximum number of other perspectives.

Our personal relationship with the object thus becomes, via a politicised enlargement of the mind, one among others; the partiality of one’s perspective is not thereby dissolved but augmented and thus enriched. From her early essays through to *Life of the Mind*, Arendt consistently labels this distancing oneself through augmentation as the work of the imagination. Fundamentally, the imagination is the faculty of re-presentation; it is the “ability to have an image in my mind of something that is not present”.³⁷ Elsewhere, Arendt traces this re-presentative power of imagination back to Parmenides’ *nous*, “through which you look steadfastly at things which are present even though they are absent”.³⁸ The Arendtian imagination, however, does much more work than simply imitating the visual sensory experience for something that cannot presently be seen. The imagination, Arendt tells us, also has a separating power, putting what is present to us at a sufficient distance to enable us to “understand it without bias and prejudice” and thus to establish the distance that separates judgement from ‘mere taste’.³⁹ The work of the imagination is the enlargement of the mind, not merely re-presentative but also representative; to not exercise the imagination is to refuse to augment one’s own perspective on an object with the perspectives of others.

Arendt thereby gives the faculty of imagination a much more significant role than the one that it is normally seen to play in Kant; for Dostal, this is a simple misinterpretation

³⁶ Robin Schott, 'Kant and the Objectification of Aesthetic Pleasure', *Kant-Studien*, 80/1 (1989), 81-92 at 84.

³⁷ Hannah Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy', *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 49-146 at 139.

³⁸ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 80.

³⁹ Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' at 323; Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 67.

of the relative value of the cognitive and non-cognitive in Kant's account of Taste.⁴⁰ Arendt's exaggeration of the imagination is traceable to its Kantian source, however, via Heidegger, who had already revealed the concealed primacy of the Kantian imagination in his lecture series published as *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Heidegger reads Kant as "shrinking-back" from the imagination as a third basic faculty alongside sensibility and understanding.⁴¹ In the 1st edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* the imagination is a 'function of the soul', but by the 2nd edition Kant has reduced it to a 'function of the understanding'. Kant appears to be put off by the idea that the imagination could be the "essential ground for ontological knowledge".⁴² From Arendt's seminar on the Kantian imagination we can see that she adopts this Heideggerean reading of Kant. When defining the synthesising function of the imagination she quotes from the 1st edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason* where imagination is the "faculty of synthesis in general".⁴³ Like Heidegger, albeit without his sense of the need to acknowledge the ambiguity, Arendt disregards Kant's turn away from the primacy of the imagination and elevates it to a central role in cognition as such.

This move renders the concepts 'imagination' and 'understanding' roughly synonymous in Arendt's writing. Her early equivocation over the relationship between the two is demonstrated in 'Understanding and Politics', an early essay reflecting on her own attempts to understand the phenomenon of totalitarianism. In the manuscript for the essay, Arendt had written: "[w]ithout this kind of imagination, *and the understanding that springs from it*, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world".⁴⁴ The published version, however, reads: "[w]ithout this kind of imagination, *which actually is understanding*, we would never be able to take our bearings in the world".⁴⁵ From this point forward, the exercise of imagination that Arendt calls the enlarged mentality – that which prepares us for a communicable judgement – is intertwined with the work necessary to know and to understand. Because understanding is always "of *something*", the freedom of the

⁴⁰ Dostal, 'Judging Human Action', at 740.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (5th edn., Studies in Continental Thought; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) at 112.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 80.

⁴⁴ Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' at 327, emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Ibid., at 323, emphasis added.

imagination and of judgement is always attached to the world.⁴⁶

That Kant employs the beautiful as his working example of reflective judgement does not mean that a theory of judgement deriving from his work can only operate upon things of which we approve. Neither does it mean that we find pleasure in everything. In her article on the realism of Arendtian thinking and judgement, Terada Rei reminds us that the experience of Nazism was the initial event that sparked Arendt's interest in the need to judge.⁴⁷ The occasion or incentive for judgement may very well be a feeling of displeasure, from where we face a choice between defiance and denial. Only from a position of realisation and understanding will we be in a position to judge and defy – denying an unpleasant reality is equivalent to accepting it, and means that our incentive has been transformed into an interest in our own survival, prosperity, or identity.⁴⁸ It may be true that we find a certain pleasure in the reality principle itself, and to this extent the event is aestheticised, but this realisation is only a precursor to reflective judgement and, if necessary, impassioned defiance.⁴⁹

The enlargement of the mind, as understood and developed by Arendt, is part of the typically phenomenological endeavour to bring an object into focus by bracketing obscuring influences, but it does so with an admission that the only method for transcending one's own view is to expose oneself to the views of situated others. It thereby retains in Arendt the epistemological role that is so confusingly smuggled into the discussion of the *sensus communis* in §40 of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. James Kirwan has argued that, for all its subjectivism, Kantian aesthetics does want to “place beauty in the world rather than in the individual subject”.⁵⁰ Arendtian judgement moves further in this direction. Disinterest is an attempt to know the object in a special sense, in which its reality is enhanced through the visiting of other perspectives in the imagination. While the imagination is working to prevent an incentive turning into an interest, it is also establishing the conditions for communicability, i.e. the shared and stable reality necessary for judgement to be significant and persuasive.

⁴⁶ Robert Fine, 'Judgment and the Reification of the Faculties: A Reconstructive Reading of Arendt's Life of the Mind', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 34/1-2 (2008), 157-76 at 168.

⁴⁷ Terada Rei, 'Thinking for Oneself: Realism and Defiance in Arendt', *Textual Practice*, 22/1 (2008), 85-111.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, at 86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, at 102.

⁵⁰ Kirwan, *The Aesthetic in Kant* at 147.

The ideology critique of disinterest

Kant's work on aesthetics is often seen as overly formal in its wish to eradicate cultural and other contingent influences from the judgement of beauty. Arthur Danto comments on the effects of the placement of a work of art as part of a 'system', positioned in and amongst other objects, and other such features of the 'artworld' as major factors in aesthetic appreciation.⁵¹ Further to this, he argues for ineradicable social-cognitive prejudices that order and enable aesthetic response.⁵² With this general critique in mind, Kantian aesthetic disinterestedness is specifically challenged from a Marxist perspective on the grounds that it emerges from and reinforces a class bias serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. The claim typically takes the form of an ideology critique, with the various oppositions present in the *Third Critique*, such as beauty and charm, or gratification and aesthetic pleasure, shown to be expressive of social distinctions. This bourgeois boundary-work is said to be pushing in two directions, distinguishing the cultured middle-class from the barbarous masses on the one hand, and the particularities of the feudal nobility on the other.⁵³ The ideological component of this work of definition is the claim to the universality of the bourgeois taste, covering over its basis in the social hierarchy.

Pierre Bourdieu's critique in *Distinction* is supported by interviews with members of the French working-class showing the 'popular' aesthetic to be the perfect opposite to the aesthetics of distance found in the *Third Critique*.⁵⁴ Where Kant deduces from the purity of taste a necessity for aesthetic appreciation to pay no regard to utility, Bourdieu's working-class subjects save their approbation for images that fulfil, or at least transparently signify, a function.⁵⁵ Where Kant's judgements of taste make an appeal to the universal, Bourdieu's working-class subjects assign different values to different audiences. The assignments are typically based on genre, which is held to be a significant factor in appreciation: a particular image is 'all right, if it's for showing to kids'. Where Kant seeks to retain aesthetic purity by eliminating the distortions of 'merely charming' elements, Bourdieu's

⁵¹ Arthur Coleman Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981) at 112.

⁵² *Ibid.*, at 107 & 24.

⁵³ Compare Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) at 488; with Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Theory and History of Literature; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) at 43.

⁵⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction* at 41.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, at 42.

working-class subjects regard colour as central to beauty. The adoption of a disinterested stance towards a work of art is said to be motivated by the desire to distinguish oneself from the proclaimed crudity and infantilism of this aesthetics of immediacy.

In direct contradiction to the Kantian aesthetic, for Bourdieu's sample of the French working-class the value of an artistic representation is strongly tied to the value of the referent: a portrait of a woman will be beautiful to the extent that the subject herself is beautiful, and abstract art presenting the viewer with no obvious referent at all is doomed from the start.⁵⁶ 'Mere taste', utility, and interest in the real existence of the object are all crucial to value; any idea of the 'pure' beauty of the form of the representation is all but nonsensical. In a postscript, Bourdieu reads the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with this counter-aesthetic in mind. Kant's pure taste is a 'disgust' towards the immediacy of gratification, with alienation considered essential to maintain the distance between the representation and the referent and to thereby provide an opportunity for the transcendence of animalistic bodily desires.⁵⁷ Support for this argument can be found in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, in which Kant explicitly opposes the beautiful and the 'disgusting', just as he opposes the ridiculous and the sublime.⁵⁸ Bourdieu holds that the refusal of gratification amounts to a substantive, puritan aesthetic exclusive of the body and its pleasures.

From this perspective, the purported formality of the deduction of pure taste thus masks a value hierarchy. Bourdieu regards as false the conflict introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis between the formal and empirical readings of Kant. The various slippages into empirical grounds that generate so much confusion for a reader trying to grasp the work in accordance with Kant's stated methodology must be taken alongside Kant's insistent refusal of an empirical basis for his deductions. Such a reading reveals the text as an ideological work hiding its class basis.⁵⁹ Indeed a claim to have eliminated the contingencies separating subjects from one another is, adds Eagleton, the very essence of ideology – hyper-subjectivising the (particular) subject's experience to become universal,

⁵⁶ Ibid., at 43.

⁵⁷ Ibid., at 488.

⁵⁸ Immanuel Kant, 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime', in Robert B. Louden and Günter Zöllner (eds.), *Anthropology, History, and Education* (1st edn., The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 18-62 at 44.

⁵⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction* at 490.

thus making the claim that that subject's experience is the true character of the world.⁶⁰ Intersubjectively valid experiences of the world are those accessible to a "spiritualized version of the abstract, serialized subject of the market place"; the critique of bourgeois aesthetic ideology is tied closely to a critique of the mythologies of capitalism.⁶¹

Arendt's writings on culture leave her open to a similar charge. In 'The Crisis in Culture', entertainment is ephemeral and serves life, while culture embodies the immortal and eternal, and is thus worldly.⁶² A substantive aesthetic certainly comes through in Arendt's writings, and is not masked by any Kantian concern with formal methodology. Disinterest is for Arendt a deliberate distancing of the self from "cares, interests and urges" such that, in forgetting ourselves, we can appreciate the sheer appearance of the thing before us.⁶³ What is left of a cultured class is caught between the educated philistine of the old society, for whom art appreciation is to be cultivated for the purpose of 'self-perfection', and the entertainment consumer of the new mass society, for whom the leisure time that could otherwise be devoted to culture is used up in consuming. Any idea of a 'mass culture' is out of the question, since even the most worthy cultural artefacts become mere entertainment when aimed at the masses; in order to be disseminated widely they must be marketed as functional.⁶⁴

Arendt's adoption of the *Third Critique* is partly motivated, therefore, by her desire to establish a sort of transcendence of the cycle of biological needs and their fulfilment, and in her most elitist moments the transcendence is explicitly rendered impossible for the masses, overly attentive as they are to meeting their basic biological needs and securing a livelihood. It is reasonable for Kennan Ferguson to express a concern that Arendt may be establishing a cultural hierarchy of taste to replace the hierarchy of truth that she seeks to break down.⁶⁵ Beauty is all but synonymous in Arendt with the capacity to endure beyond the lifespan of a single generation of human beings: "[o]nly what will last through the

⁶⁰ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 93-94.

⁶¹ Ibid., at 98. See also Robin Schott, for whom Kant's aesthetic encourages a fetishism of the commodity by positing an 'as if' the object is made for the subject's pleasure. Schott, 'Objectification of Pleasure', at 91-2.

⁶² Arendt, 'Crisis in Culture' at 204.

⁶³ Ibid., at 207.

⁶⁴ Ibid., at 204.

⁶⁵ Kennan Ferguson, *The Politics of Judgment: Aesthetics, Identity, and Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999) at 112.

centuries can ultimately claim to be a cultural object”.⁶⁶ Her favourite examples are cathedrals and statues, although this classicism co-exists alongside a tinge of misplaced optimism in regards to modern art, aimed squarely as it was against both philistinism and commodification.

Despite being open to the usual charges against the form of ideology critique – such as the reductive and quasi-conspiratorial assignment of motives to a social class – Bourdieu and Eagleton’s works on the ‘ideology of the aesthetic’ are convincing in their content. Put simply, disinterest is an interest, albeit one that conveniently invalidates all other interests. The (bad) ideological element of Kantian disinterest, however, is his placement of common human experience in the shared and innate powers of the mind where the grounds for judgement are self-ascribed and incontestable. This is indeed ideology of an insidious nature – a class interest masquerading as a timeless and non-falsifiable fact of nature.

Kimberley Curtis observes that Arendt’s emphasis on durability makes sense in relation to the need to share a world in common.⁶⁷ But the worldliness of Arendtian judgement can be retained without adopting her substantive monumentalist aesthetic. Arendt, in contrast to the formalist reading of Kant, places the commonality of human experience in the world and the object of judgement, rather than in the shared harmony of cognitive powers. Disinterest then becomes an non- or anti-ideological interest that objects in the world, whatever form they may take and however stable their qualities are, be permitted to resist what is said and thought about them.

Matter and form

A similar charge can be laid against Kant by focusing on his attempt to distinguish judgements of taste in accordance with a division of the object of judgement into matter and form. In the section of the *Critique of Judgment* dealing with the exclusion of charm and emotion from the pure judgement of taste, Kant argues that to include ‘charms’ as elements of beauty is to pass off the matter for the form.⁶⁸ This is usually, and reasonably, understood as an attempt to exclude the senses – and thus the sensuous – from the

⁶⁶ Arendt, 'Crisis in Culture' at 199.

⁶⁷ Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1999) at 12.

⁶⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 108.

judgement of beauty. The shape and arrangement of the object are to be contemplated without the distraction of its merely ‘pleasant’ qualities; as Robin Schott explains, “a rose is beautiful because of its form, not because of the sweetness of its smell, the lustre of its color, or the softness of its touch”.⁶⁹ Here, again, we can quickly find ourselves back at Bourdieu’s critique of the aesthetics of ‘disgust’ and the claim that Kant reflects a class bias in attempting to overcome the ‘barbaric’ pleasures of the body through an appeal to the ‘higher’ pleasures of distant contemplation.

From the *Lectures on Anthropology*, we know that the reason Kant distinguishes form from sensation is because only form can lay claim to universality; sensation differs, Kant believes, according to what appeals to, or is found repellent by, the particular senses of various subjects.⁷⁰ But Marxist critics see this very desire for a “realm of unanimity” in the aesthetic sphere as covering up the real inequalities of the world.⁷¹ The particularities of race, class, and sex, and the power imbalances inherent in these classifications – so uncomfortably obvious in the ‘matter’ of the world – are absent from the world of pure form, toward which both master and slave can stand together, nod their consensual approval, and then return to their respective, vastly different, material circumstances. Conspicuously neglected in Arendt’s *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, the persuasiveness of this critique of Kant’s distinction between matter and form would obviate any attempt to draw on the *Third Critique* for political theory, let alone an attempt oriented by an Arendtian conception of the political as a sphere with the unique capacity to protect and disclose a plurality of voices.

The distinction between matter and form is also regularly criticised from the perspective of philosophical aesthetics, even by scholars who do not identify an ideological component to the *Third Critique*. These critics interpret ‘form’ via Kant’s emphasis on the design and composition of an object, and his insistence that beauty lies in the shape or outline of an object rather than “mere color” or “mere tone” – both of which Kant describes as charming rather than beautiful.⁷² Guyer, for example, complains that by

⁶⁹ Schott, 'Objectification of Pleasure', at 84.

⁷⁰ Kant, Louden, and Zöller, *Anthropology, History, and Education* at 344.

⁷¹ Schott, 'Objectification of Pleasure', at 85-6. While I am drawing on Robin Schott's concise and explicit treatment of matter and form, his critique follows Herbert Marcuse and is a variation on the standard Marxist reading.

⁷² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 108-09. Kant later softened his position on the necessity for a pure aesthetic judgement to be unaffected by colour. See *ibid.*, at 370fn31.

distinguishing between the formal and material elements of objects themselves, Kant allows “particular theories of art and perceptual and cognitive psychology”, such as his belief that space and time are the *a priori* ordering principles of perception, to limit the range of objects that could legitimately be found beautiful.⁷³ Kant is at his weakest, Guyer suggests, when he makes subtle shifts from philosophy to art criticism.⁷⁴ Extending our definition of matter to equate it to the material of an object, thus designating the form as the design, does not help to make convincing the distinction between matter and form. Materials do not sit still and wait for their application to a design; matter is always in flux and always exercises agency on the design which must be devised with the cooperation of the material to be employed. For this reason Tim Ingold portrays artists and makers as ‘weavers’ of matter and form.⁷⁵

Fortunately, there is more to the distinction between matter and form than the elimination of charm or material. Kant also tells us that judgement according to form requires that no determinate concept – no idea of what the object should be, or of what it should be like, in order to serve its ends – be involved in grounding the satisfaction.⁷⁶ Pre-existing concepts get in the way of a proper appreciation of the nature and worth of what lies before us, relegating our judgement into the category that Kant calls ‘dependent’, in which the rose is beautiful just because it is a rose. Free beauty, in contrast, demands that we abstract from our judgement any “semantic or symbolic relationships to things outside” of the object.⁷⁷ Besides the exclusion of charm and emotion, to concentrate on the form of an object is to refuse to pay attention to the prejudicial concepts surrounding our understanding of its ‘type’ or ‘class’. The beautiful object is in a class of its own.

It is reasonable to read Kant as privileging the understanding of matter as concept rather than as sensation. The exclusion of ‘charms’, such as colour, follows from the lack of determinate concepts; we already know, perhaps, how we feel about ‘red’, but not about *this* red, in this unique set of relations before us, in this ‘given representation’. Rodolphe Gasché’s “para-epistemic” reading of Kant draws a similar conclusion by reminding us that it is objects of nature – not of art – that orient the *Third Critique*. Kant’s critique of

⁷³ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* at 255.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, at 237.

⁷⁵ Tim Ingold, 'The Textility of Making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34 (2010), 91-102.

⁷⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 114.

⁷⁷ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* at 243.

taste is sparked by his desire to apply the critical method to the phenomenon of discovery – the experience of some thing of which we do not have a ready concept to apply.⁷⁸ We want to give a name to some object, but no obvious name comes to mind. A concentration on form accounts for the sense of not knowing what some thing is, but cognising it as a distinct thing nonetheless.⁷⁹ By ensuring that we are faced with an object (not a mere sensation and not a mere sign), attention to form thus presents the lack of a determining concept as a problem.

Kant explains the nature of free aesthetic judgement as “always a singular judgment about the object”.⁸⁰ The critique of taste is therefore an anti-reductionist move by which Kant presses us not to assimilate the object to our impression of its parts, with their individual features and effects, nor to the attributes of any classification that we may assign to it as a whole. Rachel Zuckert has recently argued along these lines in a piece challenging the charge of ‘empty formalism’ commonly directed at Kant. On Zuckert’s reading, by distinguishing matter from form Kant asks us to see the object as an individual, with its constituent parts and properties interrelated rather than being distinguished from each other, and thus not related independently to the world and to our governing concepts.⁸¹ The object attains unity and thus is ‘what it is’. Taste, Zuckert concludes, is ‘merely subjective’ ironically because of a certain hyper-objectivity; the set of ready-to-hand shared concepts do not fit, determinate judgement is impossible, and the object is just itself.⁸² The Plato-tinted understanding of form as the perfect (Heavenly or customary) outline or mould for the worldly object, which is then denigrated as mimetic, is turned on its head.

Absent any appeal to prior sensations or ‘higher’ concepts based on a class of objects, Dickie’s above-mentioned claim, that disinterestedness arises from a closer attention to something rather than any special detached stance, is echoed by Zuckert, for whom “aesthetic experience is a deep engagement with an object as the particular object

⁷⁸ Rodolphe Gasché, *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kant's Aesthetics* (Cultural Memory in the Present; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003) at 156.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, at 179.

⁸⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 165.

⁸¹ Rachel Zuckert, 'The Purposiveness of Form: A Reading of Kant's Aesthetic Formalism', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44/4 (2006), 599-622 at 600.

⁸² *Ibid.*, at 622.

that it is”.⁸³ Attention to ‘form’ can thus be read as related closely to the *Third Critique’s* interest in the nature of judging the particular. It is not only the agreeable and the good that is denied a role in the aesthetic, but also theoretical concepts.⁸⁴ We attend more closely to the object by delaying the moment of subsumption and refusing to hastily apply a determinative judgement without giving the object the maximum opportunity to resist its classification.

The *sensus communis* and facing reality together

The interpretation of Kant’s aesthetics necessary to support an object-oriented theory of politics is akin to that presented in Tobin Sieber’s ‘Kant and the Politics of Beauty’. Therein Sieber argues that the key feature of beautiful objects is that they “prefer to be understood in their own terms”, and as such they refuse attempts at subsumption to pre-defined human measurements.⁸⁵ The role of disinterest in the *Critique of Judgment*, along with the understanding of ‘form’ as an object’s capacity to shock our faculty of understanding by not settling neatly into an existing conceptual framework, shows us that substantive communities of meaning and understanding are not what give commonality to differently situated persons. Beautiful objects make interesting topics for discussion because they are indeterminable by ready-to-hand concepts, as explained by Samuel Fleischaker:

... the fact that I find an object resistant to determination by a concept, that I judge it beautiful, makes me interested in hearing about other people’s attempts to conceptualize it. Its interpretability makes it a good matter for discussion.⁸⁶

The meaningful autonomy of opinion thus secured requires that the object’s identity be shared, not our prejudices. This not only releases the autonomy of the judge but also brings the novelty of the object into sharper relief and thus provides the promise of a community responsive, in a plurality of ways, to the novelty of what they confront. Through the enlarged mentality, each person has a sense of sharing an object in common, and a concomitant awareness that their autonomous response to it will be meaningful and

⁸³ Ibid., at 613.

⁸⁴ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* at 43.

⁸⁵ Tobin Siebers, ‘Kant and the Politics of Beauty’, *Philosophy and Literature*, 22/1 (1998), 31-50 at 35.

⁸⁶ Samuel Fleischaker, *A Third Concept of Liberty: Judgment and Freedom in Kant and Adam Smith* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) at 29.

persuasive to others. This autonomy is worldly in the sense that it responds to, and is bound by, a particular, situated object or event.

Admittedly, there is a certain dryness in this vision of the *sensus communis* that brackets the pre-existing commonalities of feeling and understanding and produces a sense in common around a shared object of concern. Many readers have found Arendt's elimination of compassion as a political virtue especially unpalatable, believing it to reflect a cold and heartless disposition. This is a particularly common criticism from psychoanalysts who, by vocational necessity, must trust in the value of exposing the 'inner life' of human beings; Paul Hoggett, for example, writes of Arendt's "moral hardness" and unwillingness to face "emotional reality".⁸⁷ Our interest in the perspectives of others is instrumental for our own sense of reality and the enhancement of our understanding of the world, thus the feelings of human others present themselves as obstacles to our sense of the real rather than matters of concern in themselves.

There is however a positive vision of political judgement in Arendt's study of the latent political elements in Kant's account of aesthetic judgement. In a recent article, Deborah Nelson wonderfully articulates a defence of the 'heartlessness' of Arendt (and of her friend Mary McCarthy). She suggests that we imagine "a countertradition of ethical relation, one that seeks not to come face-to-face with the Other but to come face-to-face with reality in the presence of others".⁸⁸ Because members of a community face the world, and not each other, the political relationship is always anchored by the object in question, which has a binding quality insofar as it is allowed to resist easy subsumption to the variety of conceptual frameworks of meaning and understanding that each person carries. The significant point here is that judgement can and should be distinguished from sheer intersubjective agreement; intersubjective frameworks of understanding constitute a common sense that is 'self-evident', whereas the common sense underpinning judgement must be 'self-altering' in the face of the world.⁸⁹ The elimination of an in-between of the self and other also eliminates the capacity for reality to impose itself. When reality is given the opportunity to resist these frameworks, when it is allowed to act into intersubjective agreement, then it is also given the power to constitute the *sensus communis*.

⁸⁷ Paul Hoggett, 'Pity, Compassion, Solidarity', in Simon Clarke, Paul Hoggett, and Simon Thompson (eds.), *Emotion, Politics and Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 145-61 at 161.

⁸⁸ Nelson, 'Virtues of Heartlessness', at 88.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, at 91.

Arendt's reworking of disinterest asks that we not try to make things as they are acceptable to us, that we not look at it with a view to how we can survive it, prosper in it, or go on as before.⁹⁰ Being dedicated to realising things as they are means being prepared to judge and, if necessary, defy the objects of the world in-between.⁹¹ The *sensus communis* is thus immanent in every object of concern, placing it outside of the aforementioned conflict between substantive and formal interpretations. If the *sensus communis* is regarded, with Gadamer, as the substantive set of understandings, habits, customs, and beliefs that communitarians hold as uniting the individual members of a community, then proclaiming the death of this substantive *sensus communis* is a reasonable empirical observation under postmodern conditions. The liberation of autonomy seems to alienate the judge from the community, insofar as 'community' is considered equivalent to a group sharing a set of taken-for-granted understandings, and it certainly contradicts any socialised reading of the *sensus communis* – including, as we have seen, tendencies in Arendt's own work.

Alternatively, if the *sensus communis* is posited as an *a priori* feature of human cognition, in an attempt to envisage judgement as universally valid by moving outside of the particularities of culture, then proclaiming the death of this formal *sensus communis* is a normatively valid task for Bourdieu's ideology critique. We do not strip back layers of self- and group-interest so as to feel pleasure in the 'quickenings' of harmonious faculties of cognition, but in order to listen to the object of contemplation, to allow it to exercise its resistance and thereby bond a judging community. Any transcendent capacity of the enlarged mentality lies in attending to the particularity – and peculiarity – of the referent, not in a union of hearts and minds and not in any mysterious harmony of universal faculties.

Arendt's interest in the *Critique of Judgment* therefore stems not only from the positioning of judgement amongst a plurality of men, and thus in the political sphere. As well as dealing with "human beings on earth", rather than with rational beings disembodied and outside of a worldly context, Arendt sees the Kant of the *Third Critique* focussing his attention on concrete particulars.⁹² The apparent 'heartlessness' of paying attention to the world at the expense of empathy and compassion for other human beings

⁹⁰ Rei, 'Thinking for Oneself', at 102.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 12.

turns out to be an enhanced sensitivity; a “becoming more open and responsive to the world”.⁹³ The plurality of human beings making up the collective is not to be considered without the inclusion of the specific material contents of the Earth upon which they act. While the ideal of consensus makes us see each additional judgement as a threat to be overcome, in pointing to things rather than to persons and speaking of realities rather than essences we diffuse this threat.⁹⁴

Conclusions

While the formalism of Kant’s aesthetics has often been criticised, in relation to a painting hanging on the wall of an art gallery, a formal procedure is, if problematic, at least conceivable. Each person who stands in front of the painting in order to evaluate its aesthetic worth stands in the footprints of other judges, such that it makes some sense to argue that a common human standpoint could be established if each judge could dispense with their subjective biases. Clearing the mind of interest, charm, and considerations of utility is then a pathway to greater agreement on the aesthetic qualities of the artwork. In contrast, in relation to political events every person is differently situated, so it is clear that an intersubjectively valid representation of a worldly event can be established only by understanding the unique reality of the situation as it ‘opens up’ to each person. The disinterestedness demanded of the Kantian aesthete thus provides only a “negative gain” in political judgements; a ‘trained’ imagination is not merely stripped of desire but is, importantly, supplemented with an understanding of what others see, hear, and touch.⁹⁵

Therefore the greatest political lesson of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is that apparently subjective judgements of taste become meaningful and make a claim upon others provided they are formed on and about an object that is shared. Arendt reconfigures for political significance the Kantian idea that meaningful public debate requires that “we, who are many, come together, on something that is one and the same

⁹³ Nelson, 'Virtues of Heartlessness', at 100.

⁹⁴ Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Studies in Continental Thought; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) at 149-51.

⁹⁵ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 168. On the ‘objective senses’ of sight, hearing, and touch, see Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 64. The ‘subjective sense’ – taste – only becomes persuasive to others when it is grounded on what is seen, heard, and touched by all.

for all”.⁹⁶ Steven Shaviro regards Kantian disinterest as akin to passion rather than desire. While desire emerges from the subject, passion comes to it, and this makes aesthetics an inherently worldly topic – since “in aesthetic feeling, experience begins outside, and culminates, or eventuates, in the subject”.⁹⁷ Disinterest is important to establish as much as possible that the feeling is, indeed, coming ‘in’. Attention to the difference between taste and judgement in Kant derives its political importance from the distinction between ‘I am cold’ and ‘It is cold’; properly political language speaks of the world and not the self, expresses a judgement and asks for agreement. Because things have their reality strengthened by multiple perspectives, pointing to the common world rather than to ourselves constitutes, enlarges, or reinforces a *sensus communis* that cannot but include the object. Communicability demands that we see what is novel in every event, and this requires us to see from the perspective of the world.

⁹⁶ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 83.

⁹⁷ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Technologies of Lived Abstraction; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009) at 4-6.

3. Seeing from the perspective of the world

Thus far, Arendt's reworking of Kant's 'enlargement of the mind' has been used to argue that the novel aspects of an object or event – those aspects that upset any *a priori* claim to a substantive community of meaning – are essential to the idea of the *sensus communis*, which lies at the heart of theories of democratic community. This chapter shows the reflective nature of judgement as it is presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as essential to enable these novelties to emerge. As an adjunct to its focus upon particulars, reflective judgement demands downgrading the potency of conceptual frameworks that could otherwise overshadow and obscure the very elements of the world that they aim to comprehend.

Arendt replaces the sharing of a conceptual framework with the sharing of stories about the world and of exemplary objects and events that can be used to validate the judgement of these stories, thus shifting the identification of political community from an agreement over general meanings to the contested understanding of particular things. In response to problems with exemplarity that have been identified by Alessandro Ferrara and others, the chapter concludes by introducing boundary objects as pragmatic responses to the need for artefacts to anchor a *sensus communis* across the boundaries of posited communities of meaning.

Judgement as a power of reflection

The account of appreciation of the beautiful given in Kant is greatly complicated by its being representative of a particular type of judgement. Judgement, Kant tells us, is “the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal”.¹ He then goes on to introduce his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with a distinction between two classes of judgement:

If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it ... is determining [determinative]. If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of

¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 67.

judgment is merely reflecting [reflective].²

Determinative judgements have a logical-deductive, apodictic quality. The law is known, and the particular in question is merely subsumed to a transcendent universal in a mechanical fashion. Aesthetic judgement is a pure form of a different style of judgement, in which observable empirical data is systematised and measured, and concepts are not so much applied as (re)formed.³ This Kant terms reflective judgement. Reflective judgement does not have a law of subsumption “sketched out for it a priori”, and is therefore required to discover or generate a principle to subsume the particular concrete entity to a ‘higher’ class.⁴

Determinative judgements feature an obvious lack of genuine agency and therefore no apparent responsibility for the choices or preferences of the judge. Reflective judgements are said to vary in their degree of autonomy, from (less autonomous) judgements of the agreeable and the good, to (more autonomous) judgements of beauty.⁵ Kant’s choice of aesthetic judgement as the model for reflective judgement demonstrates his wish to identify a maximally pure contemplative judgement and thus to illustrate a domain of freedom coexistent with the laws of nature. Only the beautiful is “a disinterested and free satisfaction”.⁶ The label of ‘beautiful’ is an evaluation that Kant holds to be genuinely free because it is not moved by a subject’s empirical inclinations or desires, all of which could potentially be accounted for via naturalistic, causal explanations.

Arendt maintains a separation between the three faculties of the mind, for each of which she claims autonomy.⁷ Neither willing nor judging follows from thinking in a strong enough sense for us to label the thinking activity as practical or instrumental to our will or judgement. Each of these faculties would dissolve if they were conceived as of proceeding in any determinant manner from the thinking process. The very existence of something called the will demands a faculty that is free from binding notions of cause and effect, even at a psychological level, otherwise there could be no willing subject. Likewise, the existence

² Ibid.

³ Pippin, 'Significance of Taste', at 550.

⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 67.

⁵ Ibid., at 94.

⁶ Ibid., at 95.

⁷ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 69.

of a distinctive faculty of judgement relies on the idea that the process of considering events and objects that are available to the senses requires something beyond the application of laws of a determining kind. If determining laws existed, assuming they were categorical and their application was a logical outcome of the thinking process, no judgement would need to take place; judgement requires that there be at least some indeterminacy in this procedure.

Arendt defines judgement as “the faculty to judge particulars without subsuming them under those general rules which can be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by other habits and rules”.⁸ As such, judgement for Arendt is always reflective. Judgement deals with particular things; it points at particular objects and says ‘this is wrong’, or ‘this is beautiful’. It is only in reflective judgement, therefore, that any judging takes place. Reflective judgement resists the ever-present temptation to order the world of things by submitting particulars to the rule of transcendent principles – on Arendt’s reckoning, an impulse especially prevalent among philosophers.⁹ The alternative to judgement for Arendt is deductive reasoning, or the application of ‘rational truth’, which because of its determinative nature does not deserve the title of judgement at all.

Reflective judgement does not deny that, when faced with some thing, we attempt to measure it against other things. What we do not do is apply an *a priori* standard that is not, itself, known to be open to judgement. Judgement proceeds via induction or analogy, wherein the concept itself is open to modification.¹⁰ The novelty of every situation means that reflective judgement is always required; determinative judgements will inevitably import something inappropriate and force the novel into concepts within which it is, at best, an awkward fit. This was clear to William James, for whom “every real dilemma is in literal strictness a unique situation”.¹¹ A central notion in Pragmatistic thought is that the world will constantly surprise us, and that it is therefore crucial to allow our consciousness to accept the new rather than to need and demand the expected.¹² Reflective judgement

⁸ Hannah Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture', *Social Research*, 38 (1971), 417-46 at 446.

⁹ Arendt, 'Concern with Politics' at 434.

¹⁰ Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) at 54 & 58.

¹¹ William James, 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life', in Giles B. Gunn (ed.), *Pragmatism and Other Writings* (New York ; London: Penguin, 2000), 242-64.

¹² Charles S. Peirce and Patricia Ann Turrissi, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking: The 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) at 145-7.

allows the novelty of an object or event to be noted by preventing the desire for taking the easier path to understanding – the application of pre-existing concepts and the concomitant loss of the novel elements of what is being observed. The capacity for resistance would then be lost, with the object not permitted to participate in its own definition.

Arendt starts all of her thought from the premise that ‘pillars of truth’ can no longer secure a shared world, that we cannot be united by dogma.¹³ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl tells us that Arendt focused on the unprecedented in preference to prophecies and ‘lessons of the past’.¹⁴ Arendt’s awareness of the problem of neglecting what is new in an event is revealed in her essay ‘Understanding and Politics’, where she discusses her use of the term ‘totalitarianism’, and the need to not simply subsume the novelty of Nazism into old concepts such as tyranny, terror, and the lust for power.¹⁵ To do so would be to deny the event of Nazism from a role in our understanding of it, comfortable though this exclusion may be. “Totalitarianism”, Arendt explains, “has ruined our categories of thought and our standards of judgment”.¹⁶ When it comes to political action, Arendt believes that ideals will tend to trip us up because we will discover that the commonality that we imagine the ideal provides is an illusion:

In the moment of action, annoyingly enough, it turns out, first, that the ‘absolute’, that which is ‘above’ the senses – the true, the good, the beautiful – is not graspable, because no one knows concretely what it is. To be sure, everybody has a conception of it, but each concretely imagines it as something entirely different.¹⁷

Abstract reasoning is not an appropriate type of thinking for application to the world of politics, which is the sphere in-between people in their public guise.

The suggestion is that the event itself, the moment of or requiring of action, deprives us of the traditional tool to understand it; if every situation has some element of novelty, then this will always be the case to a degree.¹⁸ But reflective judgement becomes

¹³ Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real* at 9.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, 'The Art of Alarm', *The Good Society*, 16/2 (2007), 19-24 at 20.

¹⁵ Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' at 312.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, at 321.

¹⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005) at 3.

¹⁸ Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' at 310.

even more appropriate in areas of rapid scientific and technological progress, where novelty is perhaps a defining characteristic, because here, as Shaviro claims in *Without Criteria*, issues generate their own concepts with which they must be understood.¹⁹ A set framework imported in to a situation will always distort understanding to some extent – in cases where change occurs very slowly this distortion will be insignificant. In situations of novelty and innovation the distortion caused by a set framework becomes a serious impediment.²⁰ Reflective judgement is therefore especially important for a politics concerned with technoscientific issues, which are characterised by the discovery and invention of the novel.

Spectatorship

Judgement is generally thought to refer either to the actor, making decisions while caught up in a situation, or to the spectator, observing the action from a distance and therefore able to appraise the actor's judgement. Early interpretations of Arendt's conception of judgement, most notably the account presented by Ronald Beiner, claimed that she had increasingly identified judgement with the detached thinker, and in doing so may have even betrayed her earlier promotion of action. More recent readings of Arendtian judgement have sought to bring out her desire to bring action and spectatorship together in such a way that both stances are adopted in a responsible judgement, regardless of the placement of the judge vis-à-vis the action. In the next two sections, I will examine some representative commentaries from both sides of this debate, and show that the latter approach comes closer to Arendt's intentions in speaking and writing about judgement.

Ronald Beiner's interpretive essay was fated to become the most influential commentary on Arendtian judgement due to its inclusion in the published collection of her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, the contents of which are the most authoritative indication of what Arendt's strategy might have been in the missing volume of *The Life of the Mind*. Early in the essay, Beiner declares that Arendt has in fact offered us two theories of judgement. The first concept of judgement places it inside the *vita activa* and is concerned with the necessity for political actors to adopt representative thought. Arendt's second

¹⁹ Shaviro, *Without Criteria* at 12.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) at 12.

concept of judgement, beginning with the 1971 essay 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', places it exclusively inside the *vita contemplativa* and is concerned with the retrospective judgement of the detached observer – the historian or storyteller.²¹

For Beiner, there are two theories of judgement in line with a shift of emphasis in Arendt; her thoughts about judgement move away from being embedded in political life as such and judgement becomes purely a faculty exercised by the solitary thinker.²² Gabriel Tlaba is one of a number of readers of Arendt to follow Beiner's analysis; as he sees it, Arendt "changes her idea of judgment as the 'representative thinking' of political agents and aligns it with thinking", shifting from a conception of judgement as public, enlarged, and political to one that is contemplative, independent, and minded.²³ This shift in emphasis appears to undo some of the effort Arendt had exerted in *The Human Condition* in an attempt to overturn the traditional philosophical preference for contemplation over action.

At the same time, Beiner sets a challenge for future interpreters. The notion that two distinct concepts of judgement exist in Arendt could be upset if it can be shown why the activity of judgement was placed within the *vita contemplativa* in Arendt's late writings, without needing to assert, as Beiner does, that her very concerns themselves had shifted.²⁴ What is underemphasised by Beiner is the similarity between the supposedly distinct approaches to judgement, especially that the political agent and the spectator are both required to adopt a similar viewpoint in making their respective judgements. The change in Arendt's emphasis derives from her realisation that in order to transcend his immediate context even the actor must think, and that her earlier distinction between the life of action and the mind was therefore overdrawn.²⁵ Without accepting that the actor has a capability for enlarged thinking, there appears to be no grounds for criticism of somebody who acts in accordance with the circumstances they find themselves in, regardless of how destructive their actions turn out to be.

²¹ Ronald Beiner, 'Hannah Arendt on Judging', *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 89-156.

²² *Ibid.*, at 92.

²³ Gabriel Masooane Tlaba, *Politics and Freedom: Human Will and Action in the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987) at 141-2.

²⁴ Beiner, 'Hannah Arendt on Judging' at 92.

²⁵ In fact, *The Human Condition* itself ends, intriguingly, with a paragraph expressing concern over the vulnerability of thought, not action; see Arendt, *Human Condition* at 324-5.

Responsible judgement demands a particular type of detachment from involvement, which places even the agent into a temporary reflective stance. Nonetheless, even if it is accepted that Arendt is not privileging the spectator, but is instead trying to describe a capacity of the actor to temporarily take on the attributes of a spectator, it may be the case that her theory of judgement does not adequately cater for this possibility. The first major piece to highlight a division between the judgement of the actor and that of the spectator was Richard J. Bernstein's essay 'Judging – the Actor and the Spectator'. Bernstein's essay was written before the *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* were published, and relies therefore on the essays in *Between Past and Future* and portions of the completed volumes of *The Life of the Mind* in order to explore Arendt's reflections of judgement. Nonetheless Bernstein prefigures a critique of Beiner's later essay by pointing out that the tension between the two positions is present even in Arendt's earliest writings on judgement.²⁶ Rather than positing two separate theories, Bernstein believes that judgement brings to light a contradiction in Arendt's work between her demand that judging be a form of action and her simultaneous claim that judgement is detached spectatorship.²⁷

Bernstein observes that on the brief account of the 'enlarged way of thinking' in 'Truth and Politics', Arendtian judgement appears consistent with Arendt's focus on debate and speech as the exemplary forms of action, as the judge is required to take into account the perspectives of others under conditions of plurality, and to rely on persuasion rather than coercion as the means of communication.²⁸ The difficulty arises from 'The Crisis of Culture', where this capacity to judge is traced both to the Aristotelian *phronesis*, a type of practical reason, and the Kantian judgement lying behind taste, a faculty explicitly detached from reason.²⁹ *The Life of the Mind* is not the source of the contradiction, but further muddies the waters by describing judgement as a faculty oriented toward the past and belonging to the historian.³⁰

Bernstein concludes by suggesting that Arendt's failure to reconcile the judging of

²⁶ Richard J. Bernstein, 'Judging - the Actor and the Spectator', *Philosophical Profiles: Essays in a Pragmatic Mode* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 221-37 at 234.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, at 231.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, at 230.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, at 231.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, at 233.

the actor and the judgement of the spectator is not a problem limited to her work, but rather one that makes a demand on everyone:

For the clash and conflict between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, the competing claims that they make upon all of us, and the search to find some resolution between the actor and the spectator continues to be one of the deepest problems of our time.³¹

It was certainly a key concern for John Dewey, who held that the separation of actor and spectator was one of many dead ends towards which modern philosophy had travelled. Philosophies that concentrate exclusively on the actor eventually lead, Dewey claimed, to a “capricious pragmatism based on exaltation of personal desire”. But to concentrate exclusively on the spectator and her disinterest pointed just as inevitably to a “consolatory estheticism based on the capacity for wringing contemplative enjoyment from even the tragedies of the outward spectacle”.³² Arendt’s genealogy of the cleavage of thought and action is not dissimilar. At the beginning of the tradition of Western philosophy, Arendt claims, thought came to be regarded only as rationality – the calculation of the correct means to a desired end – or else, where it was oriented toward meaning, it served only as a review of actions already undertaken; “[a]ction, on the other hand, was relegated to the meaningless realm of the accidental and haphazard”, disconnected from thoughtful reflection on meaning.³³ For Dewey, the solution was to pragmatically conceive of observing as active, and of knowing as a “form of doing”.³⁴ Even if the spectator is conceived as ‘active’, however, there is still the question of the capacity for the actor to ‘spectate’; Arendt, therefore, also wants to embed spectatorship in action.

It is not difficult to identify the reason that so many readers of Arendt claim that she moves to a position that irresponsibly favours the spectator over the actor. The *Lectures on Kant* is, necessarily, partly an expository work, and three features of Kant’s philosophy do favour spectatorship: firstly, while the actor is constrained by the categorical imperative,

³¹ Ibid., at 237.

³² John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (2nd edn., Paul Carus Lectures - 1st Series; New York, NY: Norton, 1929) at 242.

³³ Arendt, 'Socrates' at 6.

³⁴ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930) at 196.

the spectator is not.³⁵ It is thus possible, for example, for Kant to present some positive consequences of war, despite the fact that his maxims for action absolutely demand acting for peace.³⁶ Secondly, the spectator occupies the privileged position from which the design of nature behind an event can be surveyed. Kant's contradictory position on the Revolution in France, about which he simultaneously condemned the actors but joined the spectators in rejoicing, is thus explicable because a 'higher' standard, in this case progress, is available to the observer of events but not so easily grasped by the participant.³⁷ Equipped with a broader frame in which to place events, the world-spectator is able to decide whether a particular event serves progress.³⁸

Further to this is Kant's discussion of the genius. Arendt tells us that taste has priority over genius in Kant, because it demands that the genius exercise taste while creating.³⁹ The last impression Kant wants to leave on his readers, it seems, is one in which the necessary autonomy of artistic production from mindless rule-following means that beautiful art can result from anarchistic amateurism. Although the genius must exhibit originality above all, "[b]eautiful art must be academically correct and determinate rules must be followed", and thus pure creativity is insufficient.⁴⁰ For art to be beautiful, the artist is not to aim at singularity, but rather to target her work to the taste of a potential audience: "[t]aste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished".⁴¹ Kant regards this as enabling for the creator, providing "guidance" and "order", as well as ensuring, via communicability, the possibility of garnering influence.⁴² The genius, also, must be something more than tasteful, since the talent of the genius does somehow go beyond the ability to judge: "[f]or the judging of beautiful objects, as such, taste is required; but for beautiful art itself, i.e. for producing such objects, genius is required".⁴³ Nonetheless, the insistence that "[t]aste must take priority over genius" points the reader of Kant's aesthetics

³⁵ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 95.

³⁶ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 52.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, at 45.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, at 58.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, at 62.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 189.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, at 197.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, at 189.

firmly towards an interpretation that privileges the critic and audience over the creator of art and action.⁴⁴

Along the same lines as Bernstein, Majid Yar accepts Beiner's notion of two distinct theories of judgement but brings a philosophical analysis to bear on what the distinction reveals, i.e. a rift between the actor and spectator as a real antimony in political judgement. The gulf between the actor and spectator does not arise from a mere change of heart on the part of Arendt, and neither does it open simply because of the juxtaposition of Aristotle and Kant.⁴⁵ For Yar the account of judgement given in Arendt cannot apply to the political actor because it demands a disinterested standpoint that is simply beyond the reach of anyone with a serious involvement in action:

For the actor is always 'in the thick of things', is committed to this or that cause, is in pursuit of a particular end, desires a particular outcome, is motivated by particular reasons, is interested in objects, events and actions because he/she deems them to be right or wrong, good or bad.⁴⁶

By modelling judgement on Kant's disinterested pleasure, Yar believes that Arendt describes a mode of being available only to the detached observer, and thus ultimately gives precedence to the thinker over the doer, ironically given her lifelong attempt to revitalise the *vita activa*.⁴⁷ And she does this not only in *The Life of the Mind* but also, implicitly, in her earlier references to judgement where she had alluded to Kantian themes.

Disinterest *seems* much easier for the spectator.⁴⁸ Arendtian judgement has been regularly criticised for favouring the detached spectator, with *The Life of the Mind* confined to being a study of the judging faculty of the historian. Other critics of Arendtian judgement, such as Fleischaker, claim that her emphasis on the revelatory aspects of judging privilege the actor, for whom the rest of us are passive spectators.⁴⁹ If the 'two theories' of judgement are reconciled, however, we can see that Arendt is still concerned

⁴⁴ Ibid., at 197; see also Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 63.

⁴⁵ Majid Yar, 'From Actor to Spectator: Hannah Arendt's "Two Theories" of Political Judgment', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 26/1 (2000), 1-27 at 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., at 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., at 18.

⁴⁸ Lawrence J. Biskowski, 'Practical Foundations for Political Judgment: Arendt on Action and World', *The Journal of Politics*, 55/4 (1993), 867-87 at 873.

⁴⁹ Fleischaker, *A Third Concept of Liberty* at 110.

with the *vita activa*, and redeeming the responsibility of the actor and the action. Arendt seems to be suggesting that, in the exercise of judgement, the actor becomes temporarily part of the audience and ‘sees’ the very real objects facing them in the same ‘enlarged’ light as the audience. Yar looks at judgement only from the point of view of the actor and concludes that to place the actor in a reflective stance is impossible. However, as I show in the next section, the reconciliation must operate in both directions; because Arendt does not believe in an Archimedean point from which the spectator can judge the whole, it is also the responsibility of the spectator to employ the imagination to bring the actor’s perspective into consideration.

Arendt’s critique of Kant

More recent approaches to Arendtian judgement have integrated *The Life of the Mind* and the *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* more closely with her earlier work in which the life of action was promoted over the life of contemplation. David L. Marshall, for instance, has recently drawn on a reading of Arendt’s (untranslated) *Denktagebuch* to argue that she was always attentive to the contemplative side of judgement, going back to her readings of Hegel and Aristotle in the early 1950s.⁵⁰ This indicates, at least, that Arendt did not shift in her ideas about judgement from a concern with the actor to a concern with the spectator in line with her work on *The Life of the Mind* in the 1970s. Of those commentators who disagree with Beiner, Leora Bilsky most strongly emphasises the reconciliation of action and spectatorship. For Bilsky, what is unique in Arendt’s conception of judgement is her “situating of judgment ‘in between’ actors and spectators”, with each reciprocating the other.⁵¹ Action is fruitless without spectators who can preserve it in memory, while spectators must judge with reference to the particular and are thus bound to consider the viewpoint of the actor. Bilsky argues that it is the very distinction between the two that Arendt seeks to problematise, revealing the actor/spectator dichotomy as false.⁵²

Arendt does, in fact, seem to consider the Aristotelian and Kantian accounts of judgement as the shared capacity of both actors and spectators. Where action takes place

⁵⁰ David L. Marshall, ‘The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Judgment’, *Political Theory*, 38/3 (2010), 367-93 at 370.

⁵¹ Leora Y. Bilsky, ‘When Actor and Spectator Meet in the Courtroom: Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Judgment’, *History and Memory*, 8/2 (1996) at 137.

⁵² *Ibid.*

without spectators, or in the presence of limited perspectives, the imagination can represent others to expand the mind beyond the reach of the limited empirical diversity present to the judge.⁵³ Imagination is presented in Arendt's writings as the key to this expansion of the mind, and it is clearly intended to be fully operational in both the actor and spectator. As presented in 'Understanding and Politics', the imagination is both the distancing necessary to understand without prejudice – disinterested pleasure – and simultaneously the ability to bring close that which is remote – the clearing of intervening concepts demanded by reflective judgement's concern with the particular.⁵⁴ Thus imagination works to create both distance and familiarity, and is entrusted with the role of closing the gap between the observer and the act.

Even for the Arendtian spectator, however, judgement as it is presented in the *Critique of Judgment* is problematic, according to both Yar and Bilsky, because the Kantian *sensus communis* that bridges the subjective and objective is formal, not empirical.⁵⁵ Arendt worries that a purely empirical *sensus communis* would not allow us to hold the actor responsible because he would have the 'excuse' of adopting the norms of those he was conversing with. On the other hand, Arendt's wish to give reflective judgement political weight demands that the raw material of judgement be situated inside of a political community. The intention of her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* is to uncover a 'hidden' political philosophy in the *Critique of Judgment*, which is only achievable if Kant's allusions to a community of sense are seen as more than the mere conditions for the possibility of a purely aesthetic judgement. Arendt's search is therefore for a middle ground reconciling the views of the privileged spectator and the partial actor; a middle ground she believes is accounted for by the exercise of imagination.

In his review of the *Lectures on Kant*, William A. Galston makes the obvious point that reading Kant's theory of taste as a political theory of judgement is simply wrong, because the Kantian spectator does not guide the moral actor.⁵⁶ Outside of the transcendental philosophy of the three *Critiques*, Kant does observe the tendency for actors to take the stance of a spectator while carrying out an action, and seems to tie this to moral

⁵³ Marshall, 'The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment', at 383.

⁵⁴ Arendt, 'Understanding and Politics' at 323.

⁵⁵ Yar, 'From Actor to Spectator', at 22.

⁵⁶ Galston, 'Review: Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy', at 304-06.

action through a concern with its 'propriety':

For while on the great stage each prosecutes his actions in accordance with his dominant inclinations, at the same time he is moved by a hidden incentive to adopt in his thoughts a standpoint outside himself in order to judge the propriety of his conduct, how it appears and strikes the eye of the observer.⁵⁷

Anyhow, as Annelies Degryse reminds us, Arendt is using Kant, not interpreting him.⁵⁸ She does not attempt to reconcile the contradictions between the *Critique of Judgment* and the more obviously 'political' writings by, for example, placing his admiration for the French Revolution in the category of the sublime rather than the beautiful.⁵⁹ That Arendt targets a middle ground, and wishes to diverge from a reading of Kant in which the spectator is privileged, is easily demonstrated by one significant departure from Kant permeating all of her thought. Arendt believes that the notion of Progress means that Kant places a 'ruse of nature' over human goods and ends, thus breaking his commitment to human dignity.⁶⁰

Since this comes through most strongly in Kant's explicitly political writings, Arendt uses the notion of Progress in the First Session of the *Lectures on Kant* to defend her turn to the *Third Critique* as Kant's hidden political philosophy.⁶¹ Arendt suggests that our belief that the actor can never step outside of his or her context and judge the whole stems from the desire to see an action always in terms of some measure like Progress, which remains outside of the actor's comprehension.⁶² If such a measure is maintained, only the backward glance of the historian will be capable of seeing the true significance of any action – from this perspective, whether or not it contributed to the whole. Respecting human dignity, however, demands that the deed is not seen in terms of a preconceived narrative or 'law of the species', but rather, like the beautiful in art, as delimiting the scope of its own interpretative possibilities.

⁵⁷ Kant, 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime' at 39.

⁵⁸ Annelies Degryse, '*Sensus Communis* as a Foundation for Men as Political Beings: Arendt's Reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 37/3 (2011), 345-58 at 348.

⁵⁹ This strategy is employed by David Ingram in Ingram, 'The Postmodern Kantism of Arendt and Lyotard', at 73.

⁶⁰ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 8.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., at 77.

The spectator is, indeed, engaged with the object or action in a different manner when compared with somebody directly involved. But the spectator's involvement in the *sensus communis* ensures that they are not solitary thinkers. Degryse argues that, while the *sensus communis* should not be read as an actual dialogue with others, engagement with the world is nonetheless necessary lest the *sensus communis* be lost at the moment of judgement.⁶³ The lack of a determinative concept is the very thing that gives the actor an equally strong capacity for taking an impartial stance as the historian, by placing both of them in a reflective position.⁶⁴ Paul Ricoeur argues along these lines in his account of Arendtian judgement, noting that reflective judgement prevents the spectator from being an embodiment of some larger motor, and thus leaves us with no reason to fear the spectator's stance.⁶⁵ It cannot be Arendt's intention to subsume action to the judgement of spectators – the demand placed on the actor is only that the action is explicable to others.⁶⁶ Modelling judgement on an aesthetic-reflective basis clears away concepts that would otherwise belong only to the spectator's narrative, and in doing so clears the path for the composition of the world.

Of greatest importance for Arendt is that judgement remains reflective, i.e. there is no concept outside of the particular object or deed that determines our evaluations of it. And this points to her overall critique of Kant, for whom Progress must provide the ultimate measurement for any human deed but, in order to protect his own notion of human dignity, every person and every action must be judged in its particularity.⁶⁷ Arendt therefore wants independent, reflecting judgement to account for a position “both in and out of the game”, questioning the validity of both total engagement in action and of unworldly theoretical speculation.⁶⁸ Laurence J. Biskowski is correct, therefore, in his claim that Arendt's method of always seeking to distinguish in order to understand leads her interpreters to falsely set up the actor and spectator as opposites, when, in fact:

We are all both actors and spectators; we act, we observe, we

⁶³ Degryse, '*Sensus Communis* as a Foundation', at 356.

⁶⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 77.

⁶⁵ Paul Ricoeur, 'Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment According to Hannah Arendt', *The Just* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 94-108 at 108.

⁶⁶ Tlaba, *Politics and Freedom* at 145.

⁶⁷ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 77.

⁶⁸ Dana Richard Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999) at 106.

continually interpret the meaning of actions and events, even if we ourselves at times are profoundly involved and interested in them. ... The spectator and actor cannot be considered as fundamentally opposed archetypes; rather, to use the hermeneutic metaphor, living and acting in the world require us to tack back and forth from one to another.⁶⁹

At least, that is Arendt's picture of a *healthy* world – a fragile achievement in itself. Therein, the standpoints from which poor judgements, or non-judgements, are passed lie at each extreme of an 'actor-spectator' spectrum.

This puts Arendt broadly in line with the aims of the classical pragmatists, who sought to emphasise the active nature of all judgements and also the importance of the original work (of art, action etc.) in delimiting the range of interpretations.⁷⁰ William James prefigured Arendt on the need for spectators to adopt an enlarged mentality in his 'On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings'. The blindness he speaks of occurs when we try to decide on the conditions and values of other people, and flows naturally from his radical empiricism in that some of the relations present in the situation being judged are only experienced by someone who is intimately involved.⁷¹ James thus argues against the authority of the spectator and reporter on the actions of others, on the basis that they will fail to see and know elements of a situation that the actor will sense vividly.⁷² No single observer can possess the truth; each however does "gain a partial superiority of insight from the particular position in which he stands".⁷³ Enlargement of the mind is the encompassing of these additional relations so as to radicalise the empiricism of the otherwise limited observer.

The perspective of the world versus the perspective of the self

Critics who equate aesthetics with the modelling of the world in line with a vision of the beautiful or sublime miss the potential of the lack of criteria characterising Kantian aesthetic judgement; that is, its *reflective* nature. In Beiner's interpretative essay appended to

⁶⁹ Biskowski, 'Practical Foundations for Political Judgment', at 874.

⁷⁰ David L. Hildebrand, *Beyond Realism and Antirealism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists* (Vanderbilt Library of American Philosophy.; Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003) at 88.

⁷¹ James, 'On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings' at 267.

⁷² *Ibid.*, at 268.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, at 285.

the *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, he worries about a (quasi-fascist) “unwarranted aesthetization of politics” in Arendt’s reading of Kant.⁷⁴ Two retorts to Beiner effectively disarm this criticism. For a start, ‘aesthetics’ must be understood in its original Greek meaning of everything pertaining to the senses and to perception and is not just about elevating the beautiful over the true and good – Marshall confirms from his reading of Arendt’s *Denktagebuch* that her notes on Hegel, Aristotle and Kant make this clear.⁷⁵ Martin Jay makes a second retort on behalf of both Lyotard and Arendt in his ‘The “Aesthetic Ideology” as Ideology’. In appropriating the *Third Critique*, both Lyotard and Arendt are attempting to distance politics from the notion of realising a blueprint.⁷⁶ In refuting the “aesthetic ideology”, Jay reminds us that the political actor begins in the world and must speak and act in a manner persuasive to that world; politics is ‘worldly’ and does not work upon a blank canvas.⁷⁷

Understanding is thus essential to judgement and action. In ‘Truth and Politics’, Arendt tells us that the faculty of judgement arises from “the acceptance of things as they are”, meaning not that we resign ourselves to fate, but that we judge from the secure position of a recognised and stable reality.⁷⁸ This acceptance demands an openness to the world and to the perspectives of others, which gives a crucial role to the storyteller from whom acceptance of things may be learnt. The previous chapter therefore presented the argument that what is demanded of the political community is not shared inner faculties but the simple sharing of a reality in common, free from the fracturing effect of layers of superimposed meaning.

The requirement that judgement be reflective gives a political role to thought. Thinking has a purging element in that it destroys unexamined opinions.⁷⁹ In the ruins created by thought, reflective judgement is liberated because there are no standards to which determinative judgements can automatically refer. For Arendt the paradigmatic

⁷⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 138.

⁷⁵ Marshall, 'The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment', at 371.

⁷⁶ Martin Jay, 'The Aesthetic Ideology' as Ideology: Or, What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?', *Cultural Critique*, 21 (1992), 41-61 at 53-6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, at 55.

⁷⁸ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 257.

⁷⁹ Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', at 446.

thinker is Socrates, for the very reason that Socratic dialogue does not aim at results.⁸⁰ Socrates called himself a ‘midwife’ because he delivered people from their unreflective pre-judgements – unexamined opinions that prevent reflection. Socrates destroyed the received opinions of his interlocutors without ever replacing them with a new, improved opinion stemming from the reflective dialogue. The outcome of such thought is not truth but rather paralysis, in which the mundane process of applying the general rules given to us by custom or habit is halted because the wisdom contained within such customs has been undermined.⁸¹

Arendt’s confidence that the examination of received opinion is of political importance stems from her observation of the ease with which the supposedly strongly embedded code of Western morality was overturned in Nazi Germany (and after the War, when the code was easily restored).⁸² People can, she warned, become attached more to the existence of a code than to its contents, due to the comfort that lies in being able to practice pseudo-judgements by simply subsuming all observed objects and events into the unexamined general rules supplied by custom and habit. It is not a matter of finding a new code, because this simply supplies non-thinkers with a new set of rules; only those who have developed the faculty of thinking by practicing the examination of the old values are likely to resist the new.⁸³ In unsettling rules and systems of classification, thinking prepares the mind for the resistance of what is; thinking thus renders us amenable to the content of stories.

Arendt’s belief in the political relevance of ‘storytelling’ is well recognised, but can easily lead a reader to a very different conclusion to the one being proposed here. I therefore wish to propose a distinction that is necessary, but never explicated, in Arendt’s faith in storytelling as a seed for the imagination’s establishment of the enlarged mentality. Stories only become politically relevant when they focus on, or are filtered to give access to, the world, and not the storyteller. Lisa Disch reads Arendt as practicing and recommending a method of critical theory as storytelling from the point of view of a ‘situated impartiality’. The stance from which stories are told is achieved through the

⁸⁰ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 173.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, at 173-75.

⁸² *Ibid.*, at 177.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, at 178.

enlarged mentality. The method of storytelling is thus an attempt to redefine our ideas of objectivity and impartiality, such that impartiality is not detached from the situation but rather situated amongst a plurality of perspectives upon it.⁸⁴ When it comes to understanding, stories are a superior starting point to categories, because drawing upon and telling stories ensures that we remain attached to the experiences that we comprehend and explain to others.⁸⁵ The telling of stories is not intended to realise the sort of self-expression paired with empathy that Arendt does not favour in the political sphere; Disch correctly distinguishes storytelling from testimony, with the latter defined as an assertion of “this is the way I see the world”.⁸⁶ Arendt’s turn to the *Third Critique* shows us that this sort of claim of personal inwardness is not in the form of the appeal to subjective universality of the Kantian aesthetic.

Arendt tells us that “[c]omprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever it may be”.⁸⁷ For her biographer, Young-Bruehl, this demand to see things as they are, and thus to exercise judgement based on how things are, is the central theme of Arendt’s writing.⁸⁸ Storytelling is the methodology of facing up to reality. In an article contrasting the ‘stories of men’ with the ‘fictions of mankind’, Melvyn Hill understands Arendtian storytelling as a reconciliation with reality, the opposite to a fiction which overwhelms the reality that it tries to speak of.⁸⁹ Stories then serve as communication media for this reconciliation, opening the perspectives of others to the standpoint of the storyteller and thus providing resources for the enlargement of the mind.⁹⁰ Stories confirm reality in a way that theories do not; they make us feel more certain of what *has* happened (as opposed to what *might have*, *must have*, or *ought to have*) – responding to the world without trying to define it.⁹¹

The political goal of enlarging the mind precedes the formation of judgement and is

⁸⁴ Lisa J. Disch, 'More Truth Than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt', *Political Theory*, 21/4 (1993), 665-94 at 666.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, at 669.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, at 687.

⁸⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (2nd edn.; London: Andre Deutsch, 1986) at viii.

⁸⁸ Young-Bruehl, 'The Art of Alarm', at 19.

⁸⁹ Melvyn A. Hill, 'The Fictions of Mankind and the Stories of Men', in Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 275-99 at 289.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, at 290.

therefore not intended to better understand others but to “look upon the same world from one another’s standpoint”.⁹² The perspective of the world emerges from filtering stories to gain access to common objects of discussion. If storytelling is oriented toward the revelation of significations and meanings it can only ever demonstrate the “partial, provisional, contradictory, and always contested”.⁹³ Common sense can then only be present insofar as meanings are shared, and it is futile to hope that common sense can nonetheless be established deliberately since there is no common object for discussion. Sentimentalist Romanticism is thus the enemy of worldliness.⁹⁴ Alain Robbe-Grillet’s philosophy of literature offers a parallel critique of the Romantic novel that may help to bring out the features of the politically relevant story. Culture, he writes, undermines the freedom of our observations, camouflaging the world so only emotions can be recalled.⁹⁵ The experience of the world as such is obscured by pre-inscribed meanings:

For what is at issue here is an experience of life, not reassuring – and at the same time despairing – schemas which try to limit the damage and to assign a conventional order to our existence, to our passions.⁹⁶

In order to share a world in common, it is necessary to erase sedimented obstacles to experience.⁹⁷ Roland Barthes is correct to point out in response that the author is unable to erase every trace of signification – the mere repetition of elements, for example, is enough to mark them as significant. The goal, nonetheless, is to secure reality through the greatest possible suspension of meaning.⁹⁸

Naturally, as things among other things, persons are to be revealed in the same way. Listing ‘character’ as one of the elements of the romantic novel that are not to be found in the *nouveau roman*, Robbe-Grillet stresses that the hero of the story must also be

⁹² Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 51.

⁹³ Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction* (Essay Index Reprint Series; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970) at 141.

⁹⁴ I am referring here to the sentimentalist stereotype of Romantic thought. See W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Romanticism and the Life of Things: Fossils, Totems, and Images', in Bill Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 227-44 for an attempt to rescue the Romantic movement from its narrow association with emotion and sentiment ahead of physicality.

⁹⁵ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* at 19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, at 139.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, at 138.

⁹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972) at 202-04.

freed from the interpretations of the author.⁹⁹ Meanings emerge from negotiation between the object-character and the audience, with the minimum possible intervention of authorial narrative.¹⁰⁰ The twin objectives of Robbe-Grillet's work are thus equivalent to the twin objectives of Arendt's turn to reflective judgement: first, to allow the properties of the object-character to shine through without the obscurantism of ordering schemes; and second, to place the judging audience in a position of autonomy with regard to the derivation of meaning.

These objectives can be shown clearly by compiling the various types of judgement that Arendt believes do not fit in to a reflective framework. Sound political judgement is of a form that (reflectively) assigns a property to the object: 'this x is beautiful'. This can be contrasted with the assignation of a property to the self – the subjective-sensory 'I am pleased by x', and with the logical (determinative) subsumption of the object into a classificatory scheme – the logical-cogitative 'this x is a particular case of y'. In accordance with this normative scheme, Arendt invalidates the following types of judgements:

- the application of a grand historical narrative such as Progress;¹⁰¹
- theodicy, or more generally the technique of justifying the quality of the specific in reference to the quality of the whole;¹⁰²
- the use of theories, clichés, or trends to explain away an event;¹⁰³
- pure deductive or inductive reason;¹⁰⁴
- the application of a notion of collective responsibility, or any other pattern that dilutes the event through contextualisation;¹⁰⁵
- based on emotion or empathy;¹⁰⁶
- based on self-interest;¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* at 22.

¹⁰⁰ Barthes, *Critical Essays* at 204.

¹⁰¹ Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship' at 20; Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 216.

¹⁰² Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 30.

¹⁰³ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Revised edn.; New York: Penguin Books, 2006) at 296.

¹⁰⁴ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 215.

¹⁰⁵ Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship' at 20; Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* at 296.

¹⁰⁶ Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship' at 24; Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237; Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 43.

¹⁰⁷ Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship' at 24; Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 53; Arendt,

- taking into consideration the interests of the group to which one is associated;¹⁰⁸
- arbitrary decisionism;¹⁰⁹
- based on personal taste, sense or whim;¹¹⁰
- made in isolation;¹¹¹
- the application of rules by habit;¹¹²
- applying a moral principle or norm;¹¹³
- expressing prejudices in the social realm;¹¹⁴
- joining the majority;¹¹⁵ or
- blindly adopting the views of another.¹¹⁶

To the extent that the journalist, historian, novelist, scriptwriter, poet or testifier adopts these techniques her stories will be of little service to enlarging the mind. They have in common a refusal to allow the object or event to resist the meaning being imposed upon it.

Storytelling, for Arendt, is therefore the event of redeeming another event. This focus is consistent with her promotion of Homer as the original and highest exemplar of genuine impartiality. The novelty of Homer was that he was able to “look with equal eyes upon friend and foe, upon success and defeat”.¹¹⁷ In memorialising the deeds of Hector and the Trojans as well as Achilles and the Achaeans, glory was permitted to the vanquished enemy alongside the victorious ally. Modern history has, according to Arendt, lost this sort of impartiality in its very search for objectivity:

The historian, by gazing backward into the historical process, has been so accustomed to discovering an ‘objective’ meaning, independent of the aims and awareness of the actors, that he is

'Truth and Politics' at 237.

¹⁰⁸ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237.

¹⁰⁹ Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' at 139.

¹¹⁰ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 67; Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' at 141; Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 53.

¹¹¹ Arendt, 'Crisis in Culture' at 217.

¹¹² Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', at 446.

¹¹³ Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 53; Arendt, 'Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship' at 24.

¹¹⁴ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 110.

¹¹⁵ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' at 140.

¹¹⁷ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 258; Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 51.

liable to overlook what actually happened in his attempt to discern some objective trend.¹¹⁸

The insistence on attempting to identify a common world navigates between the recourse to 'higher' standards of judgement (privileging the spectator) and the subjectivist reduction to the mere taste of the observer – privileging the actor. These appear to be extreme opposites, with the first leaving the observer helpless amidst the context of an overshadowing narrative, and the second assigning the observer radical autonomy. They share, however, a denial of any independent significance to the person, deed, event or object under discussion.

Leslie Paul Thiele describes Arendtian action as writing a narrative and intervening in a narrative; it is not simply a matter of a narrator deciding later what the story was.¹¹⁹ If the actor is not conscious of somehow introducing a new thread to an existing narrative, then they are not acting but 'behaving', and to override their action with a new narrative not known to them renders them unfree. While there is always a process of selection involved in any storytelling, Arendt's retrieval of the Homeric tradition, alongside that of the first historians Herodotus and Thucydides, promotes the need for the criteria for selection being found in the event itself, not in its role within any particular framework.¹²⁰ The storyteller fades from view and becomes a conduit for whatever is inherent in the event or deed itself.¹²¹ Only in this manner can multiple standpoints have at their centre an object in common.

In enlarging the mind, we move to a more 'general' thinking but not to a more 'conceptual' thinking.¹²² A friend of Arendt's, J. Glenn Gray, tells us that she took an interest in beauty because it is the most 'ontological' of the trinity of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Beauty 'strikes' us where truth and goodness do not.¹²³ Disinterest is the capacity to see the novel in the object outside of the wide variety of conceptual schemes into which it may be subsumed, such that its particularity may transcend the diversity of

¹¹⁸ Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 88.

¹¹⁹ Leslie Paul Thiele, 'The Ontology of Action: Arendt and the Role of Narrative', *Theory & Event*, 12/4 (2009).

¹²⁰ Arendt, 'Tradition of Political Thought' at 46.

¹²¹ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 164.

¹²² Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 44.

¹²³ Gray, 'The Winds of Thought', at 60.

habitual and customary understandings. It is the *breach* – the interruption of something new that is difficult to categorise – that provides the opportunity (if we resist the temptation to unthinkingly subsume it into a pre-existing category) for a genuine sharing of something in common. This is what it means to claim that the *sensus communis* is that which resists. The *a priori* condition for communicable judgement – the *sensus communis*, that which binds a plurality of judges – is the object’s novelty, its resistance to schematisation, what makes it a particular, what makes it belong to, represent, or symbolise nothing but itself.

Exemplarity and the validity of judgements

To realise this potential, particulars can only be measured against other particulars. Alongside the *sensus communis*, Arendt reaches for Kant’s notion of exemplary validity in an attempt to ground judgement in particulars. On Arendt’s reading, a particular ‘exemplar’ is brought to mind as a third term for use in comparison.¹²⁴ Reflective judgement features the derivation of a rule (or Kantian ‘schema’) from a particular – such that the particular object being judged is ultimately being subsumed to the image of other particulars rather than free-floating concepts.¹²⁵ An appeal to exemplars has the benefit, for Arendt, of encapsulating an undefinable general in a famous particular, thus deferring the impossible resolution of the question ‘what is [courage, beauty, etc.]’.

Kant, however, uses the term ‘exemplarity’ as a synonym of the subjective universality of the judgement of taste. Demonstrating the validity of a reflective judgement is a significant problem for Kant, as noted by many of his major interpreters. Kirwan is among those who note that disinterest cannot equate to validity since there is no way to prove that a judgement of taste is pure – there may always be some desire involved and we are left with no choice but to trust the subject’s claim to disinterest.¹²⁶ We are supposed, therefore, to believe a judge if she makes reference only to her own feeling in making an evaluation.¹²⁷ Under this approach, the moment a judge reaches beyond ‘it just feels nice’ the purity of the judgement will be questioned. The exemplarity of the judgement is that which allows us to hold that all should agree with our designation of beauty despite the lack

¹²⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 77.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, at 83.

¹²⁶ Kirwan, *The Aesthetic in Kant* at 18.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, at 24.

of a concept: “a necessity of the assent of all to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce”.¹²⁸ Describing the judgement as an example, despite the necessity of universal consent, marks out a difficult path separating subjective necessity from both empirical agreement and determinative concepts. Exemplary validity is the ascription that we make to a judgement of taste to which we say everyone should agree, regardless of whether they actually do.

Exemplary validity is therefore used by Kant to cater for the aspect of his judging framework that states that the demand for universal assent is like that of the subsumption of the object under a determinative rule, except that because of the reflective nature of the judgement there is no rule, so the judgement can only exemplify an unspecifiable concept.¹²⁹ For Kant, as explained by Onora O’Neill, examples are useful only for moral thinking, insofar as they illustrate moral action and thus help us to assimilate the categorical imperative.¹³⁰ In the moment of action, it is that imperative, and not the example, that is to guide us. Arendt’s appropriation of exemplary validity draws on a different aspect of the *Critique of Judgment* and is quite misleading if read as an interpretation of Kant. In her use of exemplarity, Arendt means to (over)emphasise Kant’s remarks in the ‘Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments’, where he writes of particular examples, such as the classics in an aesthetic tradition, being essential to reflective judgement because of the lack of determinative concepts:

... among all the faculties and talents, taste is precisely the one which, because its judgment is not determinable by means of concepts and precepts, is most in need of the examples of what the progress of culture has longest enjoyed approval if it is not quickly to fall back into barbarism and sink back into the crudity of its first attempts.¹³¹

Thus, just as the capacity to refine the faculty of judgement challenged the universal claims of Kant’s study of the aesthetic, so does the capacity to refine a culture. The other example of cultural artefacts playing the role of exemplars in Kant, again demonstrating a degree of cultural elitism, is the ability to identify products of genius based on their becoming an exemplary model for later work; but these exemplars must necessarily be very rare given

¹²⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 121.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, at 124.

¹³⁰ Onora O’Neill, ‘The Power of Example’, *Philosophy*, 61/235 (1986), 5-29 at 7.

¹³¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 164.

the extraordinary natural gift possessed by, or perhaps possessing, the genius.¹³² Nonetheless these exemplary models of good taste are regarded by Steven DeCaroli as a sound place to look for a non-determinative form of sociability in Kant, given the formal, *a priori* nature of the *sensus communis* and the need to stretch Kant's intentions in order to conceive of the community of judgement in substantive terms.¹³³

According to Arendt's reading of the Kantian imagination (based, as noted earlier, on Heidegger's adoption of the 1st edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which the imagination lies at the root of all cognition) the imagination plays a key role in providing a 'schema' for a concept to the understanding.¹³⁴ These schematic 'shapes' or 'ideas' make communication possible; thus the imagination's role in cognition itself makes it the necessary faculty for all knowledge and communication.¹³⁵ The imagination is inspired by the succession of possible exemplars, defined by Ferrara as "entities, material or symbolic, that are as they should be, atoms of reconciliation where is and ought merge and, in so doing, liberate an energy that sparks our imagination".¹³⁶ If we are to follow Kant's line of aesthetic judgement consisting of the free play of imagination and understanding, we might say that a beautiful object, one that captures the interest, will cause us to play endlessly with various possible matching schemas without allowing the mind to settle.

In reflective judgement, the original particular object is brought to mind by the imagination; we judge not with empty concepts but with hard and fleshy objects. The illusion of determinative judgement relies on the positing of a concept as a yardstick, but this can occur only because the particular example at the basis of every concept – its worldly source – has been forgotten.¹³⁷ At this point we begin to think with signs rather than objects; often this is useful, but it is ideological (and thus apolitical) because the sign always hides a particular that is not made explicit. A concept such as 'courage' cannot bind a plurality because of the variety of different exemplars of courage that will prevail amongst the collective. No concept, as Fleischaker argues, can really be identified without

¹³² Ibid., at 189.

¹³³ Steven Decaroli, 'A Capacity for Agreement: Hannah Arendt and the Critique of Judgment', *Social Theory and Practice*, 33/3 (2007), 361-86.

¹³⁴ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 81.

¹³⁵ Ibid., at 84.

¹³⁶ Alessandro Ferrara, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) at ix.

¹³⁷ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 87.

an example. If no particular example is given of a concept that is used, then an assumption is being made about the audience of the concept.¹³⁸ Arendt notes that concepts employed in the social sciences are generally abstractions from particular examples, although the historical event from which they originated has often been detached from the concept and forgotten.¹³⁹ Exemplary validity, as found in Arendt's rather loose adaption of Kant, is a principle for reflective judgement that takes advantage of the fact that every concept is no more than a shorthand reference to a particular object.

Connections can therefore be drawn between the employment of examples by Arendt and the archaeological methods of post-structuralism. Drawing heavily on both Arendt and Foucault, Giorgio Agamben connects reflective judgement to Aristotle's paradigm model, found in the 'Prior Analytics', in which the coupling of the general to the particular is abandoned in favour of a movement from particular to particular, "from singularity to singularity".¹⁴⁰ There is no *a priori* rule, but nonetheless a paradigm develops through the succession of judgements of distinction and likeness. Foucault's panopticon is Agamben's illustration of the paradigm model. The panopticon is not a rule or concept but "a particular historical phenomenon" – an architectural design published at a specific time and place.¹⁴¹ In his own work, Agamben follows Arendt in drawing on the refugee (with Arendt herself as the implicit particular) as the paradigmatic political subject in a post-sovereign era.¹⁴² Just as a measuring device must always be part of any measurement, so must the singular paradigm be part of any appeal to the example. Paradigms originate in particulars that become exemplary.

Boundary Objects

Alessandro Ferrara, who has attempted to bring out the implications of exemplary validity

¹³⁸ Fleischaker, *A Third Concept of Liberty* at 211.

¹³⁹ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 85.

¹⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'isanto and Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009) at 19-22.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, at 16. Latour also recognises the significance of Foucault's panopticon in demonstrating the apparatus behind the production of society and knowledge; he employs the laboratory in an analogous fashion; in T. Hugh Crawford, 'An Interview with Bruno Latour', *Configurations*, 1/2 (1993), 247-68 at 253.

¹⁴² Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Cesare Casarino and Vincenzo Binetti (Theory out of Bounds; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) at 15.

in greater depth than any of Arendt's other readers, sees two problems with the use of examples in judgement. Firstly, examples demand interpretation: is running courageous or cowardly? This makes them crucially different to Kantian schema, where the benchmark, at least, is fixed.¹⁴³ It is possible to find examples that are so 'obviously' good or bad as to make judgements made in analogy to them seem 'correct'. In reality, as O'Neill points out in the 'The Power of the Example', challenges to the meaning and authority of examples are always possible. The literary and hypothetical examples that are often employed as illustrations have made the move to considering examples as schema seem more successful than it actually is.¹⁴⁴ Secondly, there can be no criteria with which to identify an example with the current object or action, as both are concrete and holistic.¹⁴⁵ Ferrara thus concludes that exemplary validity defers the question of good judgement to the ability to make the 'good' or 'correct' interpretation of examples and of the events under consideration.¹⁴⁶ But this seems to impose upon us a universal agreement on the 'right' interpretations, and it is for this reason that Ferrara smuggles in a concept, Kant's 'furtherance of life', to act as a benchmark.¹⁴⁷ The *good* judgement is then seen in psychoanalytic terms as one that has the capacity to build and preserve "a well-balanced and cohesive identity" on behalf of the judge, with the authenticity of a consistent identity preferred to the neuroticism of a compartmentalised inner life.¹⁴⁸

Yet Arendt seems satisfied that the validity of any judgement is restricted to those who are familiar with the example. In choosing examples, we also choose the community to which we appeal in our judgements.¹⁴⁹ The example is likely to be saying something to and inside of a particular tradition or ideology, and where this is not shared by an audience, the underlying meaning of the schematic example, taken for granted by the speaker, will not shed light on the current event.¹⁵⁰ This problem is recognised by Agamben in his call for a "paradigmatic ontology", or 'paradigmatology' that can cope

¹⁴³ Alessandro Ferrara, 'Judgment, Identity and Authenticity', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 24/2-3 (1998), 113-36 at 121.

¹⁴⁴ O'Neill, 'The Power of Example', at 7.

¹⁴⁵ Ferrara, 'Judgment, Identity and Authenticity', at 122.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, at 124.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, at 133.

¹⁴⁸ Ferrara, *Reflective Authenticity* at 45.

¹⁴⁹ Bryan Garsten, 'The Elusiveness of Arendtian Judgment', *Social Research*, 74/4 (2007), 1071-1108 at 1086.

¹⁵⁰ O'Neill, 'The Power of Example', at 12.

with the importance of “recognizing and articulating paradigms” in the example framework.¹⁵¹ The need to implicitly share a framework, even at the level of abstraction suggested by Ferrara, seems to defeat the purpose of Arendt’s turn to examples, which is to share the concrete particular rather than the abstract framework of understanding. The basic philosophical problem identified by Ferrara holds; Arendt’s turn to the example merely defers the dilemmas inherent in the arguments over a formal or substantive *sensus communis* from the particular under judgement to the particulars being called upon as exemplars.

April Flakne correctly notes that examples are of no use if they are infinitely stretchable. For sure, they must be interpretable, being alternatives to determinative criteria, but there must be a point of absurdity at which the use of a particular exemplar fails the test of communicability.¹⁵² The exemplar itself must be given scope to define the limits of its applicability; otherwise it will not possess the degree of resistance necessary to underpin communicability. This seems to lend support to an archaeological approach to the history of concepts. In explaining his own method, Agamben brings out the agency of signs. Signs carry signatures that limit their legitimate range of interpretations and use; as such no understanding is possible without the involvement of that which is to be understood.¹⁵³ Exemplarity as a form of validity requires that the ‘original’ must have some force, even if it will always to some extent be redefined by its application in the present. The Foucaultian method of archaeology uncovers the signatures lying in historical events and also finds material evidence to attach historical events to known signatures, ensuring that no concept can remain detached from its material sources and be thus mistaken for a free-floating cultural artefact.¹⁵⁴ The archaeological method in the human sciences can thus be said to be a defence against the misunderstanding of concepts as arbitrary labels attached to things by the mind, and an ally in the maintenance of a necessary reflective tension between a particular and its classification.

As the reference to Foucault reminds us, this is just as true in supposedly rationalised fields of endeavour as it is in the social sciences. Bowker and Star’s study of the

¹⁵¹ Agamben, *Signature of All Things* at 32.

¹⁵² April Flakne, 'Through Thick and Thin: Validity and Reflective Judgment', *Hypatia*, 20/3 (2005), 115-26 at 124.

¹⁵³ Agamben, *Signature of All Things* at 64.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, at 79.

International Classification of Diseases (ICD) shows how social and legal contingencies are naturalised by being folded in to classification systems.¹⁵⁵ For bureaucratic reasons, medical classification is made to appear determinative, as if a given cluster of symptoms can be automatically subsumed into a ‘disease’ that is universal and predefined by nature. In practice, medical judgements are reflective and rely on the very analogy to examples that characterise Agamben’s paradigm model and exemplarity in Arendt. It is because of plurality that classification becomes necessary – a list such as the ICD is especially useful, Bowker and Star note, precisely “where there are radical local differences in belief, practice, and knowledge representation”.¹⁵⁶ Classification is the imperfect and never-ending work needed to produce shared objects. Communicability becomes possible between sites because discussion can be anchored around these objects.

The emphasis placed by contemporary materialists on the role of the world in the composition of norms points the way to a reflective form of measurement and subsumption. Tim Adamson’s ‘Measure for Measure’, for example, draws on Merleau-Ponty’s later writing on the body to show how things already in nature are used as norms for the measurement of other things; measurement:

... is a matter of using something already present in the world as a norm for assessing something else in the world. Measurement is a matter of using some thing in a normative way, not using pre-established norms to measure things.¹⁵⁷

Adamson’s stated goal is to challenge the idea that (specifically human) cultural norms measure and define nature – an idea that falls short because it fails to acknowledge the role of nature in co-constructing norms. Using a ruler to measure entails placing a physical object in proximity to the item being measured, and the ‘units’ then applied, such as ‘x feet’ are traceable to hybrid things as well.

Measurement and classification, therefore, offer no threat to the lived experience that phenomenologists try to protect from incursion.¹⁵⁸ Adamson draws out one further

¹⁵⁵ Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Inside Technology; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999) at 87 & 106.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, at 141.

¹⁵⁷ Tim Adamson, 'Measure for Measure: The Reliance of Human Knowledge on the Things of the World', *Ethics and the Environment*, 10/2 (2005), 175-217 at 177.

¹⁵⁸ Bruno Latour, 'Trains of Thoughts - Piaget, Formalism and the Fifth Dimension', *Common Knowledge*, 6/3 (1997), 170-91 at 171.

implication of the materiality of measurement, which highlights a crucial aspect of reflective judgement. Because norms are things they are themselves measurable. The relationship is always *reversible*; as when a legal case judged according to a principle leads to the judgement of the principle.¹⁵⁹ In a footnote, Adamson summarises a reference to the *Critique of Judgment* that appeared in an earlier version of his paper, and does not drop the claim that Kant's reflective judgement prefigures the acknowledgement of the reversibility of measurement. There is no judgement that does not employ some more general criterion or benchmark; the particular feature of reflective judgements is that they deploy this criterion reflectively and not through a simple deduction.¹⁶⁰ To judge reflectively, any standard must itself be liable to revision, as must the choice of standard.

Standards arise from compromises of material, work, and law. The ICD provides an example of each. The influence of *material* is seen in the original design of the ICD, which had a maximum of 200 categories – not the number of known diseases in the world, but in fact the number of lines available on Austrian census forms at the time.¹⁶¹ The census form was thus a key actor in the decisions over how finely grained the classification system could be, and its involvement in the formulation of the ICD could be seen clearly in the outcome. The influence of *work* is seen in the categorisation of tuberculosis into 'confirmed by culture' and 'confirmed histologically' – defined, that is, by the method used to detect the disease in the laboratory.¹⁶² The influence of *law*, and of years of political and religious compromise, is seen in the extraordinary classification of abortion into '635: Legally induced abortion' and '636: Illegally induced abortion'.¹⁶³ Classification systems are always a "kind of treaty", obscuring the compromises and battles behind their creation; reflective judgement both demands and makes possible the retention of these battles as novel particulars arise that challenge the boundaries of classes.¹⁶⁴ Both the novel particular and the artefacts of classification can be shifted through reflective judgement.

Work emerging from Science and Technology Studies over the past two decades shows standards and classifications to be misunderstood if treated as epistemological aids;

¹⁵⁹ Adamson, 'Measure for Measure', at 180.

¹⁶⁰ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 400.

¹⁶¹ Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out* at 64.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, at 83.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, at 86.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, at 66.

they are artefacts designed, negotiated, and documented to allow for an acceptable level of commensurability between sites.¹⁶⁵ If the negotiated and material nature of classes is acknowledged, then the problems besetting Arendt's turn to exemplars can be disarmed. In practice, where exemplars are not shared by groups who require objects in common in order to anchor their judgements, new objects are created to allow for communicability; in the creation of these objects, the circle of possible exemplars is expanded. 'Boundary objects' can be constructed to achieve a local and temporary *sensus communis* amongst different actors with different viewpoints.

The notion of boundary objects comes from Susan Star and James Griesemer's study of Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, carried out to detect how cooperation is achieved amongst the diverse viewpoints of scientific actors. The authors of the study find that boundary objects are used to maintain identity across different viewpoints in cases where coercion is impossible or inadvisable.¹⁶⁶ Examples of boundary objects are: repositories (libraries and museums, in and from which various actors can use objects without agreement over their meaning or purpose), ideal types (maps and diagrams that are a 'good enough' abstraction from local objects to allow for adaptation to multiple viewpoints, coincident boundaries (objects that can be shared even though they are internally diverse because the interfaces are agreed upon) and standardised forms (outputs that enforce a similarity between groups with a variety of methods and purposes).¹⁶⁷ In each of these examples, new, shared objects are created to expand and stabilise communities across multiple sites. Boundary objects thus generate a bigger circle of possible exemplarity.

While consensus is never a natural state, it is therefore not necessarily imposed only by force. Boundary objects are placed at the necessary level to allow for communicability to be established without necessitating the resolution of substantive disagreements over the meaning and value of particular objects. Commensurability is thus constructed through the creation, modification, and use of additional objects. Concepts work to bridge a variety of exemplars – usually the work not of philosophers but of “communities of hackers,

¹⁶⁵ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 230.

¹⁶⁶ Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, 'Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39', *Social Studies of Science*, 19/4 (1989), 387-420 at 413.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, at 410.

technicians, and engineers” during “maintenance, upgrades, and integration”.¹⁶⁸ The important work of archiving this activity, to ensure that concepts remain traceable to the variety of exemplars that they encapsulate, is often not done because records of this engineering work are wrongly seen as not worthy of retention.¹⁶⁹ It is this apparently banal accumulation of erasures, and not some deep philosophical quandary, that increases the gap between concept and particular and thus subjectivises validity claims. Exemplars are hidden inside every classification, in the material particulars and the work done to build them. The apparent incommensurability of conceptual frameworks is in fact a valuable reflective space, as long as its material basis is recognised and documented.

In her (mis)reading of the *Critique of Judgment*, Arendt sees the concrete example playing the role of a schema.¹⁷⁰ The imagination can bring to mind examples that can then be used to understand an object, deed, or event. In so doing, it transcends the limitations of immediate experience. It is possible to differentiate between good and bad examples in Arendt, and Biskowski provides the key when he argues that judgement has ‘quasi-transcendental’ foundations in the “care for the world”.¹⁷¹ Examples can be ranked by the closeness of their attachment to a particular, by the concreteness of the analogy. Thereby, even if the audience disagrees over the meaning and force of the example (this, after all, is not supposed to be determinative, is supposed to encourage free play, and can only be a matter of further judgements and additional examples) the reality of the exemplary particular itself provides an object transcending the situation to be judged that is nonetheless shared in the manner of anchoring points of view. The bringing-together of an object of judgement and an exemplar can then allow for reflective judgement to occur in which all of the particulars enrolled into the situation are communicable and known to be contestable. There is therefore no need to follow Ferrara in positing any *a priori* shared sense of the good; in practice, where such shared exemplars do not exist, boundary objects are generated to allow for agreement over objects, even where there is an apparent incommensurability over meaning.

¹⁶⁸ Bowker and Star, *Sorting Things Out* at 109.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, at 111.

¹⁷⁰ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 84.

¹⁷¹ Biskowski, 'Practical Foundations for Political Judgment', at 869; see also Lawrence J. Biskowski, 'Politics Versus Aesthetics: Arendt's Critiques of Nietzsche and Heidegger', *The Review of Politics*, 57/1 (1995), 59-89.

Conclusions

While politics is not the creation of a state as a work of art, there is an art of political thinking that tries to seek the factual without ever moving to fix the identity of an individual or group. Reality is faced but the plurality of views is sustained.¹⁷² Art, Arendt rightly informs us, is only worldly if it produces a perspective on something, not if it attempts to express the inner self.¹⁷³ The crucial experiences of the politically-relevant storyteller are therefore those oriented towards a perspective on the event, not on the self – a witness gives us little if we learn only that an event ‘made her sad’, but reveals much if we learn that an event ‘is sad’. Thinking is crucial to prevent reality being overcome with habit, forgetting, and denial.¹⁷⁴ The breaking down of conceptual frameworks assists with the receptiveness to stories that reveal particular events and objects that are shareable and able to anchor a *sensus communis*. A particular type of story, and a particular type of reading, is therefore demanded. But the enlarged thinker also recognises that in the world the object does not sit alone and static as if in a gallery, patiently awaiting his gaze, but rather has its own dynamic qualities of motion, flux, odour and noise, its own dynamic relations to other things. To come ‘face-to-face with reality in the presence of others’ demands an acknowledgement not only of the mere presence of things but also of their active and ineradicable involvement in the enlargement of the mind.

¹⁷² Melissa A. Orlie, 'Thoughtless Assertion and Political Deliberation', *The American Political Science Review*, 88/3 (1994), 684-95 at 691.

¹⁷³ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 323.

¹⁷⁴ Rei, 'Thinking for Oneself', at 92.

4. Things and the enlarged mentality

An alternative reading of the enlarged mentality that does place emphasis on a world in common will still fail to enlighten the politics of present-day issues to the extent that it remains faithful to certain anti-modern tendencies in Arendt's thought. Things have generally been treated by philosophers as the 'other' of the subject, with an alternative position, in which things are "the condition and resource for the subject's being and enduring" persisting as a minority undercurrent.¹ Over the past 20 years the general neglect of material culture in 20th Century social science and philosophy has been recognised and begun to be addressed, especially thanks to the influence of Michel Serres and Bruno Latour.² This chapter will show Arendt's work as having an ambivalent relationship to this turn, implicating her thought in both the problem and the solution. As seen in the previous chapter, Arendt clearly followed "the phenomenological impulse to get behind abstractions to experience".³ But she also retained the phenomenologists' unwarranted prejudice against the artefacts of modern science, industry and technology, which she explicitly excludes from participation in the world of speech and meaning.

Enlarged thought as it is being portrayed in this thesis can and must listen to things that Arendt, under the influence of phenomenology, diminishes due to their remoteness from direct experience. A postphenomenological understanding of science and technology will be employed to counter Arendt's vision of modern science as a moment of world-alienation with one of science as the means through which natural phenomena can be brought into human affairs and made to speak. There is nothing disenchanted or technocratic about seeing from the perspective of the world because objects are *engaging*.⁴ The chapter will conclude with an understanding of enlarged thought that builds directly upon Kant and Arendt but caters for a broader range of perspectives – specifically, our instruments of observation and measurement. Disinterest is possible but it demands a lot of work – not the absence of interest but the careful and methodical application and adoption

¹ E. A. Grosz, 'The Thing', *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Writing Architecture; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 167-83 at 168.

² Bjørnar Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things', *Norwegian Architectural Review*, 36/2 (2003), 87-104 at 88.

³ Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) at 4.

⁴ Marres, 'The Issues Deserve More Credit', at 760.

of certain interests, tools, techniques, and regimes.

Technoscience, postphenomenology, and the re-return to things

Over the past thirty years, postphenomenology, technoscience studies, object-oriented philosophies and some strands of cultural studies have begun to redress the tendency of modern social science and philosophy to neglect or degrade the role of material, and especially technological, culture in the world.⁵ The most influential figure in this turn is the French philosopher of science Michel Serres, who defines the perceived problem succinctly in *The Natural Contract*:

We have lost the world. We've transformed things into fetishes or commodities, the stakes of our stratagems; and our a-cosmic philosophies, for almost half a century now, have been holding forth only on language or politics, writing or logic.⁶

Phenomenology has repeatedly promised to overcome the subjectivism of modern philosophy, from Husserl's return to 'the things themselves' through Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' to Merleau-Ponty's 'relearning to look at the world'.⁷ The phenomenological reduction to consciousness, however, and an overriding concern with the orientation of the human being, generally prevented this promise from being fully realised. Herbert Marcuse accused Husserl of bracketing action and practice along with the scientific mystification that he sought to clear away, and thus of prejudicing the phenomenological reduction towards the thinking spectator, and, ultimately, towards philosophy.⁸ Even when practice is acknowledged, however, phenomenology ultimately concentrates on the body and its orientation in the world ahead of giving due attention to nonhuman inhabitants. The concept of 'habit memory' in Merleau-Ponty, for example, tells us that we remember to ride a bike even after decades of not practicing the skill, and that we do this without conscious representation of the practice to ourselves. The role of the bicycle in the story,

⁵ For a recent sample, see Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis, *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology* (New Waves in Philosophy; Basingstoke England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁶ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth Macarthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995) at 29.

⁷ Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text', at 96.

⁸ Herbert Marcuse, 'On Science and Phenomenology', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 466-76 at 475.

however, is neglected.⁹

Heidegger's attempts to explain truth in terms of an openness to things perhaps comes closest to achieving a return to 'the things themselves', as explained by Graham Harman, for whom: "[t]he essence of [Heideggerean] truth is letting things be, so that they can appear to us as what they really are, without our violently reducing them to distortions or caricatures".¹⁰ This understanding of truth has clear connotations for a political stance of allowing things to resist. Heidegger even associates the beautiful with the object being allowed to appear on its own terms.¹¹ Other aspects of Heidegger's thought have also become central to the material turn: the 'thrownness' of being-in-the-world reminds us that we experience the world amongst things as users and not as mere observers, while 'care' is also useful in bringing forward the relations between humans and their nonhuman environments.¹² The worldly potential of Heidegger, as explained by Iain Thomson, is that in dwelling on things we may come to see that entities are "richer in meaning than we are capable of doing justice to conceptually", and in response we may approach things not to abuse them but with attitudes of "care, humility, patience, gratitude, awe, and even ... love".¹³ Further potential lies in Heidegger's etymology of 'thing' as *Ding*, or assembly. The achievement of this etymology is ambivalent in terms of including the object in the collective; it could be seen as not respecting the thing in-itself by insisting that it only works to gather people. It is also possible, however, to follow Latour and see the *Ding* as a gathering of all of the compositional elements of the thing including, but not limited to, people.¹⁴ The etymology of 'thing' then shakes off the idea that there is a set of objects 'out there' and separate from a "whole set of forums, meeting places, town halls where people

⁹ Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text', at 97. Olsen grants that Merleau-Ponty may have been turning toward a breakdown of the subject-object distinction with his discussion of carnal being, but this work was cut off by his death.

¹⁰ Graham Harman, *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing* (Ideas Explained; Chicago: Open Court, 2007) at 92.

¹¹ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 292.

¹² Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text', at 87.

¹³ Iain Thomson, 'Understanding Technology Ontotheologically, Or: The Danger and Promise of Heidegger, an American Perspective', in Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (eds.), *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology* (Basingstoke England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 146-66 at 161.

¹⁴ Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225-48 at 233.

debated".¹⁵ The same word applies to those who assemble because of their concerns and to what causes their concerns and divisions.¹⁶

Bjørnar Olsen credits Latour with popularising the work of Serres and thus instigating the most recent return to things in social philosophy.¹⁷ Referencing American pragmatism more often than continental phenomenology, the significant difference with Latour's attempt to promote the impact of material culture in the human sciences is that it explicitly includes in the domain of things the products of science and technology – usually fused into 'technoscience' in recognition of the inter-reliance of the two domains. What Peter-Paul Verbeek calls the 'classical philosophy of technology', exemplified in the thought of Heidegger, assigns a particular essence to technology as such, thus denying the necessity to consider specific technologies or the products of specific technologies, both of which this essence transcends.¹⁸ While Heidegger argued that the essence of technology preceded the modern sciences, technoscience studies show how specific technologies are always involved in coming to know the world. Latour, Harman happily reports, does not follow Heidegger in making distinctions between different types of entities, studying the mobile phone with every bit as much respect as the peasant's shoes:

Instead of Heidegger's solemn and mournful condemnation of empty modernity and its monstrous products, we find Latour happily studying subway systems, French legal decisions, ecological debates, police surveillance systems, and the price of apricots in Paris.¹⁹

Despite Latour's repeated criticisms of Heidegger, many critics point to the similarities in their work on technology. Søren Riis believes the differences between the two thinkers are largely semantic, and Latour simply brings out Heidegger's argument in a more accessible way.²⁰ Lynnette Khong contends that their projects are similar in regards to the denial of both deterministic and social-constructivist approaches to technology, and their desire to

¹⁵ Ibid., at 236.

¹⁶ Latour, 'How to Make Things Public' at 23.

¹⁷ Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text'; Bjørnar Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archaeology and the Ontology of Objects* (Archaeology in Society Series; Lanham Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010) at 9.

¹⁸ Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005) at 4.

¹⁹ Graham Harman, 'The Importance of Bruno Latour for Philosophy', *Cultural Studies Review*, 13/1 (2007), 31-49 at 34.

²⁰ Søren Riis, 'The Symmetry between Bruno Latour and Martin Heidegger: The Technique of Turning a Police Officer into a Speed Bump', *Social Studies of Science*, 38 (2008), 285-315.

break out of a subject-object dualism.²¹ More specifically, Verbeek adds, the black boxing of networks of relations, which become visible in circumstances such as the breakdown of the object, has obvious echoes of Heidegger's tool analysis.²² Verbeek suggests that Latour may be ignorant of Heidegger's early texts, and that the 'bad' Heidegger that appears in Latour's texts is the post-*Kehre* philosopher.²³ Latour has, however, in one obscure essay, given the early Heidegger credit for overturning the simplistic formula of humans using tools to control objects, claiming only that Heidegger errs in worrying that modern technology has left no room for "good old premodern *poesis*", which Latour identifies as fully present in and amongst hybrids.²⁴ For all his railing against Heidegger, then, Latour is actually not that far from accepting Khong's conclusion that the main thing separating him from Heidegger is the latter thinker's *volkisch* tendencies.²⁵ So as to retain the genuine achievements of phenomenology, the postphenomenology of Don Ihde is being fashioned by uniting the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty with this more recent technoscience pragmatism.²⁶

Arendt's *The Human Condition* emerges from the *existenzphilosophie* milieu, with the two thinkers identified by Verbeek as classical philosophers of technology, Heidegger and Jaspers, exerting significant personal influence over her thought.²⁷ Lewis and Sandra Hinchman describe *The Human Condition* as "existentialism politicized", interpreting Arendt as providing a phenomenology redirected to be sensitive to the action in concert and amongst a plurality that characterises the experience of politics.²⁸ Arendt's political theory emphasises the realisation of freedom and of the 'who-ness' of the person in the performative elements of speech and deed, with her identification of freedom with political action leading Martin Jay to align her conception of politics with the radical decisionism of

²¹ Lynnette Khong, 'Actants and Enframing: Heidegger and Latour on Technology', *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 34 (2003), 693-704.

²² Verbeek, *What Things Do* at 158.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bruno Latour, 'On Technical Mediation', *Common Knowledge*, 3/2 (1994), 29-64 at 42.

²⁵ Khong, 'Actants and Enframing', at 701.

²⁶ Ihde has recently acknowledged this fusion in his Peking University lectures. See Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience*.

²⁷ Arendt works through her own debt to existentialism in Arendt, 'What Is Existential Philosophy?'

²⁸ Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, 'Existentialism Politicized: Arendt's Debt to Jaspers', *Review of Politics*, 53/3 (1991), 435-68.

Carl Schmitt.²⁹ Associating Arendtian politics with the unconstrained sovereign will is, as Seyla Benhabib argues, to reduce Arendt's existentialism to a caricature of the solitary individual acting upon, rather than within, an external world.³⁰ Nonetheless, even the more nuanced understanding of Arendt's relationship to existentialist philosophy given by the Hinchmans only counters the decisionist reading by noting the embedding of the actor in a world of other *men*, making reference to Arendt's debt to Jaspers and her understanding of action as taking place in common and amongst a plurality.³¹ Arendt's political existentialism cannot be that of the solitary individual because the isolated free will is, for her, the epitome of the non-political. Even on this account, however, the external world is sidelined.

The object-orientation of *The Human Condition*

It is therefore not immediately obvious that enlarged thought is the most suitable basis for a political theory harmonious with this latest return to things. Arendt's most sustained consideration of judgement took place in the context of an investigation into the *vita contemplativa*, leading interpreters of Arendtian judgement to concern themselves more with the importance of a common world of words and deeds than with material objects. Students of postphenomenology and technoscience rarely mention her work. Even setting aside the very title of Arendt's last project, *The Life of the Mind*, the sense that the world outside of man diminishes in importance as Arendt's interests shift is encouraged by her placement of judgement as a third faculty of the mind, alongside thinking and willing, and the obvious synchronicity of this tripartite schema to Kant's three Critiques.

A more object-oriented reading of Arendt is possible, however, if enlarged thinking is read together with *The Human Condition*. Lawrence J. Biskowski is one of the few Arendtian scholars to give adequate attention to the significance of the physical world in delineating and stabilising the political realm; George Kateb is another who insists on "a common commitment to the reality, beauty, and sufficiency of the world – of the world

²⁹ Martin Jay and Leon Botstein, 'Hannah Arendt: Opposing Views', *Partisan Review*, 45/3 (1978), 348-81.

³⁰ Seyla Benhabib, 'From the 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' to the 'Origins of Totalitarianism' and the Genocide Convention: Adorno and Horkheimer in the Company of Arendt and Lemkin', in Warren Breckman et al. (eds.), *The Modernist Imagination: Intellectual History and Critical Theory: Essays in Honor of Martin Jay* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), 299-330 at 86.

³¹ Hinchman and Hinchman, 'Existentialism Politicized'.

‘out there’³². Numerous passages in *The Human Condition* attest to the necessity of a shared physical world forming the basis for judgement and action:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.³³

According to Arendt’s vision of a healthily functioning public realm, sharing a common world of things is essential to the worldliness of human speech and action because of the twin benefits of ‘every in-between’. In its power of relating, the metaphorical table brings people together, establishing a shared reality grounding a plurality of perspectives. Additionally, in its power of separating, the metaphorical table prevents people from blending in to an amorphous and undifferentiated mass through its existence as an object independent of purely intersubjective relations.

Arendt’s thesis of ‘world-alienation’ and her emphasis on the relating and separating power of the world is essential to a revision of the manner in which enlarged thought has been adopted in subsequent political theory. World-alienation is Arendt’s term for the state in which the in-between is removed – for her, this occurs in the situation of mass society, which:

... resembles a spiritual séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see that table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.³⁴

It is not necessary to adopt a critique of mass society, however, to register the lesson that commonality is a feature of the world between men, of which their judgements may differ widely. This stands opposed to claims that commonality is locatable ‘inside’ men – in shared thoughts, feelings, or psychological functioning. In the thesis of world alienation, rather than the plurality inherent in the human community being portrayed as a problem that needs to be solved by an appeal to an *a priori* unity, we find the unity of the human community being portrayed as a catastrophe that occurs when differing perspectives on the

³² George Kateb, 'Freedom and Worldliness in the Thought of Hannah Arendt', *Political Theory*, 5/2 (1977), 141-82 at 142.

³³ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 52.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, at 53.

same phenomenon are no longer of interest and people are unable to talk of anything but themselves.

In his *Defence of Things*, Olsen includes *The Human Condition* as a book attuned to the contemporary focus on objects, because of the significance that Arendt gives to the material world in providing the permanence and solidity necessary to allow for politics to operate in a world held in common.³⁵ For any contemporary attempt to conceive of political community, world-alienation constitutes a warning by Arendt that alienation will never be overcome by imposing or reinforcing the sorts of unworldly relationships sought by organic nationalist movements.³⁶ With the sidelining of the material world as an in-between, the imperative to separate and distinguish is likely to find expression in culture, values, religion, language, ethnicity and nationhood. Without the things of which it is composed, the intangible disappears too – thus the disappearance of the tangible causes a loss of separation and simultaneously a loss of anything with the capacity to gather and relate, with the intangible reduced to an empty discourse with no anchor in the world. ‘Blood and soil’ is then left to reign.

The enlarged mentality does not represent a new unworldly phase in Arendt’s thinking. According to David L. Marshall’s reading of Arendt’s (untranslated) *Denktagebuch*, her interest in the *Critique of Judgment* as a work of significance for political theory dates back to sometime before 1957 – the year before *The Human Condition* was published.³⁷ The enlarged mentality also plays a major role in Arendt’s ‘Truth and Politics’, an essay in which the resistance of the world of facts is upheld against ideologically motivated whitewashing.³⁸ It is therefore legitimate to understand the unwritten third volume of *The Life of the Mind* as conceived alongside Arendt’s development of a normative conception of political space as requiring the presence of, and partial deference to, things.

It seems Arendt would have agreed with ANT scholar John Law when he said “there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed about in a liberal polity”.³⁹ The capacity of things (and, typically, tables!) to anchor a commonality that both precedes

³⁵ Olsen, *In Defence of Things* at 140.

³⁶ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 256.

³⁷ Marshall, 'The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt's Theory of Judgment', at 381.

³⁸ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics'.

³⁹ Michel Callon and John Law, 'Agency and the Hybrid *Collectif*', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 94/2 (1995), 481-507 at 504.

and exceeds shared concepts is often highlighted in phenomenological literature, as in Alphonso Lingis:

The consistency and coherence of a table precede the analytic perception that itemizes its features and the shapes we can see of it and record in different perspectives. It stands there, consolidated in its external reality, and holds our bodies centred on it, anchors a range of points of view about it, and orders the approaches to it with which we inspect its characteristics and behaviours.⁴⁰

This reading of Arendt's phenomenological influences ensures that we do not have to follow Rudi Visker, for whom *The Human Condition* relies on an underlying assumption that the desire for immortality is an existential condition of being human.⁴¹ Placing in high regard objects that persist across generations can instead be seen as a political, rather than existential, imperative.

Arendt's politicised phenomenology does not only seek to recognise a plurality of human perspectives, but also to embed politics more securely in a world of things. Despite Arendt's insistence that political action *per se* takes place without the mediation of things, worldly events and objects perform a gathering role through their power to anchor discourse. Further to this, they form an integral part of the gathering through their continuing power to resist any intersubjective agreement that may form about them. Politics – being the sphere of action and discussion on and around that which exists between men, not on that that which exists in the head or heart of man – builds, sustains, and draws meaning from, this ever-changing world in common. One aspect of Arendtian 'worldliness' is the necessity to practice political judgement in a manner that remains responsive to the things in-between.

Things and objects in Arendt

Fabrication is an essential aspect of human existence for Arendt because it is the activity that builds the world that we hold in common.⁴² The problem lies in which things count and, unfortunately, Arendt's denigration of the world of objects limits the scope of her

⁴⁰ Alphonso Lingis, *The Imperative* (Studies in Continental Thought; Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1998) at 63.

⁴¹ Rudi Visker, 'Beyond Representation and Participation: Pushing Arendt into Postmodernity', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 35/4 (2009), 411-26 at 416.

⁴² Arendt, *Human Condition* at 165.

relating and separating world and lends an air of nostalgia to her work. Closely following Heidegger's distinction between the quasi-mystical Thing of the artist-poet-craftsman and the hollow Object of modern industrial societies, Arendt speaks of "a world where industrialization constantly kills off the things of yesterday to produce today's objects".⁴³ Arendt's political existentialism is therefore matched with a narrative in which the potential of things seems to be unrealisable under the conditions of twentieth-century European modernity. Despite the central role of the material in-between to Arendt's conception of politics, this narrative of a progressively disintegrating world of things can only lead her readers to the intersubjective realm, rendering human speech and deed (themselves often portrayed as increasingly rare or ineffectual) as the only meaningful worldly events.

The difference between a Thing and an Object in Heidegger is that the latter is both assimilated to, and defined in opposition to, a subject. The thingness of the jug lies in it being self-sustaining, independent, standing on its own.⁴⁴ Insofar as it is brought under prevailing forms of representation to which it can never truly belong, or considered as the mere culmination of a process of making with no remainder, the thing is an object.⁴⁵ The 'truth' of the jug, its thingness, can then only sometimes reveal itself as a shadowy, ungraspable absence. If the distinction between thing and object remains at the level of a discussion of the way entities appear then it serves as an essential reminder that every entity exceeds what human beings may wish to make of it, or the meaning they may wish to draw from it. The excess, or 'thinghood', of an entity is then its power to resist, which is neglected in anthropocentric thinking.

Being and Time's distinction between readiness-to-hand and presence-to-hand acknowledged that in everyday life our relationship with and towards a single object will vary along a scale representing different degrees of resistance – from the relative weightlessness and transparency of mere use to the weightiness and opacity, the conspicuousness, of the broken tool.⁴⁶ Later in 'The Thing', however, different entities come to be classified in a hierarchy according to which 'thingness' is a property of certain

⁴³ Ibid., at 52.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001), 161-84 at 164.

⁴⁵ Ibid., at 165-6.

⁴⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) at 95-102.

objects and not of others, and specifically not of mass-produced goods.⁴⁷

[Heidegger] aims to make as sharp a distinction as possible between, on the one hand, object, *Gegenstand*, and, on the other, the celebrated Thing. The handmade jug can be a thing, while the industrially made can of Coke remains an object. While the latter is abandoned to the empty mastery of science and technology, only the former, cradled in the respectful idiom of art, craftsmanship, and poetry, could deploy and gather its rich set of connections.⁴⁸

The thing becomes a gleaming diamond in a world of dross, “modest in number, compared with the countless objects everywhere of equal value”.⁴⁹ While Heidegger’s tool analysis provides an insightful and sensitive account of our everyday stance toward things, ‘The Thing’ betrays his prejudice against the objects of modern production.

In her own anti-modern moments, Arendt follows Heidegger both in distinguishing between objects and things and in favouring the latter. An account of the framework of *The Human Condition* is necessary to understand how Arendt’s denigration of objects vis-à-vis things fits into a narrative of industrialisation as having effected a shift from the world-oriented fabrication of *homo faber* to the life-oriented cycle of production and consumption of *animal laborans*. The key to *The Human Condition* lies in the narrative of modern history revealed in its final section, a narrative concluding with “the victory of *animal laborans*” – the victory, that is, of labour over work, of consumption over use, and of a care for life over a care for the world.⁵⁰ Life, in this context, is the biological cycle of growth and decay built into the nature of all things and shared only in the limited sense that all people have the same experiences of hunger and satiation; the world, in contrast, is all that transcends natural processes and is capable of taking on the stable reality of that which is shared in common and experienced as such in the strong sense of the metaphorical table mentioned above.

Thus there exists in Arendt an explicit evaluative hierarchy of objects and activities descending from the worldly to the unworldly. The products of *homo faber* – of work – are worldly because they embody the noble orienting ideals of use, permanence and durability.

⁴⁷ Graham Harman, 'Dwelling with the Fourfold', *Space and Culture*, 12 (2009), 292-303 at 293-4.

⁴⁸ Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', at 233.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, 'The Thing' at 180.

⁵⁰ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 323.

Work also has the capacity to reify and thus make worldly, in documents and in works of art, the fleeting events of action and speech that would otherwise not endure. The products of *animal laborans* – of labour – are unworldly because they embody the ignoble orienting ideals of consumption and perishability.⁵¹ In replacing craftsmanship with mechanised mass production, industrialisation places emphasis on the labour process and produces objects whose destiny is to be consumed as part of the maintenance of animal life rather than to be used as part of the human transcendence of mere sustenance.⁵² The products of labour are flattened to the point that any output of industrialised production is in essence the same as a loaf of bread – Arendt’s favourite example of an object of sustenance and consumption in opposition to transcendence and use.

Mass-production is then seen as incapable of producing things at all; rather it only has the capacity to churn out an endless supply of objects. Because of the totalising quality of their critique of modern objects, neither Heidegger nor Arendt are able to practice the ability to distinguish that Arendt upholds as the key to good judgement. But it is not necessary for Arendt to follow Heidegger in this respect. Arendt points out the importance of fabrication as the only activity capable of building a world, but also points out that this world building is useless if the fabricated object remains subjected to the rules that governed its construction.⁵³ The fabricated object needs to be a thing, weighing on men and not remaining under their thumbs. From her reading of Heidegger, however, Arendt does not hold much faith in the possibility of modern objects to possess this weight.

In Arendt, therefore, we see a normative demand for a politics guided by worldliness stymied by a narrative of modernity as estrangement from the world due to the incapacity for technical objects to play any role beyond that of mass consumption within the life of *animal laborans*. The sorts of issues typical of technological civilisation require that political thought pay close attention to modern artefacts and that technical objects are open to political judgement. Replacing the world-alienation thesis with Bruno Latour’s interest in hybrids, and his alternative narrative of an increasing entanglement with and amongst objects, can serve to keep the possibility of a worldly politics open.

⁵¹ Ibid., at 94.

⁵² Ibid., at 124.

⁵³ Elizabeth Briant, 'Hans Blumenberg and Hannah Arendt on the 'Unworldly Worldliness' of the Modern Age', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 61/3 (2000), 513-30 at 525.

Latour begins the argument of his *We Have Never Been Modern* with the observation that newspapers are now full of “hybrid articles that sketch out imbroglios of science, politics, economy, law, religion, technology, [and] fiction”.⁵⁴ These hybrids are the things with which politics is concerned. In our thinking, however, we act as though we can still separate “knowledge, interest, justice and power”, as if the hybrids do not exist or it was a simple matter to break them apart and divide them up neatly into separate domains.⁵⁵ The belief in the separation between nature and culture, which Latour analyses as the great modern myth, can no longer be sustained in the face of these hybrid monsters:

... when we find ourselves invaded by frozen embryos, expert systems, digital machines, sensor-equipped robots, hybrid corn, data banks, psychotropic drugs, whales outfitted with radar-sounding devices, gene synthesizers, audience analyzers, and so on, when our daily newspapers display all these monsters on page after page, and when none of these chimera can be properly on the object side or on the subject side, or even in between, something has to be done.⁵⁶

The one thing we can be certain of is that hybrids will proliferate, and it will become progressively more difficult to separate domains such as science, politics, and culture, as well as to cut through these domains with a single subject-object or human-nonhuman divide. At the centre of Latour’s claim that ‘we have never been modern’ is his observation that what makes the modern era feel different to those that came before is the number and complexity of the assemblages being formed. This is a difference only of size and of the degree to which human and nonhuman things are interlocked, and Latour is confident that we can extrapolate into a future of the collection of “imbroglios of humans and nonhumans on an ever increasing scale”.⁵⁷ What was mistaken for progress is actually entanglement.⁵⁸

The Latourian hybrid is proposed as a new subject for sociological work, to replace various forms of reductionist thinking, as neatly explained by Krarup and Blok in ‘Unfolding the Social’:

Over here is the man-computer-spreadsheet-office hybrid that we

⁵⁴ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) at 2.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, at 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, at 50.

⁵⁷ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 200.

⁵⁸ Bruno Latour, 'Progress or Entanglement? Two Models for the Long Term Evolution of Human Civilizations', (2000).

used to call 'bureaucratic rationalism'; over there is the vibrating man-virus-laboratory that we used to call 'scientific fact', as so on.⁵⁹

The acknowledgement of hybrids changes the scope and aims of politics. For Latour, politics is “the management, diplomacy, combination, and negotiation of human and nonhuman agencies”.⁶⁰ An object-oriented politics will socialise humans and nonhumans into the same institutions: the ‘parliament of things’.⁶¹ Central to the return to things found in Serres, and especially in Latour, is the need to accept that attachments with and amongst the material world proliferate through time – that human beings are increasingly tangled up with objects, and that this ‘hybridisation’ needs to be understood and managed, not denied or deplored: “Things will not get clearer, less complicated, more detached. The future will be more mixed, more complicated, more attached”.⁶² The political ramifications of this entanglement need to be addressed, but the promise of Arendtian worldliness in regards to bringing the material world inside the collective is never fully realised in her own work because of her tendency to counter a progressivist reading of technological production with an equally implausible regressivism.

World-alienation and populating the space between men

The narrative of historical decline from fabrication to labour that is presented in *The Human Condition* makes increasing world-alienation seem all but inevitable. With “the victory of *animal laborans*”, Arendt finds *homo faber* persisting only in the artist, who continues to produce worldly objects. Arendt rightly notes that the worldliness of art applies still to modern works, despite the fact that modern representations are often abstract, as long as the artwork provides a perspective on some thing outside of the purely subjective expressions of the artist.⁶³ Art possesses worldliness provided that it depicts an aspect of the world and not of the mind. Since the reality of any thing is established from multiple viewpoints, the artist’s ability to present and distribute a viewpoint on something – a task,

⁵⁹ Troels Magelund Krarup and Anders Blok, 'Unfolding the Social: Quasi-Actants, Virtual Theory, and the New Empiricism of Bruno Latour', *Sociological Review*, 59/1 (2011), 42-63 at 43.

⁶⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 290.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, at 297.

⁶² Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 191.

⁶³ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 323.

one might say, for which the artist is vocationally most suited and particularly well equipped to execute – is invaluable. Artworks do not need to be photorealistic to be understood as opening up the world, insofar as deviations from photorealism simply reflect the awareness that the neutral gaze upon a static scene is not the nature of everyday experience.

Even while defending the artist's role as fabricator, however, Arendt's argument moves in a direction that indefensibly favours nature over the artefact. While she promotes the gathering power of ancient works of all kinds, the modern artwork, in contrast, is admired not as an independent thing but only for its ability to reveal a viewpoint. Yet Arendt is aware that artwork, writing, and all other supposed products of the creative imagination are worldly in another way, too – artists and writers are ultimately reifiers and fabricators, inserting a new thing into the world.⁶⁴ Industrialised production does not seem to eliminate this worldliness to any significant, qualitative degree. While no individual Citroën 2CV may have the unique qualities of an ancient work of sculpture or a modern surrealist collage, the Citroën 2CV as a collective project and artefact of design, construction, and use is a different matter.

Margaret Canovan notes that Arendt's 'world' consists only of cultural, and not technological, objects, but Canovan neither explains why Arendt limits the contents of the world in this way, nor examines whether the distinction is justified.⁶⁵ It seems that Arendt shares with Heidegger the concern that the objects of modernity lack the qualities necessary to gather and separate, and her neglect of popular material culture therefore denies that the vast majority of objects have the power to perform the gathering and separating that she proposes as necessary to live together in the world. There is a ring of truth to this critique while Arendt's discussion remains directed at attitudes of consumption and use, which can be understood as 'existentials', in Heidegger's sense of how people experience what they are doing on a fundamental level.⁶⁶ All objects then have potential to resist, provided that the correct stance is adopted towards them. The same critique sounds an elitist tone, however, when used as a means for the hierarchical classification of certain entities, according to which 'object' becomes a negative appellation, and 'thing' a positive

⁶⁴ Ibid., at 169.

⁶⁵ Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* at 109.

⁶⁶ Lewis P. Hinchman and Sandra K. Hinchman, 'In Heidegger's Shadow: Hannah Arendt's Phenomenological Humanism', *The Review of Politics*, 46/2 (1984), 183-211 at 197.

one.⁶⁷ A preference for the artisanal thing is fine as a matter of taste but makes for crude theory, unable to acknowledge that successful examples of mass-market reproduction, such as the Penguin paperback, not only possess a stabilising quality in their consistency of design but also expand their gathering capacities through widespread distribution.

It seems safe to bring industrial designers, urban planners, architects, fashion designers, cabinetmakers, and all manner of other producers of worldly things back into the realm of *homo faber*. Like the artist, they join with existing things to compose new objects around which others can gather. The important lesson of Heidegger and Arendt's analysis is just that certain reductionist attitudes toward these things can render them speechless and unable to resist. Arendt argues, for example, that the world-building capacity of the fabricated object is only realised if it is freed from the rules governing its construction, and thus allowed to weigh upon men rather than remain subject to their mastery.⁶⁸ The distinction between the thing and the object should be seen as existential, not ontological. All artefacts will be fully-fledged things, regardless of the particulars of their production and distribution, provided their material agency is acknowledged. They then become part of the world within which any future politics is conducted, able to exert resistance in and amongst the *sensus communis*.

More disabling for a politics increasingly concerned with the human habitat, however, is a further distinction that Arendt draws in *The Human Condition* between the worldly products of work and the unworldly activities of the scientist. *The Human Condition* consigns the scientist to a sort of limbo via Arendt's classificatory scheme of labour, work, and action. Overlapping with the Heideggerean thesis that science does not *think*, Arendt believes that, despite their continuing capacity for collective activity, scientists do not *act* in her sense, because their practice is not characterised by the sorts of public and self-revelatory displays that, once recorded by the storyteller, produce meaning in human affairs.⁶⁹ This observation is linked to the cyclical nature of the natural world. Tuned into the cycles of nature, Arendt's scientist is perhaps closest to the unworldly labourer, whose Sisyphean exertions yield nothing more than another day's sustenance.

In diminishing the ability of the scientist to produce meaning, Arendt follows the

⁶⁷ Harman, *Heidegger Explained* at 129-30.

⁶⁸ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 165; Brient, 'Unworldly Worldliness', at 525.

⁶⁹ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 324.

phenomenological tradition, in which the priority of the life-world fractures the bedrock of objectivity that is essential to the rhetoric of scientific truth claims. For the relatively rationalistic Husserl, this meant that phenomenology was the ‘true’ science since only it could engage in the task of investigating this fundamental layer of everyday experience. In Heidegger’s more bleak analysis of the technological age, things are ‘annihilated’, even in the life-world, because they show themselves from the very start as objects of a technological stance. Because this technological stance is most evident in modern science, Heidegger refused the scientist *qua* scientist access to the world of things, claiming that science only deals with objects because it proceeds from a particular kind of representation. Things are never grasped by science because its nature is that of “not permitting things to be the standard for what is real”.⁷⁰ Arendt also regarded science as the manipulation of objects, not the production of things; akin to the labourer, and thus unlike the (fast-disappearing) artisanal worker, the scientist is incapable of producing the lifespan-transcending things that can stand in the space between men and stabilise human relationships.

Arendt’s attention to worldliness, and the demands she places on the stable things of the world to relate and separate, allows a person to distinguish themselves through the dignity of their opinion over a subject that is stable enough to assemble a *sensus communis*. It should be noted that Arendt often seems very concerned with keeping the human and ‘natural’ worlds separate. To draw on two examples given by Canovan, nuclear technology acts ‘into’ nature by starting new natural processes based on human theories, while totalitarianism treats the human world as merely a part of nature and requires the execution of natural laws onto human beings.⁷¹ Canovan thus reads Arendt’s emphasis on ‘world’ as drawing a sharp distinction between “the home that men have made for themselves and the natural environment to which they belong”, with the Arendtian ‘world’ consisting of the former, the mixture of artefacts and institutions set up to establish durability.⁷² At the same time, Canovan admits that the notion of ‘world’ is contentious, in terms of its relationship to nature and truth.⁷³ Arendt refuses to accept that revelations about nature can be the source of objectivity, because the natural world’s qualities of

⁷⁰ Heidegger, 'The Thing' at 168.

⁷¹ Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* at 81.

⁷² *Ibid.*, at 106-08.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, at 110.

perpetual motion and flux can never provide the stabilising qualities of enduring human artefacts.⁷⁴ At the same time, she insists that science is not a mere revelation of nature, but only reveals the human constructions that lay upon it. Since these constructions serve to stabilise the flux that Arendt worries will draw human beings into nature, it is fully compatible with the ‘world’ as Arendt defines it.

In particular, an understanding of science rooted in the phenomenologists’ preference for unmediated experience denies a relating and separating role to the products of disciplinary scientific experimentation and industrial and technological development. Science only becomes unworldly in Arendt’s sense if it aligns the achievement of truth with an escape from contextuality and concreteness. Biskowski’s argument that the problem for Arendt should not be science *per se*, but rather the search for an Archimedean Point beyond relativism and thus beyond the world and earth, is crucial in making possible the inclusion of scientific practice in the domain of ‘worldly’ activities without deviating from the privileged position of the world, and the *vita activa*, in the framework of *The Human Condition*.⁷⁵ The current nonhuman turn does just that, by going beyond phenomenology and taking science studies into account.

Technoscience and perception

In theorising judgement, Arendt follows the attempt of Kantian aesthetics to secure commonality by having the judging subject affected only by the ‘publicly available’ aspects of the object, but unfortunately limits the reach of the senses by viewing technology as an obstacle standing between mind and object. Objects of science are thus rendered unavailable to the objective senses of human beings and awarded no place in the constitution of a common world. Arendt blames the makers of instruments, the technologists, for detaching science from the sensual world.⁷⁶ With the introduction of the telescope, for Arendt a highly significant historical marker for the modern loss of the world, “the reading of an instrument seemed to have won a victory over both the mind and the senses”.⁷⁷ Thenceforth developed the realisation that instruments secure knowledge more

⁷⁴ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 137.

⁷⁵ Biskowski, 'Practical Foundations for Political Judgment', at 881.

⁷⁶ Arendt, 'Conquest of Space' at 268.

⁷⁷ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 275.

reliably than contemplation or raw experience. On this account, the direct sensory experiences necessary to know and to share an object in common become increasingly marginal as technologies proliferate.

The idea that science has devalued the senses is, as Peter Tijmes argues, somewhat unconvincing. The telescope metaphor, particularly, is weak because it does not deprive the senses at all but rather extends their reach. Likewise the microscope opens up a new world but ultimately opens this new world up to the human eye.⁷⁸ Nostalgia aside, therefore, there is no reason for the types of entities that can be counted amongst the range of things to be limited to those that happen to be accessible to raw sensory experience. Merleau-Ponty's blind man with a cane, for whom the limits of direct experience are extended to the tip of the instrument, may disagree with the romantic distinction being drawn between instrumentally mediated and non-mediated experience. The blind man's cane is the seminal example of what Don Ihde terms 'embodiment relations', in which the world can be experienced 'through' a machine as if it were an extension of the body.⁷⁹ The equivalent phenomenological experiment in Ihde's own work is the piece of chalk traced across the blackboard; it is primarily the texture and feel of the blackboard that is felt, not so much that of the chalk, which becomes part of the experiencing rather than part of what is experienced.⁸⁰

If the sensory metaphor is taken too literally, as referring to the sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste of specifically human beings, seen as bounded by the limits of the naked body, then our perceptive possibilities are needlessly impoverished. The range of machines and instruments of observation employed in science are of phenomenological import because, as Ihde argues, "[f]or embodied beings, embodied perceptual extensions are a necessary condition for the expansion of perceptually gathered knowledge of micro-features".⁸¹ Instruments of observation populate the space in-between. Alphonso Lingis makes the observation that embodiment relations constantly expand the array of things that constitute the world:

⁷⁸ Peter Tijmes, 'The Archimedean Point and Eccentricity: Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Science and Technology', in Andrew Feenberg and Alastair Hannay (eds.), *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 236-51 at 249.

⁷⁹ Don Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science; Dordrecht, Holland ; Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1979) at 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, at 7.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, at 77.

Radio telescopes, scanning electron microscopes, stethoscopes, ultrasounds, CAT-scans, radio-isotope tracers, DNA sequencers, and other prostheses have populated the real world of perception with myriads of new entities.⁸²

Ihde's description of the machine as capable of constituting a "transparency relation" goes too far; no entity is ever entirely absent.⁸³ Nonetheless, for practitioners in medicine and experimental science, these technologies are now mundane and experienced as ready-to-hand, with the things they reveal about the body and the world constituting the centre of interest.⁸⁴ If it is not to be arbitrarily limited to those aspects of the world made available to the unaided human sensory apparatus, a worldly enlarged mentality must be open to stories revealed through such technologically mediated perception.

The inseparability of technology and science, or the necessary role of artefacts in generating what we call scientific knowledge, has been among the most significant discoveries of anthropological studies of scientific practice. While technology may take the scientist away from a certain kind of direct sensory experience, instruments, as Latour points out, increase our sensitivity to the world; they allow us to pick out differences that otherwise may remain obscure.⁸⁵ Arendt's understanding of scientific practice is not entirely naïve – she references Heisenberg in a footnote to *The Human Condition* and demonstrates an awareness of the active role of instruments, noting that the object of observation and the instrument of observation are not independent of one another.⁸⁶ She dismisses the value of this observation, however, worrying that a pragmatic understanding of science simply prevents us from associating science with knowledge, leading us to turn inwards into the mind.⁸⁷ Subsequent technoscience studies are marked, in contrast, by an understanding of science as introducing real objects into the world.

To take one example among many, Andrew Pickering's *Mangle of Practice* details the role of the magnetic levitation electrometer in Giacomo Morpurgo's sixteen-year search for

⁸² Lingis, *The Imperative* at 216.

⁸³ Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* at 8.

⁸⁴ For a recent account, see Alex Faulkner, *Medical Technology into Healthcare and Society: A Sociology of Devices, Innovation and Governance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁸⁵ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 85.

⁸⁶ Arendt, *Human Condition* at 261.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, at 288.

experimental verification of the theoretically proposed quark.⁸⁸ The quark was theorised to be the elementary sub-atomic particle, the basic building-block of the universe, but its existence was not known but rather posited as a ‘best explanation’ for certain observed phenomena.⁸⁹ In an attempt to discover evidence of the quark, Morpurgo built a machine he called a magnetic levitation electrometer, which would be able to detect electrical charges suggestive of the existence of ‘free quarks’ – hypothesised to be isolated and thus detectable.⁹⁰ Of particular focus is the manner in which the activity of the laboratory constitutes the ‘mangle of practice’ of the title – a “dance of human and material agency” – a to-and-fro and back-and-forth of passivity, action and initiative between the machine and Morpurgo.⁹¹

Pickering’s case study shows that to rely only on one’s understanding of realities as they reveal themselves to human beings is to deny the value of the specific images of the world accessible to technologically enhanced perception. The quark – existing (or not) at the most micro of micro levels – can never be perceived except by a collective constituted by (*inter alia*) Morpurgo and the machine. Once it has been perceived by such a collective, the new object is able to play a gathering and separating role. Morpurgo’s experiments are set up in such a way that the quark is allowed to resist and thus show itself as active and real. The instruments of observation are crucial because they are able to report on this resistance, and insofar as the mind is enlarged to listen to their voices they are active participants in any judgement of the quark and of its meaning.

For Pickering, science should be seen as part of how we cope with the agency of the world of material things outside of, and irreducible to, to the human realm. And machines are absolutely central to this ‘coping’, as they “variously capture, seduce, download, enrol, or materialize” the agency of the world, “taming and domesticating it, putting it at our service”.⁹² Scientists like Morpurgo are constantly tuning their instruments in response to material agency; the ‘dance of agency’ then points to the tuning or disciplining of human

⁸⁸ Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) at 68-69. Notably, Pickering deliberately selects the most abstract of the sciences – physics – as his domain of study.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, at 71.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, at 72.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, at 79.

⁹² *Ibid.*, at 6-7.

agents by the machines in turn. As conceptual structures are tuned along with apparatus, there is no answer to the question of whether the human or material world controls the outcome; concepts are extended in practice, in response to material resistance.⁹³

Technologies are not only central to experimental practice in laboratories but also to observatory fieldwork and data collection. In *Pandora's Hope*, following a methodology he was at that time calling 'empirical philosophy', Bruno Latour reports on his travels with a botanical-pedological expedition to the Amazon. To derive the apparently simple knowledge of whether the Boa Vista forest is advancing into – or retreating from – a large savannah, the group of trained scientists interacts with tags, maps, notebooks, dossiers, files, folders, cabinets, card tables, cameras, photographs, alignment poles, compasses, clisimeters, stakes, topofils, cotton thread, blades, customised laboratory drills, mattocks, plastic bags, suitcases, pedocomparators, felt-tip pens, rulers, graph paper and Munsell calibrators.⁹⁴ Each of these material technologies of observation and recording, ranging from the everyday to the highly technical, is active in the data-gathering process and each forms a part of the human perception of 'natural' events. Even the collection of so-called 'raw' data is far from a simple interaction between human beings and nature.

Arendt's fear that a pragmatic approach to scientific practice will take us further into our minds assumes that the role that these worldly artefacts play in composing the space in-between men will never be accepted or understood. These limitations in Arendt's thesis of world alienation mean that her conceptualisation of enlarged thought appears to run aground in relation to political issues of an ecological nature. As far as Arendt's appropriation of Kant is concerned, this is understandable given that her urgent attention was directed towards the problem of humankind destroying itself directly, through genocidal means or with atomic weapons.⁹⁵ But the fear of world alienation can easily mutate into an ideology in Arendt's negative sense of a narrative of historical regression that promotes the ignorance of those facts that are only observable, in this case, through 'unworldly' rational methods. Ferguson sees this as a sort of democratic exclusion, eliminating the scientist from the *sensus communis* in the same way that one might eliminate

⁹³ Ibid., at 93.

⁹⁴ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 24-79.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 145.

the savage, the child, or the slave.⁹⁶ The conception of the *sensus communis* outlined in this thesis enables a more thoroughgoing critique, because it indicates that Arendt is only allowing certain types of things – most notably, political actors and great works of art or craft – to play a resisting and therefore gathering role.

A significant problem arising from Arendt’s selectivity in choosing what is and is not legitimate to populate the space between men is that much of the reality that is central to current political debate does not open up to human beings except through the mediation of experiments and instruments of observation. Recent studies of scientific knowledge reveal it to be neither pure rationality nor a mere opinion among others, but something more like:

interactive stabilizations situated in a multiple and heterogeneous space of machines, instruments, conceptual structures, disciplined practices, social actors and their relations, and so forth.⁹⁷

The early phenomenological desire to protect thinking as a task of philosophy shielded from technological rationality thus ultimately sidelines it. In conjunction with technoscience studies, phenomenology has now moved beyond the unjustified privileging of direct subject-object and subject-subject relations. Ihde’s work on the human-technology relationship in *Technics and Praxis* helps to bridge the gap between phenomenology and the anthropological observations in the technoscience studies literature. Ihde’s emendation of phenomenology respects the need to ensure that what we consider to be significant is not biased by the limitations of human embodiment.

Laboratory studies literature shows science performing the work to stabilise, and thus introduce into the world of objects of concern, the very flux that Arendt aligns with the life process and thus dismisses as unworldly. This is the apparent “paradox of scientific images”; the more instruments and mediation placed between the scientist and the object, the more ‘reality’ or ‘objectivity’ is attained.⁹⁸ Latour reads phenomenology as giving life to the world but also locking us into a human standpoint; leaving science to itself as a cold and inhuman domain best left alone, while the purportedly richer, meaningful world of intentional humans was glorified.⁹⁹ Science and Technology Studies destabilises and

⁹⁶ Ferguson, *Politics of Judgment* at 109.

⁹⁷ Pickering, *Mangle of Practice* at 70.

⁹⁸ Bruno Latour, 'What Is Iconoclasm? Or Is There a World Beyond the Image Wars?', in Peter Weibel and Bruno Latour (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (London: MIT Press, 2002), 16-42 at 34.

⁹⁹ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 9.

ultimately abolishes the distinction. Opening the ‘black box’ of scientific and technological practices, as STS scholars have done, reveals a mythical nature to this supposed technological stance and thus renders it amenable to hermeneutic and phenomenological techniques. By opening ourselves to the stories and speech of entities not normally considered as ‘subjects’ by political theorists, the space between men can finally be populated.

‘Nature’ and the enlarged mentality

At least in our time, if less urgently in Arendt’s, it is unworldly to pay attention only to that which occurs on a human scale. Political judgements relating to ecological issues involve an understanding of underlying processes that only very slowly reveal themselves to human experience, and regularly transcend the human lifespan. A narrow focus on human sensory experience becomes politically disabling when global warming presents a set of facts stabilising a flux that is revealed in “scientific studies of ice cores, ocean depths and stratospheres, beyond the range of daily experience”.¹⁰⁰ Denying a political role to natural events and to the products of the production and consumption cycle makes it less likely for political judgements to be thought through in regards to their environmental impact. It is equally important, however, that the appeal to worldliness does not eliminate the plurality of viewpoints essential to understanding and judgement, and this is the reason that a properly modified enlarged mentality remains an appropriate tool for political thinking.

Political theory’s suspicion of appeals to nature is well founded. When nature is hypostatized and seen as the ‘other’ of politics, the context inside which human concerns are played out, then it is inevitably also seen as an anti-politics and posited as the limit to debate or to political transformation; this can be seen in the historical use of terms such as ‘natural law’, which has often been employed to set the boundaries of legislative power. In trying to unsettle the political role of the appeal to nature, Latour observes that mentions of nature in political philosophy – often expressed as ‘natural order’, ‘natural law’, or ‘natural right’, are always strategies in arguing for certain reforms to public life.¹⁰¹ Arendt captured this concern with her notion of ‘rational’ (in opposition to ‘factual’) truths – those that proceed from hypothesis to judgement while riding roughshod over the actual state of the

¹⁰⁰ Constance Lever-Tracy, ‘Global Warming and Sociology’, *Current Sociology*, 56/3 (2008), 445-66 at 457.

¹⁰¹ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 28.

world.¹⁰² Policy-making in accordance with the dictates of a favoured scientific discipline – from eugenics to economic rationalism – impoverishes politics by delegitimising contrary arguments and demolishing, or allowing to pass unnoticed, any evidence perceived as inconvenient to the ‘truths’ revealed in the current state of the discipline. Natural science is not immune to this hubris.

As mentioned earlier, the initial context of Arendt’s remarks on the enlarged mind was her essay entitled ‘Truth and Politics’. It is significant that this essay deals with the question of the proper role of scientific ‘truths’ in the political realm, because the enlarged mentality is proposed therein as a politically appropriate alternative to the submission to scientific or religious dogma. Arendt’s goal is to preserve politics against its elimination by the sorts of pseudo-scientific truths posited by the Soviet and (especially) National Socialist regimes, while still holding to the distinction between a political judgement and mere individual prudence. For Kant, aesthetic judgement holds a uniquely public validity that separates it from both desire and duty: “[t]he agreeable has private approval, the beautiful public, the good universal”.¹⁰³ Kant’s observation that aesthetic judgements (and, anthropologically at least, cognitive judgements as well) demand the acknowledgement of one’s place in a community with other human beings is then adopted by Arendt in an attempt to defend the public nature of politics against its dissolution into partiality, on the one hand, and universality, on the other.

Arendt’s placement of philosophy against the *polis* on the basis that philosophy presents universal, timeless truths that do not allow for dialogue seems odd to us now. Eagleton has correctly pointed out that the reverse is probably true: the philosopher is hated not because he purports to know the truth but because he insists that there are no foundations to the ideas that the non-philosopher holds.¹⁰⁴ Only religious fundamentalisms of various creeds, and perhaps a very narrow range of modern philosophy, could be considered as rational truths in Arendt’s sense. Likewise, science has lost much of its capacity to stand as the outer limits of political action. At least in parts of the world where religion is not too greatly intertwined with political and military might, the narrative in

¹⁰² Arendt, ‘Truth and Politics’ at 226-7.

¹⁰³ Immanuel Kant and Paul Guyer, *Notes and Fragments: Logic, Metaphysics, Moral Philosophy, Aesthetics* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) at 528.

¹⁰⁴ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 48.

which science has replaced religion as the source of apolitical authority has been eroded by postmodernism, which has broken down the assumed gap between knowledge and power.

Arendt's view of science as unworldly and as having the capacity to shut down debate is also no longer convincing, taking on board a mythical image of pure rationality that has been debunked by studies of scientific practice.¹⁰⁵ Andrew Feenberg finds this same attitude towards science, as non-social and following a deductive logic, in Habermas, and traces it to Weber's division of modernity into 'cultural spheres', each with their own logic.¹⁰⁶ On Yaron Ezrahi's contrasting account, we finally come to the realisation in the late 20th Century that science and technology enlarge the number of controversies and questions rather than eliminating them.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, we discover that in any political debate each side can gain support for its own interests by advancing a scientific position.¹⁰⁸ The global warming issue and the continued teaching of 'Creation Science' in US public schools have shown the lack of power that scientists now have to set the boundaries of political debate.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps the only discipline that still makes socially and politically significant claims to rational truth is economics. Economics is the most influential contemporary example of an arguably scientific discipline that tries to discover a pre-existing order of things, including the nature of human beings and social organisation, and then impose it on the social world. With this possible exception, it is unlikely that the sciences are shutting down the political in favour of rational truth in Arendt's sense.

Latour, in contrast, sees "no alternative to the painful, political, composition of an ordered cosmos"; an acknowledgement that no laws 'discovered' by any science can stifle political life.¹¹⁰ Paying attention to the voices of specific things by regarding material objects as participants in the enlargement of the mind places the world inside of political judgement and acknowledges its mystery, dynamism, and the fallibility of even non-human

¹⁰⁵ Ferguson, *Politics of Judgment* at 106.

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Feenberg, *Between Reason and Experience: Essays in Technology and Modernity* (Inside Technology; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010) at 136.

¹⁰⁷ Yaron Ezrahi, 'Science and the Postmodern Shift in Contemporary Democracies', in Bernward Joerges and Helga Nowotny (eds.), *Social Studies of Science and Technology: Looking Back, Ahead* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 63-75 at 69.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, at 73.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion in relation to global warming, see Naomi Oreskes, 'A Call for a Collective', *Science*, 305 (2004) at 1241.

¹¹⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 264-5.

voices. It is thus a more politically sensitive approach to worldliness than the alternative materialist strategy of employing a 'hard' world as the fixed and stubborn boundary of social action. In revising the enlarged mentality we need not only to expand perception to include the instruments of science, but also to clarify the type of realism being adopted. Along with the fallibility of human perception, the fallibility of the technologies developed to enable perception of the natural world must be acknowledged as an ineluctable feature of the work of bringing objects into the common world. While acknowledging with Ihde the importance of including the perspectives of scientific instruments in order to give speech to the world, it is equally important to be sensitive to the variable faithfulness of this, and indeed all, speech.

The enlarged mentality is necessary because no single person (or deity) owns the essential standpoint from which to view objects and deeds, such that a common sense is necessary for any given reality to come into focus. As discussed previously, Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* promotes a reading of the *Third Critique* in which Kant's *ein erweiterte Denkungsart* is understood as having been imported into his aesthetics from his anthropology of human reason, and based on an awareness of the limits of human thought (the same awareness underpinning his critique of metaphysics) and the consequent fallibility of the isolated thinker. Arendt's space of appearance derives its significance from the fact that it is available to the objective senses; that reality is secured for an object by the common sense. However, the distrust of abstract thinking revealed in her exclusion of 'rational' truths from the political sphere leads her to an understanding of cognition in which shared sensory experience is the only means via which reality can be established.¹¹¹ Mediated perception is thus seen as a threat to our sense of the real.

However, as mediators of experience, technologies shape our access to reality in more subtle and ambiguous ways than is suggested by a theory of estrangement.¹¹² What Ihde would later call his 'postphenomenology' of the human-technology relation refers to mediatory agency as involving 'amplification' and 'reduction'.¹¹³ Instruments tell of different viewpoints on a given reality to those of an observer armed with different – or no

¹¹¹ Sandra K. Hinchman, 'Common Sense and Political Barbarism in the Theory of Hannah Arendt', *Polity*, 17/2 (1984), 317-39 at 324.

¹¹² Ewa Domanska, 'The Material Presence of the Past', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 337-48 at 342.

¹¹³ Ihde, *Technics and Praxis* at 21; without having made major changes in his approach, Ihde began to make regular use of the term 'postphenomenology' somewhat later; see Ihde, *Postphenomenology*. I am thus applying it retrospectively to his earlier philosophy of technology.

– equipment. Certain events are amplified while others are reduced, either intentionally to reduce ‘noise’, or as a side effect of amplification. In the language of actor-network theory, the instrument’s role is that of an active mediator, not that of a merely passive intermediary between the mind of the scientist and the events under examination. One of the key criticisms that Latour makes of traditional social theory is the tendency to (as he sees it) treat various entities as intermediaries. Intermediaries merely ‘carry’ something – a meaning, a message, a fact – without exerting any transformative power.¹¹⁴ If this were the case, they could in fact be left out of any explanation, since what they ‘carry’ is sufficient to do all of the explaining; only through a succession of intermediaries would the fantasy of pure representation be possible. Machines and instruments are mediatory, but this is what gives them world-revealing qualities.

Enlargement versus empathy

One aspect of the Kantian enlarged mentality that is rendered faithfully by Arendt is the distinction between broadening one’s mind and what is commonly known as empathy. Empathy is not representative if it accepts the myth that it might be possible to suspend one’s own identity. Melissa Orlic is correct to argue that, were such a capacity possible, empathy would be thoughtless in Arendt’s sense, an automatic adoption of the perspective of another without pausing for thought.¹¹⁵ Representative thought can also suffer from the opposite flaw: the imposition of one’s own viewpoint onto another situated person.¹¹⁶ Arendt’s revision of representative thinking thus denies that the enlarged thinker can be an intermediary. To imagine something as an intermediary is to either overestimate or underestimate the transformations that it imparts on its relations. Arendt’s distrust of empathy, compassion, and solidarity reflect a desire to maintain a mediatory (not intermediary) space between the enlarged thinker and each visited perspective and story. As argued earlier, Kant’s enlarged thought must be interpreted consistently with the high value that he places on autonomy and the use of one’s own reason. If it is not a question of considering the feelings or opinions of other people, what does it mean to, as Kant’s broadened way of thinking recommends, place oneself ‘in the standpoint of others’?

¹¹⁴ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 39.

¹¹⁵ Orlic, 'Thoughtless Assertion and Political Deliberation', at 691.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Arendt tells us that, when picturing a slum dwelling, we imagine how we would feel living there. This does not mean, she insists, that we think like someone who actually does live there, since his experiences would be different to ours.¹¹⁷ As Arendt had already emphasised in 'Truth and Politics', we do not empathise, nor do we merely bring our opinions into line with the mainstream.¹¹⁸ In fact, and here is the essential point, it is not only our interests and desires that are bracketed but interest and desire *tout court*.

Our interest in other perspectives lies in what they reveal about some thing. While broadening the mind does visit other perspectives, it does so not to see those perspectives as such, but to see an object in a politically responsible manner. The mind is broadened through exposure to realities, not to the feelings of others. The excellent politician does not have special insight into the desires or feelings of citizens, but rather to the "greatest possible number and variety of realities".¹¹⁹ This notion appeals because of its inherent materiality. We adopt an enlarged mentality not so as to 'feel' the dampness of living in the slum dwelling, but to vicariously witness the mould on the blackening walls and the broken handle of the old tin bucket strategically positioned to catch water from the leaking roof. The world 'opens up' not in emotion, nor in the privacy of introverted cogitation, but in *concreto*. By distancing itself from empathy, the enlarged mentality aims at establishing the conditions for communicability and the potential for persuasion by generating a shared reality while maintaining a plural response. The enlarged mentality to be adopted here is therefore both strictly formal (we do not ask others how they feel or for their consent) and wholly empirical (the resources we draw on to make our judgements are concrete, actively experienced, and traceable).

This partial concretisation of enlarged thought is the central move taken by Arendt to politicise Kantian aesthetics. Arendt's enlarged mentality is intended to establish a sort of political 'seeing', with which a judgement can be made that respects the intuition that politics entails a certain transcendence of one's personal interests.¹²⁰ Arendt wants us to be able to access other perspectives through storytelling, thus our capacity to visit other perspectives is developed empirically through exposure to a variety of stories. Elsewhere

¹¹⁷ Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy' at 140.

¹¹⁸ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 237.

¹¹⁹ Arendt, *Promise of Politics* at 18.

¹²⁰ On 'seeing' politically, see Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 167.

Arendt calls this exposure to stories “training the imagination to go visiting”.¹²¹ Standpoints are not attainable via a survey or *vox populi*; it is not opinions, neither in the aggregate nor in the particular, being sought. What the imagination requires to ‘go visiting’ is not a cacophony of opinions but a sensitivity to the ways that the world ‘opens up’ to others, a sensitivity that is attainable only by understanding realities, not merely opinions.¹²² Exposure to opinions is an important aspect of enlarging the mind, but only for what they reveal about different realities, not for what they reveal about the opinion holders. The partial response of a person to the realities they face are not considered as part of the perspective being adopted – they, too, are disinterested, and their interest in, and feelings about, the situation are irrelevant, politically speaking.

The imagination visits these hints as to how the world opens up to others, disregarding the elements of experience so central to Romanticism – feeling, biography – to focus instead on the unique perspectives that are revealed about some thing. Morally, we may be carefully attuned to how people ‘feel’, but politically this carries no weight. Arendt consistently warns against the role of emotion in politics, writing in a letter that “[g]enerally speaking, the role of the ‘heart’ in politics seems to me altogether questionable”.¹²³ This applies not only to emotions typically understood as belonging to the realm of personal affairs, such as love, but also to feelings that are often appealed to by political thinkers seeking an emotional basis for solidarity: compassion, pity and empathy. Like love, empathy brings us too close to others and their suffering; therefore bypassing the proper reference of political speech, which is always about the world.

Arendt’s admonishments against the political role of feelings are thus closely linked to her demand that political judgements are to be made about a thing that is shared in common; political speech occurs when “someone talks to somebody about something that is of interest to both because it inter-est, it is between them”.¹²⁴ The enlargement of the mind becomes impossible in relation to how people feel because feelings do not present themselves in the space of appearances where exposure to a variety of perspectives has the

¹²¹ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 43.

¹²² Arendt, *Promise of Politics* at 18.

¹²³ Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt, 'Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt', in Ron H. Feldman (ed.), *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 240-51.

¹²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963) at 81.

capacity to establish and enhance a shared reality. The arts of persuasion and argument cease to be effective in relation to emotions, replaced by a focus on the person and their purity; political speech is reduced to an exercise of mere assertion about the self, which can only be met by suspicion about the character of the person, the degree of their hypocrisy and speculation over the presence of ulterior motives.¹²⁵

Kant worried that the soft sentiment of sympathy would “get in the way of justice” because it was “likely to lead one to react to a single need while remaining cold to the suffering of many”.¹²⁶ That compassion may be directed towards a collective, rather than an individual, however, does not render it more amenable to political judgements – an oppressed group can easily become an object of suspicion. Any fear that we need empathy to spark momentum for change can be met with a straightforward objection reminiscent of the Stoic achievement of satisfaction through the control of desire. Compassion does not lead us necessarily to make changes to the world because emotion can be targeted directly: the suffering of the slum-dweller could be eased, perhaps, by leaving the world untouched and dispensing Prozac to the slums. The suffering group then becomes itself the object of political action. But only in a bio-political dystopia could such a manipulation of subjective well-being be regarded as a political act. Momentum for change is better established by facing reality.¹²⁷

Arendt gives us at least two further reasons for her suspicion of solidarity based on compassionate empathy. There is, firstly, a great danger that solidarity can glorify the sufferer – that, far from being motivated to embark on worldly action directed at relieving suffering, empathisers can come to believe that to ‘really’ live is to struggle. Paralysis, not action, can be the only result of a suggestion “that life comes fully into its own only among those who are, in worldly terms, the insulted and injured”.¹²⁸ The demoralised and destitute come to be seen as privileged, with obviously regressive political effect. Secondly, concern with ‘matters of the heart’ has, in the main, led the Romantic tradition to care more about the self than the other; exemplified for Arendt in the figure of Rousseau, for whom compassion “aroused his heart” but led him to “become involved in his heart rather

¹²⁵ Ibid., at 91.

¹²⁶ Kant, 'Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime' at 30.

¹²⁷ Nelson, 'Virtues of Heartlessness', at 88.

¹²⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (1st edn.; New York: Harcourt, 1968) at 13-14.

than in the sufferings of others".¹²⁹ Autobiography, rather than charity, is born; the mental and emotional health of the privileged, such as the purported spiritual emptiness of the middle class, is prioritised over the improvement of worldly conditions for all. Sheer intensity of feeling, the bonds of victimhood, and the experience of struggle, can arouse a perverse jealousy amongst those whose subsistence and identity are relatively secure.

Arguments against the role of passion in politics often stem from a liberal defence of the values of Enlightenment. Liberal theorists are concerned that emotions will override what they regard as the properly political faculties of reason, agency, and the neutrality of justice.¹³⁰ Arendt does not fit into this tradition of trying to prise apart reason and the passions, as she makes clear in *On Revolution*:

To bring the 'irrationality' of desires and emotions under the control of rationality was, of course, a thought dear to the Enlightenment, and as such was quickly found wanting in many respects, especially in its facile and superficial equation of thought with reason and of reason with rationality.¹³¹

Arendt draws a fine but recognisable line between her views and those of the liberalist or Enlightenment rationalist tradition when she tries to account for the role of the emotions in her own attempts at understanding. Replying to Eric Voegelin's review of *Origins of Totalitarianism*, she claims that the sense of indignation one must feel when describing something horrific, and the condemnation of the event that follows from this indignation, are to be 'threaded' into the description.¹³² Sentimentality is to be avoided, Arendt tells us, but it is also an error of understanding to attempt a 'pure' sociological or psychological description, with judgements carefully stripped away.

The type of objectivity being sought is close to William James' radical empiricism, in that Arendt wants to describe what is present without embellishment but also, crucially, without attempting to untether the event from its relations so as to arrive at the 'bare facts':

To be radical, empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, the relations that connect experiences must themselves

¹²⁹ Arendt, *On Revolution* at 88.

¹³⁰ See Cheryl Ann Hall, *The Trouble with Passion: Political Theory Beyond the Reign of Reason* (New York: Routledge, 2005) at 3.

¹³¹ Arendt, *On Revolution* at 91.

¹³² Hannah Arendt, 'A Reply', *Review of Politics*, 15/1 (1953), 76-84 at 403-4.

be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be considered as 'real' as anything else in the system.¹³³

Unlike pity, emotions such as anger and laughter expose reality in arising from the world, and to abstract them from experience is to move further from, not closer to, the real situation.¹³⁴ Explained by Latour, this means that we do not add anything to experience but also that we do not subtract anything – namely the relations and connections between things.¹³⁵ The relationship of the spectator to the event is left in place without being exaggerated, and the approval or disapproval of the spectator is treated as an aesthetic event to be given the same, but not greater, attention as any other aspect of the situation being described. Kimberley Curtis is thus correct to note that, even for Arendt, “the heart must beat”.¹³⁶ It may arouse us, and become the occasion for reflection as in Kant; and it cannot be eliminated from our judgements on reality, or from our rhetoric in persuasion. An excess of emotional solidarity, however, can shield us from facts.¹³⁷ Passion will always be part of reason, but passion itself must not be the object of politics.

Because enlarging the mind is not an intermediary process, because it is not empathetic, because it is not a process of aggregating the interests and desires of others, it is not necessary to limit enlargement to human beings. To face reality properly in a world of apparatuses, Ihde calls for us to use a ‘compound eye’ – to give up on the supposed link between reality and the directness of observation and instead to exercise a willingness to see through the mediation of a variety of technologies.¹³⁸ The technological instruments of observation and measurement that are essential to our understanding of the natural world do not have a will as that term is understood in relation to human consciousness, but they do have a standpoint – through the amplification of certain features and the reduction of others, the world ‘opens up’ to them in a particular way. In relation to the objects and issues likely to be constitutive of the contemporary *sensus communis*, however, Arendt’s anti-modern stance prevents these – what we might call object-inclusive – implications from

¹³³ William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (The Works of William James; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976) at 22.

¹³⁴ Hannah Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts on Lessing', *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 3-31 at 6.

¹³⁵ Bruno Latour, 'A Plea for Earthly Sciences', (2007) at 8.

¹³⁶ Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real* at 9.

¹³⁷ Nelson, 'Virtues of Heartlessness', at 95.

¹³⁸ Verbeek, *What Things Do* at 138.

emerging appropriately and fully in her work on judgement.

Conclusions

Proponents of an epistemic turn in democratic theory must face up to the challenge of elitism. Estlund makes clear his awareness of “[t]he moral challenge for any epistemic conception of political authority ... to let truth be the guide without illegitimately privileging the opinions of any putative experts”, and thus looks to balance individual, collective, and expert opinion in order to sketch out his ‘epistemic proceduralism’.¹³⁹ Acknowledging the insights of postphenomenology, however, ‘external’ reality should enhance and enliven politics rather than closing it off, as Arendt seems to fear. If nonhumans are considered along with their imperfect spokespersons, then they are not capable of shutting down debate, rather they “complicate and open up” processes of deliberation.¹⁴⁰ Acknowledging the mediating role of instruments, and the amplification and reduction structure inherent in all attempts to represent the world, denies the validity of any claim to the one true perspective on an object or phenomenon. No single scientific claim can provide sufficient certainty to stand on its own as a source of apolitical authority. It is the inscriptions that matter, not the field.

In the framework of the *Critique of Judgment*, such inscriptions are not introduced as argument-stoppers. Indeed, it is because they are acknowledged as stories about events, not infallible understandings of eternal features of the world, that nonhuman narratives can be added in a broad-minded fashion to the shared understanding of various standpoints on reality, so as to increase the strength and sharpness of the common world from which autonomous but mutually enriching opinions are formed. One reason the evidence for global warming is so convincing is the range of sources that are speaking: ice cores, satellite images, tree rings, and ocean temperature monitors, to name a few. To speak only of a possible consensus between scientists is to render mute these voices. In practice, the stories revealed in the inscriptions of scientific instruments can be ignored, just as those revealed in the artefacts of human observation are regularly pushed aside for the sake of political convenience. When object-things are given a prominent place in democratic ideals, however, the narrow association of political judgement with human intersubjective contests

¹³⁹ Estlund, 'Beyond Fairness and Deliberation' at 75.

¹⁴⁰ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 38.

and negotiations can be seen more clearly for what it is: a refusal to allow the world to resist.

5. Allowing the world to resist

The preconditions for judgement being outlined here – the sharing, that is, of an object in common and the maintenance of an autonomous stance towards it – correspond neatly with Bruno Latour’s call for an ‘object-oriented democracy’. This chapter will argue that current strains of democratic theory, with self-ascribed roots in Arendt’s application to political judgement of the Kantian concept of enlarged thought, have neglected the significance of the physical world of things and artefacts to their conception of a healthy political sphere. Despite their roots in the Arendtian ‘enlarged mentality’, and the necessity of listening to stories in order to judge from the perspective of the world, the focus of democratic theorists remains fixed upon the intersubjective negotiation of conflicting values and opinions. Allowing the world to resist means that what lies ‘between men’ – whether it lies in the domains conventionally called ‘nature’ or ‘culture’ – is to be respected, while acknowledging that all stories are accessible only at varying levels of always-imperfect faithfulness.

Enlargement versus consensus formation

Accepting multiple human and nonhuman standpoints acknowledges the world in its relativity without leaving us to the morass of a relativism of doctrines without any point of reference, thus answering Biskowski’s challenge to reorient *The Human Condition* so that it can meet the requirement of Arendtian judgement – that acknowledging relativism does not lead us to the view that mere strength of conviction is the only test of belief.¹ It makes little sense for Arendt to turn to the *Third Critique* only to embrace a culturally relativistic validity scheme for judgement, given Kant’s interest in exploring the conditions for the possibility of a subjective universality via *uninteressiert Wohlgefallen*.² Through an overemphasis on §40, therefore, Arendt goes too far, even on her own terms, in socialising the *Critique of Judgment*. Up to this point we can agree with Lyotard’s retort to Gadamer and Arendt:

Sensus communis isn’t *intellectio communis*, *gesunde Verstand*, good sense, sound understanding, that of communication through the

¹ Biskowski, 'Practical Foundations for Political Judgment', at 882.

² A similar argument can be found in Flakne, 'Through Thick and Thin', at 118.

mediation of a concept. Even less is it *intellectio communitatis*, the intelligence of the community.³

Lyotard concludes from this that *sensus communis* is only communicable in principle and revels in the discovery of the felt and indeterminable “concept’s other” preceding all understanding and thus revealing the irrationality at the core of knowing.⁴ In contrast, Jürgen Habermas retains the universalisability of Arendtian communicability as the groundwork for his communicative conception of politics.

Habermas reveals his debt to Arendt in a 1977 article titled ‘Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power’. From that essay it can be seen that Arendt’s redefinition of power as distinct from force opens up a crucial space in which contemporary theories of democracy are able to press their respective claims. On the Habermas reading, ‘power’ in Arendt is contrasted with Max Weber’s definition of power as the ability of a person or group to fulfil a predefined goal by influencing the will of another person or group.⁵ Influencing the will of others may very well involve the establishment of an agreement between individuals or groups, but any such agreement will be constituted with instrumental aims.⁶ Arendt, Habermas rightly points out, considers this to be a definition not of power but of ‘force’, which, for Arendt, is normatively a- or (more probably) anti-political.

The defining element of what Habermas terms communicative power, as opposed to forcible coercion, is that the former is oriented toward obtaining agreement, where the latter is oriented toward obtaining a goal. Habermas connects this “forceless force” clearly to his own project of uncovering a (then) universal or (later) historically emergent rationality underlying consensus-directed communication:

The strength of a consensus brought about in unconstrained communication is not measured against any success but against the claim to rational validity that is immanent in speech.⁷

Habermas sees his departure from Arendt in an insistence that the process of reaching

³ Lyotard, 'Sensus Communis' at 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, at 1 & 24.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, 'Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power', *Social Research*, 44/1 (1977), 3-24 at 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, at 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, at 5.

agreement includes the verification and criticism of validity claims. Habermas is concerned that Arendt provides us with no “critical standard”, no capacity to distinguish true and false opinion.⁸ Representative thought – the enlarged mentality – operates in isolation from argumentation oriented towards knowledge. This observation leads him to his famous critique of a “yawning abyss between knowledge and opinion that cannot be closed with arguments”.⁹ For Habermas, Arendt usefully detaches communicative power from force, but unnecessarily detaches it also from the activities of truth and verification.

Despite this criticism, Habermas makes clear the debt that his own work on communicative ethics owes to what he describes as Arendt’s idea of power as “the formation of a common will in a communication directed to reaching agreement”.¹⁰ Further evidence of the influence of Arendt on Habermas is found in his 1980 commencement address to the New School for Social Research. In this speech, published in the Marxist journal *Telos*, Habermas bluntly stated that he had “learned from H. Arendt how to approach a theory of communicative action”.¹¹ Arendt’s ‘rediscovery’ of Kant’s analysis of judgement is counted by Habermas as one of the “achievements of fundamental importance” to have emerged from the New School.¹² His account of Arendt working towards “a concept of communicative rationality which is built into speech and action itself” clearly positions her as a precursor to his own project.¹³ It is therefore reasonable to count Arendt as a seminal figure in the subsequent development of communicative ethics and its application in theories of deliberative democracy.

The Habermasian reading of Arendt depends on his linking of communicability with the intention of the speech act – on his account, to reach consensus:

As long as people talk to each other with the intention of reaching a consensus the very idea of common understanding, built into speech, ground claims for a radical equality which might be suspended for the time being but not stifled forever.¹⁴

⁸ Ibid., at 22.

⁹ Ibid., at 23.

¹⁰ Ibid., at 4, emphasis removed.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, 'On the German-Jewish Heritage', *Telos*, 45 (1980), 127-31 at 128.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., at 130.

¹⁴ Ibid., at 128.

Margaret Canovan has rightly pointed to this supposed desire to form a consensus, or a common will, as a distortion of Arendt's work. Modernists often criticise Arendt by starting from the same misunderstanding as Habermas and then claiming that because of her intersubjective focus she does not respect the cognitive elements of judgement.¹⁵ For Arendt, the world of objects, of words, and of deeds attains its sense of being from common sense, making the 'plurality of standpoints' essential to both cognition and politics:

If it is true that a thing is real within both the historical-political and the sensate world only if it can show itself and be perceived from all its sides, then there must always be a plurality of individuals or peoples and a plurality of standpoints to make reality even possible and to guarantee its continuation.¹⁶

Habermas is correct to argue that Arendt attempts to associate political communication with action rather than knowing, as sharing the contingent facts is a key to establishing the conditions for communicable judgement. However, it is most certainly not Arendt's intention to portray politics as the domain in which this reality is dissolved into a single will.

The claim that Arendt values consensus over truth is a commonplace of commentaries on her work. In Ferguson, this argument is advanced through an identification of *sensus communis* with consensus; an account of Arendtian judgement as a search for a unified *sensus communis* in which differences can disappear into a higher unity.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, this goal is seen as a problem in light of Arendt's stated admiration of plurality, which becomes on this model of the *sensus communis* something to be valued only in an instrumental fashion as leading to a more valuable final consensus. This appears to contradict Arendt's insistence that the world is impoverished if any single viewpoint is lost.¹⁸ Plurality has a much higher value in Arendt's work than any consensus of interests or of 'truth'. The facts and events of the world, "embedded in time and materiality", form part of "the acceptance of things as they are" – the starting point, not the goal, of the faculty of judgement.¹⁹ But it is also clear that the enlargement of the mind is not intended to work towards a consensus of any sort, even a consensus of opinion. The ideal of consensus goes further than Arendt's desire to sever the persuasive nature of political action

¹⁵ See, for example, Norris, 'Arendt, Kant and the Politics of Common Sense'.

¹⁶ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 175.

¹⁷ Ferguson, *Politics of Judgment* at 104 & 13.

¹⁸ Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics' at 175.

¹⁹ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 227 & 57.

from the coercive nature of force.

While it is also a common theme in her two books on Arendt's political theory, Margaret Canovan most clearly highlights the gap between Arendt and theories of consensus in an article entitled 'Arendt, Rousseau, and Human Plurality in Politics'. Arendt's belief in plurality leads to her denial that the exercise of reason will lead men to converge upon a single truth, contradicting the assumption of a whole chain of political philosophers, from Plato to Rousseau to Habermas, that it is only some form of distortion that prevents common rational convictions being formed.²⁰ Plurality is not to be flattened by the requirement to make a decision; opinion, judgement and compromise remain the key tools of political practice.²¹ Canovan's Arendt thus denies Rousseau's belief that men could be, or ought to be, unified on the basis of 'interest':

Whereas Rousseau tried to unite citizens in a single General Will, Arendt stressed the importance of a *common public world* within which plural citizens can be contained.²²

When it comes to action, messy compromise is the only 'procedure' that must be followed, and there is no rational or philosophical way of avoiding this without treading too heavily on the very meaning and possibility of political action.²³

While Habermas highlights the importance of plurality in Arendt's work in his 'On the German-Jewish Heritage', he is wrong to regard it as instrumental to an eventual consensus.²⁴ The plurality of opinion is a feature of the world that Arendt seeks to safeguard, not overcome.²⁵ Deliberative democrats are primarily concerned with the question of legitimacy, and in order to secure legitimacy they look for principles that can bridge an assumed plurality of world-views via an agreement over the procedures for communicating values, opinions, and other subjective states of mind.²⁶ Even as a

²⁰ Margaret Canovan, 'Arendt, Rousseau, and Human Plurality in Politics', *The Journal of Politics*, 45 (1983), 286-302 at 296.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, at 286, emphasis added.

²³ *Ibid.*, at 295.

²⁴ Habermas, 'On the German-Jewish Heritage', at 128.

²⁵ Margaret Canovan, 'A Case of Distorted Communication: A Note on Habermas and Arendt', *Political Theory*, 11/1 (1983), 105-16 at 108.

²⁶ The primacy of legitimacy is particularly explicit in Seyla Benhabib, 'Deliberative Rationality and Models of Democratic Legitimacy', *Constellations*, 1/1 (1994), 26-52 at 26.

regulative ideal, the goal of consensus threatens the necessary plurality of citizens. When the *sensus communis* is seen as the basis for sound political judgement, rather than the outcome of a negotiation over previously constituted judgements aimed at consensus, Arendt's dual focus on common sense and plurality can be reconciled. Ferguson's claim that Arendt errs in seeking a unified *sensus communis* in which difference disappears can therefore be challenged. After establishing an object in common, intersubjective persuasion becomes important, but only because it has been rendered meaningful by the shared object of judgement.

The difference between the Arendtian enlarged mentality and any of the various attempts to theorise a general or public decision procedure must therefore be emphasised. Adopting an enlarged mentality does not aid in the formation of a 'common will' at all, but rather seeks to provide a common object around which a plurality of opinions can be formed – opinions that are responsible and respected because of their basis in the shared material reality of objects and events. When the imagination 'goes visiting', it (ideally) finds only the objective-sensory aesthetic, the perspective of the world – the story stripped of personal, incommunicable meaning and emotion and therefore shared and communicable in the Kantian fashion. Opinion, the perspective of the self, emerges from this vicarious experience and manifests judgement if spoken or acted upon. Meanings and proposals for action are established as if all were situated in the privileged position of being simultaneously united and separated by the object-of-the-world in question. Challenges to the identity of the object (as opposed to its meaning and the question of what-is-to-be-done) can only be met by re-visiting – just as a scientist returns to his instruments if two differently mediated observations of a natural event cannot be reconciled.

In the earlier critical discussion of communicability, we saw that Kant wants to claim that the disinterest of our satisfaction in an object guarantees the universal communicability of that satisfaction, and that Arendt shifts this argument to insist that our satisfaction is reflected upon based on the degree to which we believe it to be wise to publicise amongst a substantive human community. Both of these readings of intersubjectivity leave the item of interest in a helplessly passive state, thus leading us to the aporias of formal versus substantive *sensus communis*. A reading of Arendt that promotes a consensus orientation is an understandable response, but to be consistent with the demand for plurality, communicability must reflect the notion that debates over the merits of an

object are grounded in some prior agreement over its identity, which is best accounted for by acknowledging its power to resist. The bracketing of interest and desire that dominate Kant's discussion of the possibility and nature of a pure judgement of beauty secure nothing more or less than a guarantee that when a community discusses the worth of some thing, it is the thing that is being discussed, not the judge and not the community. Opinions are then communicable, autonomous yet meaningful to others, because discussion takes place in a gathering around the common thing. Understood as an agreement over the object of concern, communicability allows for the preservation of a plurality of responses and does not require that the interlocutors are concerned with attaining a consensus judgement, even as an ideal.

Enlargement versus political morality

In line with her interest in developing a deliberative ethics, Seyla Benhabib identifies her conception of enlarged thought with a "dialogic procedure".²⁷ Such a project of grounding a procedural ethics in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* may be perfectly valid, but should not be confused with the very different project of politicising the enlarged mentality. Of course caring for the self and caring for others are both necessary, even urgent; they form the heart of religious and moral traditions. Morally, we may indeed want to avoid upsetting a person's feelings, insulting their values, or preventing them from realising their subjective desires. Mining the *Third Critique* unearths little of value, however, if it retrieves only a variant of preference utilitarianism. It is in dark, and thus a-political, times that people will gather "in order to arrive at mutual understandings with their fellow men without regard for the world that lies between them".²⁸ For the purposes of political judgement, we want only to know what anyone would see, smell and hear from a person's unique position in the world; the sharing of perspectives on the world, not of subjective feelings about it, is the true political value of the enlarged mentality.

The enlarged mentality cannot ground a discourse ethic. Stating an intention to "think with Arendt against Arendt", Seyla Benhabib develops Arendt's ideas on judgement in such a way as to conceive of the enlarged mentality as a moral faculty, a possibility

²⁷ Seyla Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Arendt's Thought', *Political Theory*, 16/1 (1988), 29-51 at 48.

²⁸ Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times' at 12.

Benhabib regards Arendt as having overlooked because of her insistence on separating politics and morals.²⁹ We can grant to Benhabib the feasibility of working out a conception of moral judgement built on Kant's philosophy of reflective judgement; she rightly argues that moral judgement, like Kantian aesthetics, is reflective and exercises the imagination.³⁰ Arendt, however, travels on an entirely different train of thought in relation to morality – as Benhabib acknowledges, she emphasises 'harmony' as a moral principle, and 'plurality' as a political one.³¹ Further, Arendt does not place morality at the service of politics, but rather sees it as a backstop for times when politics is failing or impossible.

Benhabib attempts to present Arendt's neglect of the enlarged mentality as a moral resource by tracing her concern with judgement to the puzzle of differentiating between right and wrong in the wake of her observations about Eichmann's 'banality'.³² For her part, however, Arendt is well aware that Eichmann as a moral actor had no recourse to the enlargement of the mind, acting as he did in a depoliticised environment. While Benhabib wants to rethink judgement as the "moral foundations of politics", it is more in line with Arendt's intentions to regard moral judgement as the last resort of human decency, available at those moments when the world has lost its gathering power and a person can call only on their inner resources. This is why, when it came to pondering the possibility of moral judgement in the context of a breakdown of common sense, Arendt emphasised the faculty of thought and the harmony of the two-in-one over the plurality of sharing a world in common.

For Arendt, morality always begins with the discourse with the Self.³³ In her response to the banality of evil in the essay 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', Arendt gives us two Socratic axioms that are of significance to moral judgement. The first is 'it is better to be wronged than to do wrong'. The second is the equivalent of Kant's third maxim of the common human understanding: the principle of not contradicting oneself. These inner moral resources become significant when judgements must be made amidst political circumstances so depraved as to make enlarging the mind impossible – thinking is

²⁹ Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics', at 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, at 34-5.

³¹ Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996) at 190.

³² Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics', at 31.

³³ Ursula Ludz, 'Arendt's Observations and Thoughts on Ethical Questions', *Social Research*, 74/3 (2007), 797-810 at 803.

then the only faculty that the individual has to fall back upon. While engaged in thought the self engages in a soundless dialogue, which brings a divided self into presence and thus actualises a sort of plurality within the solitary mind. The evildoer is he who is unable or unwilling to call himself to account in this manner.³⁴ Arendt hopes that an injunction arising from divided consciousness may at least prevent thinkers from joining in when everybody else is blindingly following destructive norms and the opportunity to see a common object from multiple standpoints has been lost. Such an inward turn has two pertinent features – firstly, it does not rely on sympathy, or indeed any insight into others’ subjective feelings; secondly, it is external to politics, thus not contradicting Arendt’s emphasis on the worldliness of political judgement.

According to Arendt, there are two problems with thinking of good judgement in terms of conscience. Firstly, it entails an appeal to an unworldly authority, something above the human. Secondly, conscience appears as a command rather than a judgement, demanding universal agreement and binding the will.³⁵ These two problems both place judgement outside of politics, motivating Arendt’s turn to the sense of taste, usually thought of as belonging to aesthetics, as the form of a properly political judgement. To think in Arendtian terms is often to *not* obey one’s inner ‘voice of conscience’, but rather to engage with it, interrogate it, and, if necessary, dispense with it. As Max Deutscher makes clear, to think is to “question even that inner voice that tells us what we should do”.³⁶ Judges at Nuremberg were asked to consider the actions of people who were forced to tell right from wrong without any resources except for their own private judgement.³⁷ A ‘right’ decision would be one taken at odds with the opinion of almost everyone they conversed with. Eichmann is Arendt’s exemplar of non-thinking: ‘listening’ only to the conscience arising from the morality of a thoughtless surrounding culture. Arendt’s appeal to Socrates’ statement about not wanting to be out of harmony with the self represents for Terada Rei a “perverse self-interest” that can become significant when no public self exists and the person is left with his or her own thought as the only resource.³⁸ In a depraved society, one’s own peace of mind is all that is left to give hope for defiance.

³⁴ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 191.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, at 215.

³⁶ Max Deutscher, *Judgment after Arendt* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) at 67.

³⁷ Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* at 294.

³⁸ Rei, "Thinking for Oneself", at 87.

The danger that Arendt seeks to warn us against is that of knowing the story in advance of any encounter with the facts.³⁹ Since aesthetics is so intensively related to cognition in general, and especially so in Arendt's Heideggerian reading of Kant, the interest in aesthetic judgement is the result of an interest in the apprehension of facts. Anything that prevents us from facing up to the world is questionable; even statistics can serve to obscure fact by presenting the average as the factual.⁴⁰ Rei explains that the ethical horizon of Arendt's work on judgement is to accept unpleasant realities so as to defy them, rather than to deny unpleasant realities so as to accept them.⁴¹ Sometimes the only way to be sensitive to facts is to stand alone, and on these occasions it may seem that the person most sensitive to the world is eccentric in the extreme. This differs significantly from Benhabib's deliberative conception of morality, because in politics this is very much, as Arendt would have it, a last resort – a final attempt to find plurality in the self when it has been sucked out of the surrounding culture.

Enlargement versus agonism

Theorists of agonistic democracy begin from the acknowledgement that the very realisation of deliberative democracy would dissolve the plurality that it takes from Arendt as a premise.⁴² They therefore call for us to “give up on the dream of a rational consensus”.⁴³ Chantal Mouffe proceeds from a Wittgensteinian critique of Habermasian deliberative democracy to argue that the distinction between the procedural and the substantial is unsustainable, because procedures are always practices embedded in a prior agreement at the level of language and ‘forms of life’; the regulative ideal of a moral consensus can then silence voices by sidelining them in the very definition of the procedures for consensus formation.⁴⁴ Mouffe sees a certain form of life being privileged by models of deliberative democracy, and consensus only made possible by the bracketing of those aspects of other

³⁹ Nelson, 'Virtues of Heartlessness', at 94.

⁴⁰ Ibid., at 97.

⁴¹ Rei, 'Thinking for Oneself', at 86.

⁴² Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, 66/5 (1999), 745-58 at 757.

⁴³ Chantal Mouffe, 'For an Agonistic Model of Democracy', in Noël O'Sullivan (ed.), *Political Theory in Transition* (London: Routledge, 2000), 113-30 at 124.

⁴⁴ Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', at 749.

forms of life that do not place a high value on impartial rationality and the attainment of a 'moral point of view'.⁴⁵ The response of agonists is to seek not the elimination of power relations as such but the shifting of relations of antagonism (the other as enemy) into relations of agonism (the other as adversary).⁴⁶ The antagonism is not eradicated but 'tamed'; a previously moral relationship becomes political.⁴⁷

Recognising that Habermas' appropriation of the enlarged mentality denies the emphasis on plurality so central to Arendt's thought, theorists in favour of agonistic models of democracy also turn to Arendt's work. Emphasising Arendt's Nietzschean side, Bonnie Honig uncovers a conception of politics as "an always unfinished business".⁴⁸ Honig's Arendt is an admirer of the *agon*, wishing to keep the contest alive amidst the claims to domination of any single "idea, truth, essence, individual, or institution".⁴⁹ While deliberative democracy is ideally tuned towards the reaching of consensus through mechanisms aimed at ensuring the balanced airing of the maximum possible number of affected voices, a more radical normative image of democracy is drawn from Arendt by agonistic democrats:

[Arendt's] is not the expressive politics of community, dialogue, deliberation, or consensus that some of her readers mistake it to be. It is a *virtù* theory of politics, an activist, democratic politics of contest, resistance, and amendment.⁵⁰

The agonistic approach to representative thinking has the advantage of acknowledging the importance of maintaining plurality. Agonists often take from Arendt the idea that identities are constituted in and amongst political action, and thus they cannot be 'fixed' outside of politics itself.⁵¹ Personal and institutional identities are constantly in flux, and necessarily so if a political space is to remain open.

⁴⁵ Mouffe, 'For an Agonistic Model of Democracy' at 124.

⁴⁶ Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', at 755; Chantal Mouffe, 'For an Agonistic Public Sphere', in Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen (eds.), *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 123-32 at 126.

⁴⁷ Mouffe, 'For an Agonistic Public Sphere' at 130.

⁴⁸ Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Contestations; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) at 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, at 116.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, at 77.

⁵¹ Mark Wenham, 'Agonistic Pluralism and Three Archetypal Forms of Politics', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2 (2003), 165-86 at 168.

Hanna Pitkin is one of many commentators to have expressed concern that the value of agonistic competition is so strong in Arendt as to promote self-aggrandisement or even violence.⁵² This critique stems from Arendt's desire to ensure that there is no necessary path from motive or cause to action. Arendt's infamous refusal to accept social and economic issues as 'objects' of political speech leads Pitkin to consider the question of what, exactly, Arendt's political actors are talking of and passing judgement about.⁵³ In Aristotle, agonism is tempered by the nomination of justice as the good toward which politics is oriented.⁵⁴ On a strongly agonistic reading of Arendt, with no such orienting figure, all that is left, it seems, is a 'machismo' vision of "little boys clamouring for attention", seeking public affirmation of their bravery and importance without a care for justice.⁵⁵ It was not Arendt's intention to promote an idea of a public sphere of pure self-display, but the desire to protect politics from being determinable by anything outside of it can give rise to an image of political action as good only in- and for-itself.

In her article 'Justice', Pitkin suggests that the perhaps exaggerated emphasis on the autonomy of action is counter-balanced by Arendt's insistence that objects gather the public and order their concerns.⁵⁶ On this reading, it is not certain subject matters that are kept out of public discussion, but rather certain attitudes – those of the labourer (process) and the craftsman (making). Discouraging these attitudes is an attempt to allow the common world to orient political action without treading so heavily over it that it cannot be experienced as shared. The problem with thinking economics, for example, in terms of process or making is that the particular objects making up the real-world economy will be overwhelmed by theories of how economies function.

The enlarged mentality is frequently aligned with Nietzschean perspectivism to place emphasis on its agonistic tendencies. Visiting other perspectives adds another viewpoint to one's own – adding to but not subtracting from one's current understanding of a feature of the world. Nietzschean political theorists like to see this as an opportunity to transfigure identities, as in Orlie, for whom:

⁵² Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, 'Justice: On Relating Private and Public', *Political Theory*, 9/3 (1981), 327-52 at 341.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, at 337.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, at 339.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, at 338.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, at 342.

[p]olitical deliberation offers the world a modified view of another location mixed with 'who' you are, thus transfiguring 'whom' you and they appear to be, as well as 'whom' you and they are becoming.⁵⁷

This concern with the identity of the thinker has the virtue of preventing political contestation from being a clash of fixed identities. However it maintains our focus on the identity of the judge rather than on the issue, event, or object of concern. This focus can be seen in Honig's highlighting of the capacity to make promises as the stabilising component of Arendt's agonistic political sphere.⁵⁸ Even if it succeeds in taming antagonism and preventing open violence, an agonism that concentrates so much of its attention on the play or contest among the actors that it does not pay attention to the things under contestation is going to be left with a barely civilised battle between different identities and interests, a mere "Machiavellian cleverness" without any sense of sharing a common world in between.⁵⁹ Worse, it may be likely to give rise to even more vociferous appeals to 'hard' facts, in order to settle debate once and for all.

Jacques Rancière is another prominent political theorist who derives his appreciation for the agonistic aspects of politics from his reading of Arendt. While it departs from deliberative and contractual political philosophies in important ways, Rancière's theory of disagreement has also been criticised for lacking materiality.⁶⁰ Politics according to Rancière is about disagreement, and interlocutors in a state of disagreement "both understand and do not understand the same thing by the same words".⁶¹ The thing in question is, however, a concept, and thus inside of language.⁶² Jane Bennett, the theorist of 'thing-power', argues that while Rancière does not want to include nonhumans in his conception of the political, it seems perfectly possible within his framework.⁶³ One reason that the principle of politics cannot be found, as in Habermas, via the pragmatics of

⁵⁷ Orlic, 'Thoughtless Assertion and Political Deliberation', at 692.

⁵⁸ Bonnie Honig, 'The Politics of Agonism: A Critical Response to 'Beyond Good and Evil: Arendt, Nietzsche and the Aestheticization of Political Action' by Dana R. Villa', *Political Theory*, 21/3 (1993), 528-33 at 531.

⁵⁹ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 54.

⁶⁰ Braun and Whatmore, 'The Stuff of Politics' at xxiii.

⁶¹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) at xi.

⁶² *Ibid.*, at x.

⁶³ Bennett, 'In Parliament with Things' at 139; the argument can also be found in the more recent Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

speech, is because parties to political discussion are representing a third person – often a group such as ‘the workers’. The political speech act designates this group as worthy of speech, appeals to them as a group and thus plays a role in defining group identity, and sets the speaker up as a valid representative. Rancière thus holds that political interaction is characterised by a lack of agreement over who counts as a party to the discussion; politics thus occurs in the (ongoing) moment of the constitution of the *demos*. The *demos* acts in both negating and rupturing ways; in negating it “refuses, resists, dissents, objects, repudiates and rejects” – all verbs that Bennett insists are typical of nonhuman things.⁶⁴ The exclusion of the nonhuman is part of a larger exclusion of beings on the basis of linguistic competence:

In defining the *demos* as a linguistically competent, though currently unrecognised practitioner of human language, Rancière both demeans the non-linguistic elements of human expression and excludes nonhumans from political participation.⁶⁵

On his own terms, Rancière seems to be engaging in an act of political speech in designating only language users as worthy of speech, especially since he accepts that their voices enter politics through spokespersons.

Serres argues that this philosophy engenders an understanding of politics in which the politician can be “splendidly ignorant of the things of the world”.⁶⁶ He could remain ignorant of the world because the “administrative organization of groups” was the proper domain of politics; as a result, “[n]one of his speeches spoke of the world: instead they endlessly discussed men”.⁶⁷ A Pragmatistic approach reveals multiplicity as a feature of the world, not of human narratives and perspectives.⁶⁸ What makes it necessary for us to enlarge our minds is not merely the variety of ways that human beings ‘see’ and make sense of the world but rather the inherent instability and complexity of any situation.

In their concern over the hollowness of a politics oriented towards a common will, therefore, agonists lose the alternative orienting figure of a common world. For Monique Deveaux, agonistic theorists are defined by a belief that no consensus can or should be

⁶⁴ Bennett, 'In Parliament with Things' at 140.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Serres, *The Natural Contract* at 43.

⁶⁷ Ibid., at 43-4.

⁶⁸ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 116.

secured prior to political contestation.⁶⁹ This is an exaggeration, since agonistic democracy does still require some intersubjective agreement, for example, over the proper limits of agonistic struggle and the denial of violent exclusion as a political technique. Mouffe admits that an agonistic model of democracy needs a ‘conflictual’ consensus, based in the adherence to one of a plurality of interpretations of a basically liberal and democratic nature.⁷⁰ Even with this proviso, however, agonistic readings of Arendt miss something critical in her account of politics. Mouffe seeks a democratic model “more receptive to the multiplicity of voices, the plurality of values and the complexity of power structures encompassed by contemporary pluralist societies”.⁷¹ As Siebers notes in discussing the political ramifications of Kant’s aesthetics, it is not just other subjects who make up ‘the other’, but also objects.⁷² ‘Voices’, ‘values’, and ‘power structures’ are insufficient; the agonistic contestation of judgements has meaning only if judgements are about the world, and arrived at autonomously from the consensus of the objective senses that the *Critique of Judgment* seeks to establish via enlarged thought. Thus a crucial element of Arendt’s thought that is overlooked by agonistic theorists is that politics is enhanced in correlation with ‘our sense of the real’.⁷³ A politics of contestation is fine so long as the contest is anchored by a worldly aesthetics and not by the world-denying ‘anaesthetics’ of identity, solidarity, and otherness.

From speech to listening

Allowing the world to speak means shifting the focus of democratic theory from speech to listening, but making this shift ‘worldly’ such that it does not arrive at empathy. The neglect of materiality in political theory stems from a belief that things are speechless, resulting from an exclusive association of speech with language. When things are listened to, they are generally regarded either as false idols or as sources of evidence for the more significant actions of human beings.⁷⁴ Without any attention to non-human voices,

⁶⁹ Monique Deveaux, ‘Agonism and Pluralism’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 25/4 (1999), 1-22 at 4.

⁷⁰ Mouffe, ‘For an Agonistic Model of Democracy’ at 126; Mouffe, ‘For an Agonistic Public Sphere’ at 125.

⁷¹ Mouffe, ‘For an Agonistic Model of Democracy’ at 128.

⁷² Siebers, ‘Kant and the Politics of Beauty’, at 45.

⁷³ Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real* at 20-1.

⁷⁴ Lorraine Daston, ‘Speechless’, in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone, 2004), 9-26 at 9.

deliberative democracy is left with no way of recognising just what is a good argument, outside of an adherence to agreed procedures of fairness, but this is because the dice are loaded by the abstraction of deliberation from its worldly context. At the same time, both political and cognitive spaces only ever represent impurely, bringing forward mediated translations of other voices. The differentiation between the human political subject and the non-human apolitical object is based on two false premises, according to Dobson's sharp reading of Latour's *Politics of Nature*: firstly, the assumption is made that the speech of humans is unmediated; secondly, that science transparently represents objects in an apolitical fashion. In fact, 'translation', 'betrayal', and 'speech impediments' are characteristics of both scientific and political speech; both domains rely on spokespeople.⁷⁵ Arguing alongside Mary Jacobus that "[s]omeone else's experience can only be imagined or spoken for at risk of denying or appropriating its otherness" is just another way of saying that being a spokesperson, and thus a storyteller, always involves translation.⁷⁶ That nature does not 'speak' without being given the power to do so by science is no reason to exclude it from politics, since humans do not 'speak' either without being given the power to do so by politics. This point is especially apt to an Arendtian conception of politics, given her insistence on the need for a substantive belonging to an effective political body in order for political freedom to be realised.

Blakeley and Bryson's 'Mind the Gap' is one of the few pieces of academic writing to take note of Latour's challenge to democratic theory and, specifically, to the politics of nature. One of the key tactics used by women and non-whites campaigning for democratic inclusion has been, the authors remind us, to distance themselves from nature – showing that closeness to nature has historically been an excuse for political irrelevance.⁷⁷ On the flip side, and particularly following the efforts of Peter Singer, most attempts to bring nature into politics have been centred on extending the rights of humans to animals and plants.⁷⁸ These strategies have been forced upon us by the theoretical separation of nature and politics, and the metaphysics that this implies and helps to reinforce. The reality is, and has always been, different. Every political issue or, in Latour's technical term, every

⁷⁵ Andrew Dobson, 'Democracy and Nature: Speaking and Listening', *Political Studies*, 58/4 (2010), 752-68 at 758.

⁷⁶ Mary Jacobus, 'Response: Imagining Things', *Textual Practice*, 22/1 (2008), 113-22 at 12.

⁷⁷ Georgina Blakeley and Valerie Bryson, 'Mind the Gap: Democracy in Theory and in Practice', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 9/4 (2010), 359-92 at 362.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

proposition, arises from complex and inseparable hybrids of the human and non-human, meaning that representation is a single problem rather than two separate issues of the scientific and the political.⁷⁹ The two questions of representation – epistemological inquiry into how we can exactly represent reality and political philosophy inquiry into how a spokesperson can faithfully represent other humans – can be brought together.⁸⁰ An object-oriented politics will always present an issue as a hybrid of the human and nonhuman:

... a virus never appears without its virologists, a pulsar without its radioastronomers, a drug addict without his drugs, a lion without its Masai, a worker without her union, a proprietor without her property, a farmer without his landscape, an ecosystem without its ecologist, a fetishist without his fetishes, a saint without her apparitions, an elected official without her voices.⁸¹

In both cases it is about a spokesperson listening to and reporting the speech of the represented, and the amount of transformation that takes place.

All representatives have overlapping private and collective interests. Representative government, on Dewey's definition, is that where measures are in place to ensure that the representative function is primary and the private function secondary.⁸² Latour sees the same process at work in the laboratory; the various implements and methods of experimental science are in place to turn the scientist into the representative of a collective of which he is a part. While the impetus behind Latour's desire to bring the two problems of representation together is to break from the idea that facts speak for themselves and are merely transmitted by experts, Lisa Disch finds some lessons in this for the way we think about political representation, which should not involve capturing a pre-existing interest by finding delegates whose speech is most proximate to an identified interest group.⁸³ Disch argues that:

It should be as possible for actants in politics as it is for those in science to have a dialogic relationship with those who claim to

⁷⁹ Ibid., at 336.

⁸⁰ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 55.

⁸¹ Ibid., at 166.

⁸² John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1927) at 76-7.

⁸³ Lisa Disch, 'Faitiche-Izing the People: What Representative Democracy Might Learn from Science Studies', in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore (eds.), *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), 267-93 at 269.

represent them, one where legitimacy is based on openness to risk rather than on its foreclosure.⁸⁴

Legitimacy would be based on treating people as respectfully as scientists treat things; constructing apparatuses that give citizens the same ability to resist as entities are provided in the laboratory.

An object-oriented politics needs to hear what Peter Sloterdijk has called the ‘physiognomic world’ – things speaking to us outside of language.⁸⁵ Because of its focus on the in-between, such a politics would consist of propositions rather than statements. Proposition is meant here in accordance with its technical use by Latour, for whom a “proposition, contrary to a statement, includes the world in a certain state”.⁸⁶ This means that propositions engage the collective that constructs that state of things. Latour’s concept of the proposition “implies”, according to Blakeley and Bryson, “a different understanding of politics based on our ability, not to speak, but to hear”.⁸⁷ We then do not limit our concern to those who can listen to us but instead we listen to all who can speak, turning around the deliberative democratic obsession with including everyone likely to be affected by a decision. The example of a proposition given by the authors is the sound of icebergs melting – a now undeniably ‘political’ sound that comes to us from a hybrid of what was previously divided into natural, technical, and human activity.

An emphasis on listening goes deeper to the heart of political practice than the alternative project of extending human rights to the nonhuman. All speech, whatever its source, is captured and represented (and thus transformed) by instruments, spokespersons, artists, and rhetoricians. As Rancière pointed out in objecting to deliberative models, political speech is notably an exercise in ventriloquism – it is speech made on behalf of others that convinces the audience that those others are speaking. Latour makes the additional point that this applies to all speech, whether it be about people, events, or things:

Those who speak always speak of others that do not speak themselves. They speak of him, of that, of us, of you ... of who

⁸⁴ Ibid., at 290.

⁸⁵ Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Theory and History of Literature; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) at 139.

⁸⁶ Bruno Latour, 'Stengers' Shibboleth', <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/poparticles/poparticle/p070.html> (1997) at xiii-xiv.

⁸⁷ Blakeley and Bryson, 'Mind the Gap', at 368.

this is, what that wants, when the other happened.⁸⁸

Nonhumans can therefore speak through spokespersons but, just like democratic representatives, spokespersons may be speaking across the entire gamut of certainty and doubt, faithfulness and betrayal.⁸⁹ In contrast, what has generally been called ‘realist’ political theory tends to ignore spokespersons at the expense of those who speak only about themselves, often given the generous title of ‘stakeholders’.⁹⁰ Like citizens, icebergs can form propositions so long as the spokespersons and apparatus in place to bring them to attention are not ignored.

The curious lack of attention to listening in democratic theory has recently been highlighted by Gideon Calder, building on the work of John Dryzek in particular. Considering the amount of ink used up on discussions of deliberation, Calder finds relatively little spent on the topic of listening.⁹¹ In the literature on deliberative democracy, particularly, it seems as though the crucial democratic work is done once space is provided for all (or all ‘affected’) parties to speak – admittedly, a monumental task in itself.⁹² Calder suggests that speech is prioritised in political theory because it is seen as active, while listening is regarded as passive: “Great speeches are recorded, anthologised, mythologised, with oratory treated as emblematic of the craft of politics. Great listening will not find similar honour”.⁹³ The passivity of listening is, however, overstated – especially if we consider what is involved in listening to nature. And while it is environmental political theory that makes this clear, the benefits of paying attention to listening are benefits for democracy *per se*. Listening is, above all, *unsettling*:

Listening is a process characterised by openness to possibility, to interruption, and to that which is not reassuring – an openness to being pulled up short, and required to readjust one’s orientations in light of unanticipated information, arguments, perspectives or

⁸⁸ Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) at 194.

⁸⁹ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 70.

⁹⁰ Isabelle Stengers, 'Including Nonhumans in Political Theory: Opening Pandora's Box', in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore (eds.), *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), 3-33 at 20.

⁹¹ Gideon Calder, 'Listening, Democracy and the Environment', *In-Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies*, 4/2 (2009), 26-41 at 26.

⁹² *Ibid.*, at 29.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, at 30.

insights.⁹⁴

More agonistic approaches will find much to agree with in Calder's account of the 'openness' of listening, but will tend to view this openness only as a willingness to accept the human other into the *agon*. Iris Marion Young, for example, foregrounds the role of listening in the enlargement of the mind when devising her 'asymmetrical reciprocity'.⁹⁵ Young worries that putting ourselves in the place of others can fail because our own "fears and fantasies" are not eradicated; her example is of able-bodied persons being asked to put themselves in the position of a person in a wheelchair, and massively exaggerating the psychological impact.⁹⁶ This problem particularly arises when privileged people imagine themselves as less privileged, as the assumptions embedded in the very fact of their privilege cause misrepresentation, but the opposite is also problematic, for example if a victim was asked to take the perspective of an oppressor.⁹⁷ In order to challenge the identity of the enlarged mind, the question becomes as significant for Young as the statement, and listening becomes as significant as speech.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the reciprocity remains too symmetrical, in that questions are posed only to those who can pose questions themselves.

A democratic commitment requires listening to the 'non-speaking voices' that political theorists are wont to exclude – voices of nature, future generations, people external to the collective, etc.⁹⁹ The political philosophic technique of defining the political collective in terms of a social contract is identified by Serres as a major source of the worldless thinking that has permeated through our ideas of politics, society, and law. The virtual event of signing the social contract represents a "casting off from the world", acknowledged by its own proponents as leaving the state of nature.¹⁰⁰ Politics is then free to pay attention only the relations of men to each other, because from the moment of the social contract being signed, we can forget the nature that we have successfully escaped

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Iris Marion Young, 'Assymetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought', *Constellations*, 3/3 (1997), 340-63 at 343.

⁹⁶ Ibid., at 344.

⁹⁷ Ibid., at 350.

⁹⁸ Ibid., at 354-7.

⁹⁹ Calder, 'Listening, Democracy and the Environment', at 33.

¹⁰⁰ Serres, *The Natural Contract* at 34.

from, regarding it as “distant, mute, inanimate, isolated, infinitely far from cities or groups, from our texts, and from publicity”.¹⁰¹ Further, Serres adds, that which is non-negotiable by contract is defined as natural law, which follows from human nature – even beyond the social contract, the world disappears in favour of the reason and/or history of men.¹⁰² The *a priori* division of the world into things that can and cannot speak allows us to reject numerous objects out of hand on the basis of irrationality, that they do not exist or are not included in the proper domain of ‘citizens’, defined too narrowly as speaking beings.¹⁰³ Attention to the physiognomic world means that we must consider the rejection of either humans or nonhumans as itself a deliberate political act, rather than engaging in indeterminable arguments over whether they do or do not have some *a priori* claim on our attention.

Redistributing distributed agency

A great benefit of deliberative and agonistic approaches to democratic theory is that they challenge the model of sovereign individual agency that sits at the heart of liberal theory. The subject is ‘decentred’ to varying degrees; agency is embedded more securely within a social setting, and seen as intersubjectively distributed. An intersubjective view of agency is insufficient, however, if the subject is limited to humans with the capacity of speech, rather than distributed more widely amongst that which can be listened to. Ewa Domanska observes that one of the distinguishing features of the recent philosophical interest in things is that they are treated not as merely existing but also as ‘acting’ on their own behalf. This activity occurs outside of the human imposition of sign-value onto things, which has been the primary concern of deconstructive and textualist approaches.¹⁰⁴ In stating that “an actor is whatever makes a difference”, Latour takes up a Pragmatistic view of agency, as laid out in the first of Peirce’s 1903 *Lectures on Pragmatism*, in which the ‘agent’ is merely whatever force has the most discernible effect.¹⁰⁵ The Latourian ‘actant’ covers literally everything that exists – all that exists must make some difference.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., at 34-5.

¹⁰² Ibid., at 35.

¹⁰³ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 178; Calder, 'Listening, Democracy and the Environment', at 40.

¹⁰⁴ Domanska, 'The Material Presence of the Past', at 339.

¹⁰⁵ Bruno Latour and Tomás Sánchez-Criado, 'Making the 'Res Publica'', *ephemera*, 7/2 (2007), 364-71 at 366; Peirce and Turrissi, *Lectures on Pragmatism* at 155-6.

Action is a property of hybrids, of associations. Employing an identical example to that analysed in a similar context by Don Ihde, Latour explains hybrid actors with reference to the debate surrounding the right to bear arms in the United States.¹⁰⁶ On the one hand, the gun lobby makes the moralist argument typically phrased as ‘guns don’t kill people; people kill people’. The influence of the gun is ignored; the entire agency is placed in the essence of a person who may or may not have a propensity to kill. Someone who wishes to reform gun laws, on the other hand, will argue along the lines of some degree of technical determinism – ‘guns kill people’ – in which a person who is otherwise innocent may become a killer with a gun in hand. Latour insists that what we really have with the bringing-together of the person and the gun is a new “hybrid actor”; both the person and the gun are changed by the mediation of the other.¹⁰⁷

It is clear from the above example that there is no sovereignty of the man, the technique, nor the instrument in Latourian agency. Callon and Law have explicitly tied the notion of agency in ANT to the philosophical project of the decentring of the subject.¹⁰⁸ Latour argues that “[a]ction is not done under the full control of consciousness”.¹⁰⁹ Action always slightly ‘overtakes’ the actor, who is always surprised by what they do; and this applies to things as well as people.¹¹⁰ This is not equivalent to the claim that there is some amorphous ‘social agency’ in operation, which is always shorthand for the very specific agents involved.¹¹¹ Most controversial is Latour’s claim that “objects, too, have agency”.¹¹² So as to avoid assigning agency to things, sociologists tend to speak of material objects in terms of their capacities to ‘express’, ‘symbolise’, ‘reinforce’, ‘transport’, ‘objectify’, and ‘reify’. Latour observes, in contrast, that when he interviews people for ethnographic studies they speak of things acting in a much more direct way – objects “... authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on”.¹¹³ And this activity becomes particularly busy during

¹⁰⁶ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 176.

¹⁰⁷ Bruno Latour, 'Factures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to That of Attachment', *Res*, 36 (1999), 20-31 at 1021.

¹⁰⁸ Callon and Law, 'Agency and the Hybrid *Collectif*', at 487.

¹⁰⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 44.

¹¹⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 281.

¹¹¹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 45.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, at 68.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, at 72.

moments of innovation and controversy, novelty and birth, breakdowns and ‘what-if?’ scenarios.¹¹⁴

Some of the forces involved in action are delegations. As explained by Verbeek, Latourian delegation occurs when humans inscribe a particular action in a nonhuman delegate, allowing for effects to extend outside of presence.¹¹⁵ Previous actors often embed action in objects, and these objects continue to exercise the acts of their delegators through time.¹¹⁶ For Andrew Martin, this means that Latour does not assign a “mystical power to objects”; his unwillingness to separate *a priori* humans and non-humans must be read alongside his theory of delegation, in which the agency of objects – the door closer and the speed hump being two archetypes that Latour has examined at length – is a material embedding of the agency that humans wish to give them.¹¹⁷ Martin’s reading of Latourian agency is perhaps too conventional in placing all agency back on the human side of the object’s construction. The object-agents are, like everything in Latour’s world, the result of negotiations involving humans and non-humans.¹¹⁸ Any agency will also arise out of this history of co-constructed associations and translations, thus allowing Latour to displace agency from humans to hybrid networks and institutions.¹¹⁹ Martin, however, blaming the misunderstanding on Latour’s “Gallic panache”, only allows this agency to come from the programming and delegation of human agency by human subjects.¹²⁰

Andrew Pickering has a similar concern over the notion of ‘delegation’ in Latour. There does not seem to be a genuine symmetry between human and nonhuman agents, and while Latour seeks this symmetry his notion of delegation denies it – in a footnote Pickering wonders whether delegation becomes absurd as a symmetrical notion once machines are said to ‘delegate’ back to humans.¹²¹ For his part, Latour wants to avoid any connotations of delegation as a subject-object dialectic; he simply wants to show how

¹¹⁴ Ibid., at 80-2.

¹¹⁵ Verbeek, *What Things Do* at 160.

¹¹⁶ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 188-9.

¹¹⁷ Andrew Martin, 'Agents in Inter-Action: Bruno Latour and Agency', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 12/4 (2005), 283-311 at 283.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., at 284.

¹¹⁹ Latour, 'On Technical Mediation', at 46.

¹²⁰ Martin, 'Agents in Inter-Action', at 283.

¹²¹ Pickering, *Mangle of Practice* at 16.

characteristics are shared between humans and non-humans.¹²² “As agents”, Pickering claims against Latour, “we humans seem to be importantly different from non-human agents like the weather, television sets, or particle accelerators”, none of which seem to have the sort of agency required to devise a speed hump.¹²³ The question of intentionality raises its head whenever a claim is made to material agency. As attested by Heidegger’s analysis of the three-fold temporality of human experience, which is oriented by the situating of action amongst the past, present, and future, humans seem to live in time in a way that (as far as we can tell) material does not.¹²⁴

Latour does, in fact, avoid this absurdity; nonhumans do not delegate but rather ‘prescribe’ behaviour back to us, and these ‘prescriptions’ are encoded in programs, manuals, and training sessions.¹²⁵ Further, he accepts that his early rhetoric, assigning moral dignity to technical objects such as the seat belt, was an exaggeration intended to shock the reader away from the idea that the relationship between technology and morality is that between tools and intentions.¹²⁶ Even so, intentionality and its content is itself immanent in practices; it is not a freestanding force. ‘Subjectivities’, ‘justifications’, ‘unconscious’, and ‘personalities’ all circulate. To be politically responsible, the future-oriented goals of intentional human beings are to be emergent from, and transformed by, what Pickering Pragmatically summarises as “sensitive encounters with material agency”.¹²⁷ To register Pickering’s findings, it is not necessary to assign intentionality or consciousness to the machine. The claim to agency here merely represents the active role of the machine in generating outcomes that will regularly surprise the scientist and call for an active modification of the experimental process. Pickering’s ‘mangle of practice’ captures this through a ‘dialectic of resistance and accommodation’, exemplified in laboratory practices:

As active, intentional beings, scientists tentatively construct some new machine. They then adopt a passive role, monitoring the

¹²² Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 190.

¹²³ Pickering, *Mangle of Practice* at 16.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, at 18-19.

¹²⁵ Bruno Latour, 'Where Are the Missing Masses? Sociology of a Few Mundane Artefacts', in Weibe Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1992), 225-58 at 157.

¹²⁶ Bruno Latour, 'Morality and Technology: The End of the Means', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19/5-6 (2002), 247-60 at 254 & 248.

¹²⁷ Pickering, *Mangle of Practice* at 20.

performance of the machine to see whatever captures of material agency it might effect. Symmetrically, this period of human passivity is the period in which material agency actively manifests itself.¹²⁸

Pickering observes Morpurgo creating the MLE then stepping back to watch it. The material world, in this case a grain positioned inside the machine, would then act – but not always as Morpurgo was expecting. Regularly, the grain would act in a manner that did not fit expectations – it resisted the behavioural mappings that the physicist expected it to follow. Then, Morpurgo again became the agent, accommodating this resistance by altering his conceptual scheme or the parameters of his machine. Sometimes it would be other agents whose acts would force accommodation – such as when a dead fly affected overnight readings of the electrometer.¹²⁹ More material – in this case flypaper – was then necessary. It is important to clarify, however, that the work of the scientist increases the autonomy of the object and thus its capacity to resist; agency is not a zero-sum game, or as Latour counters, perhaps in response to Pickering, a ‘tug-of-war’.¹³⁰

The fact of delegation is subversive to a human-centred account – or practice – of politics. Delegates are employed by people who we may or may not have voted for, and who may not be around to face either a protest or the ballot box.¹³¹ The persistent agency delegated to these things, however, continues to have definitely political effects. This is one major reason why a political focus on interest groups is unable to achieve worthwhile political results, ignoring as it does an array of nonhuman delegates. Bennett speaks of nonhumans having ‘thing-power’: “moments of recalcitrance, vitality and efficacy”.¹³² Without denying the force of the latter two ‘moments’, the passive-active nature of the first of these moments makes it the most promising conception of material agency. The terms ‘recalcitrance’ and ‘resistance’ do not have the sorts of connotations that lead Martin and Pickering to soften Latour’s object agency. Material does not require intentionality to resist without any human being instructing it to do so.

As a result, when we encounter resistance we always find it on the boundary of the

¹²⁸ Ibid., at 21-22.

¹²⁹ Ibid., at 87.

¹³⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 147.

¹³¹ Latour, 'On Technical Mediation', at 40.

¹³² Bennett, 'In Parliament with Things' at 136.

human and nonhuman realms. Resistance is not the same as constraint, because it highlights the temporally emergent nature of agency noted by Peter Wehling, but also because it captures the degrees of agency, the fluctuations in strength.¹³³ Some actions and arguments become near impossible because of the work done to embed and transport previous actions and arguments, and this is equally the case in all domains of life:

We can no more drive a car on the subway than we can doubt the laws of Newton. The reasons are the same in each case: distant points have been linked by paths that were narrow at first and then were broadened and properly paved.¹³⁴

On Martin's account of Latour, change arises from the "political manoeuvres" employed by proponents of different paths as they attempt to change a situation and shift the strongest path of resistance to one that promotes their own representation.¹³⁵ Human and nonhuman allies are both central to these manoeuvres, so there is no sense of determinism of either material or of the mind. Lyotard brings out the political consequences of this idea of truth in *The Postmodern Condition*; if prosthetic devices are necessary to produce proof, then we arrive at a situation where "wealth, efficiency, and truth" go together.¹³⁶ Proof, verification, and therefore truth, is, above all, *expensive*; "[t]he games of scientific language become the games of the rich".¹³⁷ Access to technology thus equates to the ability to define truth, to be 'right'.¹³⁸ When discussing agency we are never dealing with either objects or subjects alone. The river 'speaks' by being "made to speak through plenty of techniques of representation".¹³⁹ Nonhumans are accompanied by "professionals ... instruments, situations, and protocols"; humans are accompanied by "laboratories, sites, situations, tests, and effects".¹⁴⁰ In the case of Morpurgo, the unexpected action of a particular grain was only encountered as a resistance because of the circumstances of its movement – being situated in a particular machine, at a particular time, and watched by a scientist with

¹³³ Peter Wehling, 'The Situated Materiality of Scientific Practices: Postconstructivism - a New Theoretical Perspective in Science Studies', *Science, Technology & Innovation Studies*, Special Issue 1 (2006), 81-100 at 91.

¹³⁴ Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* at 185.

¹³⁵ Martin, 'Agents in Inter-Action', at 287.

¹³⁶ Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition* at 45.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., at 46.

¹³⁹ Latour and Sánchez-Criado, 'Making the 'Res Public'', at 366.

¹⁴⁰ Latour, *Politics of Nature* at 75.

particular understandings.¹⁴¹ Latour does not extend human agency, as it has been traditionally understood, to nonhuman entities; instead he insists that all agency is dispersed amongst humans and nonhumans and is impossible without both.¹⁴²

Agency is a product of collectives, thus our action is largely a product of what we are attached to. The point is not to be ‘free’ from our attachments – this would make action impossible or powerless – but to choose good rather than poor attachments and to work out “whether we are well or poorly bound”.¹⁴³ To be emancipated means to be well attached, not to be unattached.¹⁴⁴ The refusal to acknowledge personal autonomy as a goal does not have to be a reactionary move, because our inability to detach does not demand that the same attachments are maintained; in order to be effective, emancipation must be the replacement of certain ties with others.¹⁴⁵ More connections equals greater, not lesser, individuation.¹⁴⁶ Isabelle Stengers suggests that a new idea of freedom emerges from an awareness of the importance of attachments; in an object-oriented political theory, humans are to be thought of as “spokespersons claiming that it is not their free opinions that matter but what causes them to think and to object”.¹⁴⁷ Politics is an art of connecting humans and things, not of isolating one from the other. We can, as Arendt says, choose our company. Since there is never a single source of action, we can understand action only by observing these choices.¹⁴⁸ Our competencies are traceable through the equipment that we ‘subscribe’ to.¹⁴⁹ There is no human intentionality as a whole, but rather it is composed of layers, subjectifiers, or what Latour calls ‘plug-ins’.¹⁵⁰ These plug-ins are traceable materials like anything else; one easily traceable example given by Latour is identity papers.¹⁵¹ In emphasising the importance of choosing one’s company Arendt turns

¹⁴¹ Pickering, *Mangle of Practice* at 92.

¹⁴² Linda Nash, 'The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?', *Environmental History*, 10/1 (2005), 67-69 at 67.

¹⁴³ Latour, 'Factures/Fractures', at 22.

¹⁴⁴ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 218.

¹⁴⁵ Latour, 'Factures/Fractures', at 23.

¹⁴⁶ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 133.

¹⁴⁷ Stengers, 'Including Nonhumans in Political Theory' at 5.

¹⁴⁸ Latour, 'Factures/Fractures', at 27.

¹⁴⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 210.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, at 207.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, at 208.

subjectivity outward from the self to the other whose company has been chosen.¹⁵² This ‘company’ is not limited to human beings, so action and judgement become the product of a hybrid actor.

The human capacity to transcend their immediate material circumstances stems from the ability to think. Specifically, we can bring to mind specific things that are not immediately present to us – because they are elsewhere, or no longer in the world at all. Arendt’s faith in the capacity of the actor to take a position among the audience lies in the ability of the mind, as she sees it, to withdraw into thought, to deal with re-presentations of objects rather than what is given directly to the senses.¹⁵³ This entails a certain worldly transcendence, since the human mind is always capable of introducing into thought, alongside the given object, that which is absent. For Kant, only the genius has the ability to create new exemplars that can expand the array of exemplary particulars to which we can refer when passing judgement.¹⁵⁴ The broader application of reflective judgement in Arendt implies only that objects from outside of the immediate situation, those experienced in the past or known through exposure to stories, are brought to bear on that which is being immediately attended to. These particulars, brought into the situation by the power of thought, can then serve as criteria and principles for judging that which is already present in the situation surrounding us.¹⁵⁵ However, these things being brought to mind must necessarily be known to us and, as such, are already in the situation to some degree. Our ‘company’, therefore, the entire set of our attachments, is available to import into any situation as points of comparison. We have seen that Arendt departs from Kant when she insists that the enlarged mentality requires the ‘company’ of others, as opposed to an awareness of their (possible) existence.¹⁵⁶ Because of the importance of the imagination to Arendtian judgement, our choice of ‘company’, providing us with a storehouse of examples, is crucial.

Arendt tells us that we choose our company when we communicate our

¹⁵² Garrath Williams, 'Ethics and Human Relationality: Between Arendt's Accounts of Morality', *Hannah Arendt Newsletter*, http://www.hannaharendt.de/download/5_williams.pdf, (2007) at 9-10.

¹⁵³ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 76-77.

¹⁵⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* at 191.

¹⁵⁵ Arendt, *Life of the Mind* at 70-6.

¹⁵⁶ Taylor, 'Thinking for Politics', at 162.

judgements.¹⁵⁷ Further, in judgement the value we place on others shifts from a view in which we are dependent upon them to serve our needs and wants to a view in which their presence is a necessary condition of our mental faculty of judgement.¹⁵⁸ There is much more to this, however, because to choose our company is to choose our referents – and this applies to attachments of all sorts, not only human beings. The value of everything we attach to ourselves lies not only in its utility but also in its becoming part of a judging and acting collective. The representative thinker thus plays a mediating role in which the thinker’s own network of attachments – in Arendt’s terms, the company that the thinker keeps – transforms the narratives to which he remains open. In contrast to the isolated thinker, whom Arendt regards as more likely to impose categories upon the world, enlarged thinking is worldly because the resistance of things, the role things play in the opening up of the world to the self and others, is respected. Already in Arendt distributed agency is a fact; as Thiele puts it, “the sovereign actor, like Barthes’ author, is dead”.¹⁵⁹ But agency should not only be distributed intersubjectively; to judge action is to understand what has acted, and there is no agency without humans, and no agency without nonhumans.

Conclusions

The proposal for an object-oriented democracy demands a political theory that passes through and beyond the visions of intersubjectivist deliberative and agonistic democrats that have thus far been derived from the Kantian enlargement of the mind in order to cope with plurality and the supposed incommensurability of perspectives within the political community. Stengers illustrates the difference:

The famous tale of the three blind men and the elephant, one recognizing a trunk, the second a snake, and the third a fly swatter, has sometimes been used to illustrate the workings of Kuhnian incommensurability. But this example misses the point about collective concern that, so I believe, must be associated with Kuhn’s description. The blind men all investigate the elephant, but the diverging ways in which they characterise it appear as an end point. The divergence is not a matter of crucial concern to them. If it had been such, the story would not end when the blind

¹⁵⁷ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* at 74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Thiele, 'Ontology of Action'.

men make their first contradictory assessments; they would next move around the elephant to explore the possibility of a coherent account that could turn outright contradictions into very interesting contrasted standpoints. In other words the blind men would have lent themselves and their respective interpretations to active comparison, giving that which they all address the power to impose 'due attention'.¹⁶⁰

The three blind men engage in something like the enlargement of the mind here, in Stenger's addition to the story, but they do so while facing the elephant, and not in a manner quite like that envisioned by deliberative or agonistic democratic theorists. The elephant never stops being involved in the *sensus communis*; the important aspect missing from these prominent political theories is to allow for the object's 'power to impose'. Conceiving of the enlarged mentality as a method for listening to the world, rather than merely the basis for procedures of negotiating contested opinions, allows for the resistance of the world to human designs and purposes and thus produces a *sensus communis* in which issues are able to receive 'due attention'.

¹⁶⁰ Isabelle Stengers, 'Comparison as a Matter of Concern', *Common Knowledge*, 17/1 (2011), 48-63 at 53.

6. Tracing the space between men

As we have seen, Arendt's adoption of the 'enlarged mentality' as the model for political thinking is crucially reliant on a distinction drawn in 'Truth and Politics' between 'factual' and 'rational' truths. For all of her emphasis on politics as the domain of opinion and persuasion, Arendt is very much aware of the role of knowledge in stabilising the political domain, and she therefore makes an appeal to factual truth to mark the aspects of the world that provide the stability demanded of a politics of opinion. By 'factual' truth, Arendt refers here to brute happenings – her example is "that on the night of August 4, 1914, German troops crossed the frontier of Belgium" – as opposed to anything that might be deduced from a theoretical premise.¹

Political judgement is responsible to the world only if it is open to a plurality of stories that are world-revealing in that they do not indulge in any of the various forms of anaesthesia – methods of escape from facing up to the way things are in the world. Unfortunately, Arendt never provides a convincing account of how we are to know a fact when we see it, and she is therefore unable to protect facts against the 'rational' doctrines that she fears will overrun them. Once given more than cursory attention, Arendt's desire to delineate a sphere of factual truths is quickly embroiled in epistemological and ontological controversies.² Perhaps for this reason, the importance to enlarging the mind of allowing the world to resist is generally overlooked in democratic theory.

This chapter claims that the tendency to identify a plurality of stories about some thing with a plurality of subjective feelings and opinions towards it results in the neglect of a very important normative claim. According to Annabel Herzog, a major implication of Arendt's belief in the political relevance of storytelling is that a dysfunctional political space can be identified by the possibility of getting away with the denial of facts, of speaking a falsehood and not being faced with an effective challenge on factual grounds.³ This means that it is not an autonomous sphere of objective enquiry that protects facts from politics, but rather a lively and transparent political sphere that prevents facts from being hidden,

¹ Arendt, 'Truth and Politics' at 239.

² See the brief discussion in John S. Nelson, 'Politics and Truth: Arendt's Problematic', *American Journal of Political Science*, 22/2 (1978), 270-301 at 282.

³ Annabel Herzog, 'Reporting and Storytelling: *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as Political Testimony', *Thesis Eleven*, 69 (2002), 83-98 at 87.

ignored, or subsumed into a greater narrative that denies their novelty. A healthy politics thus relies heavily on the factual truths of which Arendt speaks of in ‘Truth and Politics’ but is never willing, or perhaps able, to persuasively define.

The postconstructivist moment

To regard certain statements as factually true in the hard sense that Arendt requires is to accept the project of modern epistemology, defined by Lingis as an effort “to separate, in the multitude of appearances a thing extends in time and space, what is due to the reality of the thing from what is due to the intervening medium and what is due to the mind”.⁴ This project stands in ruins – “pure facts” are a useful, but not more real, abstraction from technology, theory and practice.⁵ Pragmatistic thinking, as now manifest in postconstructivist philosophy and especially in Latour’s equation of truth and ‘traceability’, can flesh out Arendt’s notion of factual truth and thus reintroduce the normative potential of ‘worldliness’ as a measure of political responsibility.

Latour’s proposal for an object-oriented democracy emerges from his background as the key thinker behind actor-network theory along with his support for the classical pragmatism of James, Dewey, and Lippmann. To give an account of the updated pragmatism necessary for this thesis, the term postconstructivism is preferred over actor-network theory because of its broader scope, encompassing similar approaches from outside of the actor-network camp, and because the network metaphor has become an obstacle to understanding, as even Latour himself has begun seeking alternatives.⁶ Postconstructivism is not yet a settled concept, but Peter Wehling, who traces the use of the term back to 1993 publication of Michael Lynch’s *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action*, has previously noted its usefulness as an umbrella term.⁷ The term is rarely employed, however, outside of the Science and Technology Studies field. The central feature allowing any given theory to be labelled postconstructivist is the insistence that content and meaning can only be established by an awareness of “social, material and discursive”

⁴ Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* at 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, at 40.

⁶ Bruno Latour, ‘Networks, Societies, Spheres: Reflections of an Actor-Network Theorist’, *International Journal of Communication*, 5 (2011), 797-810; Bruno Latour, ‘Some Experiments in Art and Politics’, *e-flux*, 23 (2011).

⁷ Wehling, ‘Situated Materiality’, at 82-3.

settings together, and that these domains are woven ‘on the ground’ in “material and performative practices”.⁸ When studying how things are and how they came to be, there is to be no *a priori* preference given to the practices of ‘subjects’ or ‘objects’.

Actor-network theory developed out of the sociology of science, and is thus both dependent on, and sets itself against, the ‘Strong Programme’ of Barnes and Bloor. The Edinburgh School, from which the Strong Programme arose, extended sociological explanations of science to content, not just organisation. The central objective was most clearly stated in Bloor’s *Knowledge and Social Imagery*: “All knowledge, whether it be in the empirical sciences or even in mathematics, should be treated, through and through, as material for investigation”.⁹ A key principle of early sociological studies, which has been adopted and translated by actor-network scholars, is to make no *a priori* distinction between true and false belief – the same reasons used to ‘explain away’ false beliefs should be used to ‘explain’ true beliefs; otherwise sociological study will be biased towards the winners.¹⁰ This is known as the principle of symmetry. The methodological demand of symmetry, promoted by science scholars in order to ensure that ideas about what constitutes rationality do not obscure the historical account of scientific and technological projects, closely parallels the insistence on storytelling used by Arendt to assist with clearing away preconceptions in order to liberate reflective judgement. According to Arendt’s reading of Homer, the pseudo-objectivity of the historical narrative of victory and defeat is not allowed to override the need to preserve the value of individual events.¹¹ According to the methodological principle of symmetry, the eventual ubiquity of a given technology is not to be a factor in the methods of study – the contingencies of victory and defeat have no explanatory power.

Steve Woolgar’s critique of the Strong Programme gives us the starting point of the actor-network approach, which is to accuse earlier science studies scholarship of betraying the principle of symmetry by treating an aspect of the social world as determinate, while assuming the natural world to be ‘constructed’.¹² Woolgar argues that Barnes and Bloor

⁸ Ibid., at 88.

⁹ David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (2nd edn.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Sergio Sismondo, *An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (2nd edn.; Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) at 48.

¹¹ Arendt, 'Concept of History' at 51.

¹² Sismondo, *An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies* at 52.

employ a “sociological sledgehammer” in their studies of scientific practice, by assuming a fixed ‘context’ or a fixed set of individual or group ‘interests’ are adequate to explain scientific knowledge.¹³ Actor-network theory responds to this lack of symmetry by extending the principle across the social and natural world. Bloor argues that these criticisms of the Strong Programme are misdirected because the intention has always been to explain beliefs about nature, not nature itself, with reference to society.¹⁴ He thus denies that he is engaging in a form of Idealism, as his critics suggest. Nonetheless the Strong Programme does have a tendency to specify somewhat static interests, external to the content that they are trying to explain and supposedly giving rise to the actions of scientists.¹⁵ What Barnes and Bloor miss, according to the actor-network critique, is that scientists are constantly performing ‘interest work’ themselves, monitoring and accounting for context and interests in their own, and others’, work.¹⁶ Actor-network studies thus follow the traces of this ‘interest work’ closely, rather than attempting to explain scientific knowledge by reference to external, ‘social’ influences that only the insight of the sociologist is capable of identifying. This work of disinterest is the rationality of science.

Postconstructivist approaches such as actor-network theory thus extend the principle of symmetry to deny any claim that traces everything back to “purely mental structures” and also those that trace everything back to “purely materialist concerns”.¹⁷ Social constructivism had placed material culture behind people and meaning, such that even when things were studied, the purpose of that study was to reveal something about human society.¹⁸ After the content of religion – rituals, miracles, etc. – had been socially explained, the same techniques were applied to law, popular culture, and art.¹⁹ One outgrowth of this was its radicalisation in the post-structural turn to text, where things became nothing more than carriers of social meanings.²⁰ The postconstructivist moment is the subtraction of the word ‘social’ from the concept of social construction; in science

¹³ Steve Woolgar, 'Interest and Explanation in the Social Study of Science', *Social Studies of Science*, 11 (1981), 365-94 at 373.

¹⁴ David Bloor, 'Anti-Latour', *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 30/1 (1999), 81-112 at 87.

¹⁵ Woolgar, 'Interest and Explanation', at 369.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, at 371.

¹⁷ Martin, 'Agents in Inter-Action', at 284.

¹⁸ Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text', at 88.

¹⁹ Latour, 'When Things Strike Back', at 109.

²⁰ Olsen, 'Material Culture after Text', at 90.

studies this was manifest in a refusal to accept the privileging of social factors in the emergence of knowledge, but without a return to 'representative' realism.²¹ Latour decisively broke away from the Strong Programme when he and Woolgar removed the word 'social' from the subtitle of their classic text *Laboratory Life*.²² While the original 1979 edition was subtitled *The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*, the second edition of 1986 appeared as simply *The Construction of Scientific Facts*, so as to ensure that 'the social' could not be misconstrued as a specific type of thing from which facts are constructed.²³ Actor-network theory builds from this point; the strength or weakness of any network-thing cannot be ascertained by the 'type' of thing that it is. Power arises from heterogeneous alliances; actants enlist others and become a single actant in the eyes of another, thus increasing their resistance.²⁴ The allies that a network-thing gathers can be from the domains that we often call nature, language, culture, or material – but actor-network theory considers these supposedly different forces as equal in principle.²⁵ No thing can be understood unless all of its allies, regardless of how we might wish to classify them, are taken into account, and the temptation to prioritise one type of ally is resisted. It is this core idea that lies at the heart of postconstructivist theory, or 'heterogeneous constructivism'.

The politics of postconstructivism

In comparison with constructivism, postconstructivist analysis makes more explicit its aims to add reality to matters of fact, not subtract from them.²⁶ The Kuhnian argument for incommensurability, in particular, has often been directed against the idea of scientific rationality. The insistence of Science and Technology Studies scholars that commensurability is always possible through the medium of standards and the creation of boundary objects denies the force of some of the more radical critiques of scientific inquiry.

²¹ Wehling, 'Situated Materiality', at 84.

²² Jan Harris, 'The Ordering of Things: Organization in Bruno Latour', *The Sociological Review*, 53/Supplement 1 (2005), 163-77 at 164.

²³ Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (Sage Library of Social Research; Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1979); Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

²⁴ Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* at 159.

²⁵ Harman, 'The Importance of Bruno Latour for Philosophy', at 33.

²⁶ Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', at 232.

Stengers joins Latour in applauding the political ramifications of this work given the trends visible in the knowledge economy, in which inquiry is increasingly directed towards desirable outcomes instead of oriented towards truth.²⁷ Stretching the debunking argument too far will sever the connection between science and reliability completely, thus making science an even more dangerous instrument. The political task is not to undermine the association of science and objectivity but rather to refuse the reductionist usage of any one particular science to explain knowledge and action.²⁸

Postconstructivism can partly accept the political edge of constructivist critique, that “[t]he claim (for some variable X) that X is socially constructed is to insist upon the possibility and desirability that X be changed” – but hastens to add that desirability is not at issue, since ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is not a measure of ‘constructedness’, and, more importantly, that X cannot be changed by humans alone. Latour takes issue with the accusation that science studies is designed to debunk the ‘truth’ of science:

There could be no question that laboratories, particle accelerators, telescopes, national statistics, satellites arrays, giant computers, and specimen collections were artificial places the history of which could be documented in the same way as for buildings, computer chips, and locomotives. And yet there was not the slightest doubt that the products of these artificial and costly sites were the most ascertained, objective, and certified results ever obtained by collective human ingenuity.²⁹

That ‘constructed’ and ‘real’ are synonymous seems obvious in domains such as engineering and architecture, yet this link seemed to be lost when sociology turned its constructivist rhetoric to science. This is odd because gravity, it seems obvious to point out, is not a reflection of society, nor is it a mere construction of human language, discourse, and social organisation. This does not alter the fact, however, that all knowledge production can be located at specific sites at specific times with specific objects.³⁰

It was especially in politics that the question of whether something was *either* manipulated *or* real became meaningful, and constructivists usually found themselves being

²⁷ Stengers, 'Comparison as a Matter of Concern', at 54.

²⁸ Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', at 242.

²⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 89-90.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, at 175.

drawn on to defend positions that they found politically unappealing.³¹ A specific problem of political strategy therefore highlights the necessity of this move, as can be seen in the experiences of Sheila Jasanoff, a sociologist of knowledge who has found it difficult to use her expertise in pursuit of a neutral, let alone progressive, political agenda. She writes of regular requests from corporate interests to appear as an expert witness for the defence against claims of environmental and health risks and damages. Their intention was not for her to support an alternative scientific claim, but simply to undercut the credibility of any scientific expert called by an adversary: “[t]he sociology of knowledge was for them an instrument to undercut their opponent’s expert status, and thus to deprive them of ‘science’ itself as a political resource”.³² Latour reflected on this sort of misuse of his own constructivist critique in a 2004 article called ‘Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?’. Republicans wanting to deter action on climate change are recommending “artificially maintained scientific controversy” in order to maintain a sense of ‘unsettled’ science amongst the public.³³ Latour worries about his own implication in this sort of strategy, noting that he has “spent some time in the past trying to show ‘the lack of scientific certainty’ inherent in the construction of facts”.³⁴ The attempt “to emancipate the public from prematurely naturalized objective facts” now seemed aimless and self-destructive, but it is very difficult to simply turn around and say that “global warming is a fact whether you like it or not”.³⁵ Further, Latour sees too many similarities between popularised versions of eminent philosophers and social critics on the one hand, and crude conspiracy theories on the other; a distrust of established accounts had created a phenomenon of ‘instant revisionism’.³⁶

Marxist critics of post-modernism had long pointed out its convenience for the holders of power and its incapacity to promote the cause of emancipation. In his 1990 book, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Terry Eagleton warned that:

... [t]hose who have developed the nervous tic of placing such vulgar terms as ‘truth’ and ‘fact’ in fastidiously distancing scare

³¹ Latour, 'What Is Iconoclash?' at 37.

³² Sheila Jasanoff, 'Beyond Epistemology: Relativism and Engagement in the Politics of Science', *Social Studies of Science*, 26/2 (1996), 393-418 at 399.

³³ Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', at 226.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, at 227.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

quotes should be careful to avoid a certain collusion between their own high-toned theoretical gestures and the most banal, routine political strategies of the capitalist power-structure.³⁷

Habermas has expressed similar concerns in his ongoing arguments with the ‘young conservatives’.³⁸ Latour’s own realisation of his implication in protecting the status quo is nonetheless important because it comes from within, and because it targets the critical stance *per se* – the modern as much as the post-modern. Latour’s particular move in response is to challenge the notion of society, and particularly the use of ‘social’ as a sort of material. He argues that the now common sense thinking that there is a ‘social context’ for ‘non-social’ activities (law, economics, science) is no longer productive.³⁹ The social is not material from which things can be made, nor glue that sticks things together; Latour turns society from an input into an output of “the specific associations provided by economics, linguistics, psychology, law, management, etc.”⁴⁰ Once the social adjective is removed, to show that something is ‘constructed’ is not to debunk it but to enhance its reality; the more constructed a thing is, the more “autonomous reality” it possesses.⁴¹ Latour regards this as the central lesson of science studies for the broader social sciences.

In inquiring sociologically into such things as, for example, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, Science and Technology Studies demonstrate the stubbornness of objects and thus show how any account of an object’s construction adds to, rather than subtracts from, its ‘reality’: ‘social’ explanations cannot debunk.⁴² One (positivist) response to this would be to consider the ‘hard’ sciences as a special domain; the postconstructivist move is to instead revise sociological methods and thinking.⁴³ For the postconstructivist, science can only be seen as socially constructed if the social includes “atoms, blood cells, sunlight, gravity, and lab equipment”; we will understand nothing if our ‘society’ is limited to scientists, CEOs and politicians.⁴⁴ All objects are given the same status as ‘factishes’ –

³⁷ Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* at 379.

³⁸ Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity Versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), 3-14 at 13.

³⁹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 1-4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, at 5.

⁴¹ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 275.

⁴² Latour, 'When Things Strike Back', at 112.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, at 109.

⁴⁴ Harman, 'The Importance of Bruno Latour for Philosophy', at 41.

Latour's neologism for fact and fetish.⁴⁵ Every thing, not only the objects of science, has the capacity to resist.⁴⁶ Postconstructivist things, in science and everywhere else, are neither matters of fact, sitting around and waiting to be discovered by humans in order to put a stop to arguments by revealing 'how things are', but nor are they matters of opinion, mere fetishes or projections of social phenomena and thus insignificant in their own physicality; their stories are therefore perfectly apt for enlarging the mind of the political actor.

Understanding the environment

Latour specifies the importance of early pragmatism ("not Rorty", he is careful to point out) to his thinking about politics in a 2007 interview. Theorists of deliberative democracy also acknowledge a debt to philosophical pragmatism. James Bohman, for example, explicitly traces to John Dewey the call for deliberation as a path to the improvement of democratic practice.⁴⁷ However, the Pragmatistic conception of political activity was in some ways more sophisticated than that drawn by deliberative theorists, and this is particularly clear in the pragmatic understanding of the nature of political speech. Political speech cannot be judged in reference to norms of communication, otherwise the entire realm of politics will seem hopelessly deviant.⁴⁸ For pragmatists, political rhetoric has as its primary task not to present an argument to an audience but to trace, build, reinforce and define a public.⁴⁹ More generally, democracy and the *demos* are both a consequence of human and nonhuman co-construction.⁵⁰ Just as Latour tells us that there is no 'social' behind social action, for pragmatists there is also no 'public' behind political action.⁵¹

Lippmann, Dewey and James found the scientific method appealing for a very different reason than more positivistic thinkers. Scientific facts were particularly interesting

⁴⁵ Latour, 'When Things Strike Back', at 113.

⁴⁶ Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', at 243.

⁴⁷ James Bohman, *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy* (Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996) at 1.

⁴⁸ Bruno Latour, 'What If We Talked Politics a Little?', *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2 (2003), 143-64 at 146.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, at 148.

⁵⁰ Roel Nahuis and Harro Van Lente, 'Where Are the Politics? Perspectives on Democracy and Technology', *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 33/5 (2008), 559-81 at 573.

⁵¹ Latour, *Reassembling the Social* at 162.

because of the apparatus that surrounded them, the need for intersubjective agreement to check accuracy, and the capacity to acknowledge error; they were particularly interesting, that is, because they were *not* providing hard answers.⁵² Latour follows them in his desire to shift emphasis from Science (“certainty, coldness, aloofness, objectivity, distance, and necessity”) to Research (“uncertain, open-ended, immersed in many lowly problems of money, instruments, and know-how; unable to differentiate as yet between hot and cold, subjective and objective, human and nonhuman”).⁵³ Where the early pragmatism often fell short, however, was in holding it sufficient for the natural environment to be an ‘issue’, where this is not politics as such but that of which politics is concerned. Latour seeks to move beyond Dewey by observing that a consistent pragmatism will not predetermine the essence of the political subject.

Such an acknowledgement is of service to political thought in general, especially to our ideas of what constitutes democratic politics. The benefits are particularly stark in relation to environmental politics, however; as Dobson argues, the political subject needs to be rethought if a green politics is to succeed.⁵⁴ Enlarging the mind was envisioned by Arendt as the prerequisite to all judgement, regardless of the political issues at stake, but it is with issues of environmental politics that the benefits of a postconstructivist enlarged mentality are most clear. Global warming is Latour’s most frequent example of a matter of concern, indicating that it remains central in his thoughts when trying to conceive of non-modern things. Asked in a 1993 interview to explain what a hybrid object is, he replied:

The object now emerging is a completely new object that doesn’t have the classical features of objectivity. ... For example, what is anthropogenic heat? Of course it is human: it is socially constructed, because it is our heat produced by our pollution; but it has the scale of the planet, so it is a natural phenomenon.⁵⁵

To some degree, the need to rethink the distinction between the social and natural in the face of such phenomena has been faced up to by the historical sciences, as seen in the first of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, in which he claims that “[a]nthropocentric explanations of climate change spell the collapse of the age-old

⁵²James T. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) at 319.

⁵³Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 20.

⁵⁴Dobson, 'Democracy and Nature', at 752.

⁵⁵Crawford, 'An Interview with Bruno Latour', at 260.

humanist distinction between natural history and human history”.⁵⁶ Arendt’s own view of history, focussed squarely on the public speech and deed of human actors, is called into question by this acknowledgement. Historians are coming to accept that the current discussions around the relations between people and things demand a less anthropocentric history – one that “considers humankind as one among many organic and non-organic beings existing on earth”.⁵⁷ Arendt’s political theory must face the same challenge, insofar as it is seen to maintain the same focus.

One of the distinctive features of environmental protest groups is their tendency to root their arguments in science. Environmentalists came to be presented as mouthpieces of the interests of plants, habitats, and wildlife. Being too close to science, however, opens up environmentalists to science studies’ critiques challenging the possible purity of any faithful representation of these non-human interests.⁵⁸ Therefore, environmentalists frequently protest against constructivist approaches to science. Eileen Crist, for example, argues that “[t]he application of constructivism to ‘nature’ and ‘wilderness’ is intellectually and political objectionable”.⁵⁹ Believing that constructivists ignore the ‘reference dimension’, Crist worries about the dilution of the power of untrammelled wilderness to act as a “site of resistance”.⁶⁰ Crist does not clearly explain why she places such stock in the value of spaces outside of human interference – an impossible ideal anyhow given that human activity affects the ecosystem as a whole. The reliance on defining and defending a shrinking space of ‘pure’ nature seems largely symbolic. Steve Yearley traces this reliance back to the beginnings of the environmentalist movement in the United States, when groups were dedicated to preserving nature reserves for the purposes of scientific experimentation.⁶¹

It is common for sociologists to insist that sociological methods do not need to change in regards to issues such as climate change; to do so, it is argued, is to abdicate the role of sociology. But when this insistence is made, such as in Grundmann and Stehr’s

⁵⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Climate of History: Four Theses', *Critical Inquiry*, 35/2 (2009), 197-222 at 201.

⁵⁷ Domanska, 'The Material Presence of the Past', at 338.

⁵⁸ Steven Yearley, 'The Environmental Challenge to Science Studies', in Sheila Jasanoff and Society for Social Studies of Science (eds.), *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (Rev. edn.; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995), 457-79 at 462-3.

⁵⁹ Eileen Crist, 'Against the Social Construction of Nature and Wilderness', *Environmental Ethics*, 26 (2004), 5-24 at 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, at 21-2.

⁶¹ Yearley, 'The Environmental Challenge to Science Studies' at 462.

reply to the concerns of Constance Lever-Tracy, little comfort is provided that the deconstruction of climate science is not a danger to political action.⁶² Burningham and Cooper are among those who have defended social constructivism in the sociology of the environment against some specific criticisms from ‘realists’. They argue that the recent history of attacks on social constructivist approaches to environmental issues, attacks claiming that constructivism is “dangerous and morally and ethically wrong”, assume that social constructivism is the equivalent of treating all truth claims of being of equal validity; it is thus a concern over relativism.⁶³ The constructivist approach is couched as a denial of the “independent reality of nature”.⁶⁴ Non-foundationalist positions are “ethically preferable”, according to the authors. Because we tend to accept the ontological status of the most prominent claim, it is often necessary to ‘upset’ this foundation by showing how it could be otherwise; the constructivist approach thereby generally favours the ‘underdog’.⁶⁵ However, Burningham and Cooper’s assumption that ethical preference should always be accorded to the less-prominent claim is troubling; even if it is true that constructivism favours the less powerful, it is not necessarily the case that this makes it ethically preferable unless one holds on to an ethical horizon that is curiously worldless for environmental studies.

More specifically, Crist’s inclusion of Latour (alongside Derrida) on a list of troublesome “postmodern perspectives” is confusing.⁶⁶ When specifying the problem of constructivist approaches to nature, she describes it as the “funnel[ling of] all fascination about knowledge creation as a story about people”.⁶⁷ Postconstructivist approaches remind us that the real target should be Idealism, and the crudely Idealist forms of social constructivism that have been long superseded within science studies, where they are known to be unsupportable.⁶⁸ Our ideas of objectivity are now ‘interactive’ (“we know the world because we are connected to it”), as opposed to ‘traditional’ (“we know the world

⁶² Reiner Grundmann and Nico Stehr, 'Climate Change: What Role for Sociology? A Response to Constance Lever-Tracy', *Current Sociology*, 58/6 (2010), 897-910.

⁶³ Kate Burningham and Geoff Cooper, 'Being Constructive: Social Constructivism and the Environment', *Sociology*, 33/2 (1999), 297-316 at 300.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, at 313.

⁶⁶ Crist, 'Against the Social Construction of Nature and Wilderness', at 16.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, at 15.

⁶⁸ Sergio Sismondo, 'Some Social Constructions', *Social Studies of Science*, 23/3 (1993), 515-53.

because we are separated from it").⁶⁹ When disinterest is seen as work accomplished by human and non-human collectives, the interactive model becomes fully compatible with our ethical standard of disinterestedness. With interactive objectivity, however, comes a realisation by some environmental thinkers that maintaining the subject/object distinction at the heart of the traditional model of objectivity is actually harmful to environmentalism. According to N. Katherine Hayles, for example, maintaining such a distinction creates the illusion of one-way agency, with the denial of agency to objects giving us a sense that acting of the world can never rebound on the (human) actor.⁷⁰

That social construction is seen as a refutation, and still used as such in political battles, indicates that a view of science as 'pure' is still prevalent; spreading a more nuanced and accurate view of the "socially situated and contingent" nature of science may help to disarm those who seek to wield constructivism as a weapon.⁷¹ This belief is supported by the study of Kinchy and Kleinman into the behaviour of members of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), in which they find ecological scientists performing a delicate process of "dual boundary-work" necessitated by the ideal of scientific purity.⁷² Scientists must assert simultaneously that their work is practical and that it is 'pure', otherwise the motivational pull behind the utility of the work can be used to undermine the purity of the results.⁷³ Kinchy & Kleinman find that the ideal of valid science as 'pure' and invalid science as 'impure' opens scientists up to charges of bias if they have particular political leanings, charges that can be as crude as accusing ecological scientists of bias on the grounds that they only pursued ecological science in the first place because of environmental sympathies and thus cannot possibly be 'objective'.⁷⁴ Conceiving of disinterest as a closer attention to things and their activity, rather than as a sort of aloofness, enfranchises such 'interested' parties.

⁶⁹ N. Katherine Hayles, 'Searching for Common Ground', in Michael E. Soulé and Gary Lease (eds.), *Reinventing Nature?: Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995), 47-64 at 48.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, at 56.

⁷¹ David Demeritt, 'The Construction of Global Warming and the Politics of Science', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91/2 (2001), 307-37 at 309.

⁷² Abby J. Kinchy and Daniel Lee Kleinman, 'Organizing Credibility: Discursive and Organizational Orthodoxy on the Borders of Ecology Ad Politics', *Social Studies of Science*, 33/6 (2003), 869-96 at 877.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, at 878.

Michel Serres asks us to forget the word ‘environment’, and therefore also any symbolic value of fencing off a space of pure ‘wilderness’. The term environment as it is commonly used places human beings at the centre of the world with natural systems ‘around’ humanity. This is a strange ordering of things, given that the Earth existed without human beings (and will do so again), yet we cannot exist without the Earth.⁷⁵ Serres argues that nature can no longer be a setting in which we act or a reference point from which we take our bearings, because our activities affect it.⁷⁶ More generally, as philosopher and architectural theorist E. A. Grosz has written, we have come to know natural and artefactual things as Darwinian rather than Newtonian; as having a history and a duration, as having been incorporated, accommodated, found and made over time by other things, including human beings.⁷⁷ Postconstructivism wants to make the either/or of natural object or social actor meaningless, and by so doing it can help to disarm the political move of debunking knowledge on the basis that it is ‘merely’ a ‘social construction’.⁷⁸ The important distinction is between the Idealist social constructivism that claimed phenomena as ontologically or nominally subjective, that is, constructed by belief and/or language, and the postconstructivist claim that the environment is a heterogeneous product of practices, instruments, satellites, models, and events.⁷⁹

Traceability and the validity of knowledge

A persistent line of thinking claims that constructivism allows all positions to be equally valid. Concerned moralists turn to ideas of ‘constrained constructivism’ to flee the curse of relativism.⁸⁰ Latour does insist that “[n]othing is by itself either logical or illogical”, but he quickly adds that “not everything is equally convincing”.⁸¹ What is *least* convincing, for Latour, is to make reference to a particular underlying nature of things, and use this as a short-hand, and a critical standard, for the work of relationship-building. Latour’s anti-critical stance shows the strong influence of classical pragmatism on his thinking. The work

⁷⁵ Serres, *The Natural Contract* at 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, at 86.

⁷⁷ Grosz, 'The Thing' at 168-9.

⁷⁸ Wehling, 'Situated Materiality', at 96-7.

⁷⁹ Demeritt, 'The Construction of Global Warming', at 311.

⁸⁰ Hayles, 'Searching for Common Ground' at 53.

⁸¹ Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* at 182.

of Dewey's that Latour most frequently cites, *The Public and Its Problems*, denies any explanatory power to "alleged, special, original, society-making causal forces, whether instincts, fiat of will, personal, or an immanent, universal, practical reason, or an indwelling, metaphysical, social essence and nature".⁸² Facts, if understood in the postconstructivist sense, are far easier to account for and much more likely to bind a public.

In his aforementioned essay entitled 'Circulating Reference', Latour draws on his observations of a botanical-pedological expedition to the Amazon forest in order to gain an empirically-informed understanding of the supposed gap between world and word that had forever obsessed philosophers of science. Latour expresses his hope that, by studying scientific practice up close and avoiding the shortcuts and "time-saving abstractions" favoured in philosophical studies, he may successfully practice a sort of 'empirical epistemology'.⁸³ The expedition studies the border of the Boa Vista forest and a neighbouring savannah, and seeks to answer the question of whether the forest is advancing upon the savannah or retreating from it. Following the scientists, Latour seeks to answer the question of what lies between the references to 'the Boa Vista forest' in the scientific report produced after the expedition and the Boa Vista forest itself.

The scientists begin by studying maps. The immeasurable extent of the collective involved in the experiment is already clear; if the work done previously by others to develop an atlas of the region had not been performed, this starting point would be much further back. Already, on day one, the 'world' under analysis implicates "the rocket ship Ariane, orbiting satellites, data banks, draftspeople, engravers, printers, and all those whose work here manifests itself as paper".⁸⁴ Assuming the map to be accurate, the work of all of these entities, and countless others, is black-boxed. The size and extent of the collective involved is a matter of practice.

Noting that the word 'reference' has etymological roots in the Latin *referre* – bring back – Latour initially follows the collection of specimens by a botanist.⁸⁵ The botanist extracts specimens of certain plants, each representing its species. Dealing with specimens

⁸² Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* at 25.

⁸³ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 26.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, at 28-9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, at 32.

in a botanical institute confers many advantages over working in the forest itself.⁸⁶ Suitably classified in a cabinet, plants collected from sites separated in time and space can become contemporaneous by being placed beside each other on a table. Rendered mobile by their detachment from the forest, specimens can be shuffled and combined by suitably skilled bodies in such a way that patterns can emerge. More important for present purposes is that the specimens are not simply ‘used’ by the researcher but collected, classified, and retained. This is essential because each sample must serve as evidence for the notes that the botanist scribes in her notebook. Analogous to footnotes in a scholarly text, the plants serve as “representation guarantors”.⁸⁷ Because the specimens are collected and stored, it will be possible to trace back from the text to the specimen. Because the specimens are labelled and the forest mapped, if the evidence is then disputed it will be possible to trace back further from the specimens to the site from which they were collected.

A Pragmatistic approach to epistemological questions highlights the active nature of inquiry. Once botanical collection is complete, Latour joins the pedologists (earth scientists specialising in soil studies) as they collect soil samples. As the soil is collected, a logbook is carefully maintained registering the precise co-ordinates, time, and depth of the lump of earth extracted. Again, without the logbook, the traceability of the soil to the forest would be lost. Furthermore, the forest itself must be transformed in order that traceability is maintained. The world, as Latour puts it, “must become a laboratory” if it is to be known.⁸⁸ Latour discovers here the tendency to confuse metrology and subjectivity that he posits in his philosophical work.⁸⁹ Just as Kant argued, knowing nature means projecting a Euclidean world onto it; but the ‘*a priori* forms of intuition’ of which Kant spoke are, in the case under study, a set of points marked by thread, carefully mapped out by a pedological instrument called the Topofil ChaixTM, a tool that appears relatively straight-forward in its design but that a brain-in-a-vat would nonetheless lack the mechanical skills to employ.⁹⁰ For a statement to be made ‘true’, the world needs transformations along with the language used to describe it.

Despite this activity, and all of the transformations made to the world in order to

⁸⁶ Ibid., at 38.

⁸⁷ Ibid., at 34.

⁸⁸ Ibid., at 43.

⁸⁹ For example, Latour, 'Trains of Thoughts', at 185.

⁹⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 43.

render it knowable, when objects are made to speak by the instruments of science they are allowed to resist what humans may wish to make of them. Representation does not always arrive in the shape of words; the chain of references might lead to objects – instruments, diagrams – or embodied skills.⁹¹ While collecting their samples, the pedologists employ a tool called a pedocomparator, which has the appearance of a simple wooden box divided into a number of labelled square compartments. Samples are placed in an appropriate cube in the pedocomparator according to the observable properties of the soil – a procedure that Latour sees as the practical work of moving from the relatively more concrete to the relatively more abstract:

We are not jumping from soil to the Idea of soil, but from continuous and multiple clumps of earth to a discrete color in a geometric cube coded in x- and y-coordinates.⁹²

Here we see worldly reflective judgement in practice in a scientific setting. In this procedure of transforming the soil through the use of an instrument, we do not impose an arbitrary classification on to formless matter. The educed meaning of the soil is ‘loaded’ into an appropriate box; the classification is not an abstract chart or table of rules of taxonomy so much as an active process of composition comprising the body of the scientist, the instrument with its own history, disciplinary conventions, and nature. The pedocomparator ‘speaks’ – for example, according to the pedologist himself, it ‘tells us if we have finished’ by revealing its blank compartments⁹³ – but much of this speech is representative of the soil. To test whether a piece of soil is more like clay or more like sand, the pedologist spits on it and kneads it between his fingers to feel the texture.⁹⁴ Again, the soil is subjected to a trial in which it is allowed to resist its classification; “there is”, Latour tells us elsewhere, “no such thing as the imposition of categories upon a formless matter”.⁹⁵

It is most certainly not necessary to accept the myth that scientific instruments offer pure representations of natural phenomena in order to register their significance. Like the human eye, an instrument of observation can often be existentially transparent but is

⁹¹ Callon and Law, 'Agency and the Hybrid *Collectif*', at 501.

⁹² Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 49. Referring to a photograph of a pedologist placing soil into a cube in the pedocomparator, Latour (in full pragmatist mode) cheekily writes: “In Figure 2.12, René abstracts.”

⁹³ *Ibid.*, at 51.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, at 63.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, at 298.

nonetheless always an active participant in representation. In the case of the pedocomparator, the reduction of the forest allows for the amplification of the soil; with the samples sitting side-by-side surprising patterns can now emerge that would be undetectable in the field.⁹⁶ Devoid of trees and monkeys, the pedocomparator, even when each of its compartments is full, does not resemble the forest – and would be of little use if it did.

By the time a final report is written by the pedological team any number of similar transformations will have taken place, each having the same amplification/reduction structure analysed by Ihde. At each stage we experience both loss and gain. We reduce through a loss of locality, particularity, multiplicity, and continuity; we amplify through a gain of compatibility, standardisation, text, calculation, circulation, and relative universality.⁹⁷ Yet Latour insists that the final report does refer to the Boa Vista forest.⁹⁸ It does so not because it ‘points’ to it as an outside referent but because the forest has been kept constant as an internal referent through the series of transformations.

Latour had long denied the existence of external references, going back to *Irreductions*, where he argued that “[r]eferents are always internal to the forces that use them as touchstones”.⁹⁹ The idea of circulating reference extends this argument. Scientific texts differ from narrative by always speaking of an internal referent positioned within the text but in non-prose form: a diagram, chart or equation, for example.¹⁰⁰ The scientific text is thus self-verifying in a way that literature generally is not. We open a gap between the world and its representation only by ignoring or forgetting one or more stages in the holding constant of an internal referent.¹⁰¹ In the report produced by the expedition under study, the text is traceable; it speaks of a diagram that summarises an instrument that extracts and codes soil that is marked and designated to its co-ordinates in the forest. Representations are in the world; they are “as material as any other thing”.¹⁰² Provided that the circulating reference is traceable, the Boa Vista forest is being allowed to speak and

⁹⁶ Ibid., at 53.

⁹⁷ Ibid., at 71.

⁹⁸ Ibid., at 57.

⁹⁹ Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* at 166.

¹⁰⁰ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 56.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., at 73.

¹⁰² Stratos Nanoglou, 'The Materiality of Representation: A Preface', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 16 (2009), 157-61 at 157.

resist, and the enduring artefacts of the study – the dried and preserved plants in the cabinet at the botanical institute, the pedocomparator loaded with soil, the carefully maintained notebooks and the published report – are able to play the relating and separating role proper to things.

Each of these steps is a movement from matter to form, but the crucial point is that one is able to return to the first stage by beginning at the last. What were mediators then become traces of action.¹⁰³ This is the essence of what Latour means by ‘circulating reference’:

To know is not simply to explore, but rather it is to be able to make your way back over your own footsteps, following the path you have just mapped out.¹⁰⁴

If the pedocomparator containing the samples were to be upended while being transported along the bumpy roads leading from the site to the township, the circuit would be broken, and the report would no longer be telling us anything ‘true’ about the Boa Vista.¹⁰⁵ For Latour, ‘true’ and ‘traceable’ are synonymous; “[t]ruth is nothing but a chain of translation without resemblance from one actor to the next”.¹⁰⁶ The diagram serving as an internal referent in the final report, at once constructed, invented, discovered and conventional, is nevertheless reliable if it allows us to trace what preceded it. This makes for an objectivity understood as both a train of hybrid constructions – a series of traces – and also a matter of reality.

The ubiquity of stories

With circular reference in mind, the distinction between factual and rational truths gains a foothold. Instead of true statements and false statements there are continuous references and interrupted references.¹⁰⁷ Isabelle Stengers relates how at ‘miracle sites’, such as Lourdes, the Catholic Church refuses to confirm a miracle until a particular healing can be

¹⁰³ Nicolas Bencherki, ‘Mediators and the Material Stabilization of Society’, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, (2011), 1-6 at 3.

¹⁰⁴ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope* at 74.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, at 69.

¹⁰⁶ Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Anamnesis; Prahran, Vic.: re.press, 2009) at 76.

¹⁰⁷ Latour, *Pandora’s Hope* at 97.

shown by a specially employed doctor to be inexplicable in reference to natural causes.¹⁰⁸ Factual truths – including those presented in scientific literature – are worldly and able to play assembling and separating roles provided they are traceable. Being traceable, they are of significance to a common world outside of the boundaries of their discipline. In the case of both untraceable claims to truth, and of world-views and theories of all kinds, while serving a pragmatic purpose within a discipline (such as the role played by the miracle within the church), they are untraceable to any worldly referent and therefore have no legitimate political gathering or separating power. The need for traceability explains why politics needs to take place in the space between men, and helps to redeem Arendt’s heavily criticised exclusion from politics of compassion and pity; the “egotistically or romantically inward, intimate, or private” which, Kateb tells us, “fail to measure up to [Arendt’s] criteria of freedom and worldliness”, do so if and because they make for untraceable claims.¹⁰⁹ A politics centred on the heads and hearts of men, rather than those things in-between that interest them, will baffle the spectator who is left with no traces to follow. When the space between men is abolished, such as in a politics of passion or compassion, there is no possibility of retrieving the material by opening the ‘black box’. Untraceable claims should be regarded as miracles, with all of the incredulity implied by the term.

Michel Serres’ study of the gnomon brings out the need to enlarge the mind to natural and artefactual entities as key parts of any collective. The gnomon is the shaft of the sundial; it casts a shadow on the marble face of the sundial, which is often thought of as a primitive clock, but was actually more of an observatory.¹¹⁰ Serres writes of the gnomon as a machine rather than an instrument; it inscribes knowledge automatically onto a surface “as if the world knew itself”, without any need for intervention by what we would now call a human subject.¹¹¹ Any person practicing geometry can trace their apparently abstract calculations to the shadow writings of the gnomon upon the marble, as objectified in tables of data. The mind is then enlarged to include the gnomon’s point of view, and in turn the source of light; the speech of the world which no solitary interpreter of direct sensory input would ever hear. Serres sees theory, or the ‘laws’ of trigonometry, as mere

¹⁰⁸ Stengers, 'Comparison as a Matter of Concern', at 57.

¹⁰⁹ Kateb, 'Freedom and Worldliness', at 144.

¹¹⁰ Michel Serres, 'Gnomon: The Beginnings of Geometry in Greece', in Michel Serres (ed.), *A History of Scientific Thought: Elements of a History of Science: Translated from the French* (Oxford ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995), 73-123 at 79.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, at 80 & 83.

shortcuts to this speech, obviating the need to consult unmanageable tabulated lists of data.¹¹² The tools of geometry, such as rulers and compasses, embody the memory of the gnomon.¹¹³ Euclid's work, Serres concludes, can only be explained by an anthropology of a community that includes the Sun, the gnomon, and the compass – all part of the collective that constructed geometry.¹¹⁴ Mathematics, astronomy and geography are true because of, and to the extent to which, they are known as a collective inclusive of these shadows on the sundial and all of the traces that take us back through the gnomon to the source of light.

Treating things as mediators means that there are no shortcuts to uncovering cause and effect but, as Nicolas Bencherki explains, all is far from lost: “[a]s they carry actions elsewhere and at other times, mediators also become traces of those actions”.¹¹⁵ The chain of mediators is the traceable path of reference, which can be followed in an effort to discover how some thing came to be stabilised. An understanding of scientific observation as similarly mediatory, yet also traceable and thus representative insofar as the chain of transformations is intact, allows for the inclusion of scientific realities in the *sensus communis*. Thiele hopes that storytelling can alleviate Arendt's notoriously strict demarcation of the social and political, because stories can bring the social into the public sphere and make them matters of public concern.¹¹⁶ We can now go a step further. Latour's belief that the identity of any thing is a product of progressive mediations means things are only as they are because of a series of translations: “chains of mediations are not the same thing as an effortless passage from cause to effect”.¹¹⁷ Traceability is always relative, and any claim that one event was already contained ‘in’ another is either shorthand or fraudulent; because of translation, every transfer is also a set of transformations of varying opacity.¹¹⁸ Harman draws out a crucial implication: this means that storytellers are needed to narrate the formation of identity; and that they are needed for literally *everything*¹¹⁹ – including what

¹¹² Ibid., at 87.

¹¹³ Ibid., at 115.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., at 117.

¹¹⁵ Bencherki, 'Mediators and the Material Stabilization of Society', at 3.

¹¹⁶ Thiele, 'Ontology of Action'.

¹¹⁷ Latour, *Pandora's Hope* at 298.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Harman, 'The Importance of Bruno Latour for Philosophy', at 40.

was previously called ‘nature’, but also including the technoscientific and bureaucratic domains of activity denied a place in Arendt’s framework because they are imagined to proceed through unworldly deductive rationality.

Truth will not be revealed unless stories are told. In promoting the need for stories to be told about technology, David Kaplan observes that the turn to narrative in order to understand has continued to privilege humans as subjects for stories – with events and things treated as a (curiously fixed) context for human narratives rather than subjects of stories of their own.¹²⁰ But stories can, and are, told about things and natural events all of the time, a point made most emphatically in Latour’s *Aramis*, where the titular technological object – a transit system, in this case – is spoken of and spoken for as if it were the main character of a novel.¹²¹ Against Arendt in her anti-modern moments, the character of the referent – such as whether it is a product of modern technoscience – need not play any role in its status as an object of worldly, enlarged, political judgement. An inscription produced in a scientific trial or in the mediated observation of events is to be regarded, with full awareness of its shortcomings, as another narrated standpoint, another perspective upon reality to which the imagination of the enlarged mind is opened. All sorts of activity, in all domains, can become stories – provided that there is something to tell, which there always is provided the traces are preserved.

Traceability versus Agnotology

For Arendt, as we have seen, politically relevant storytelling reveals aspects of the particulars of the world without various forms of world-concealing ‘anaesthetics’. The need to retain the normative force of Arendt’s exclusion of anaesthetic stories from the enlargement of the mind can be demonstrated with reference to recent studies of ‘agnotology’ – the exploitation or construction of ignorance in order to deter certain political responses to what is known.¹²² The centrality of epistemological concerns in the

¹²⁰ David M. Kaplan, 'How to Read Technology Critically', in Jan-Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (eds.), *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology* (Basingstoke England ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 83-99 at 83.

¹²¹ Bruno Latour, *Aramis, or, the Love of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

¹²² ‘Agnotology’ is the title of an edited collection on the subject; see Robert N. Proctor, 'Agnotology: A Missing Term to Describe the Cultural Production of Ignorance (and Its Study)', in Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 1-36.

sociology of knowledge has tended to bias studies towards how we know, but not how we don't know. Smithson called for a 'social theory of ignorance' as early as 1985, asking that attention be paid to the construction of ignorance, not only of knowledge.¹²³ What is now called agnotology has only become a popular field of research in the years following the release of a memo written by public relations expert Frank Luntz. The 'Luntz Memo', as it has come to be known, was leaked to the Environmental Working Group in 2003. 'The Environment: A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America' was a report on how government action on global warming could be deferred or prevented by employing certain strategies in public communications. Frank Luntz begins by informing his readers, in a fashion reminiscent of Arendt's fear in 'Truth and Politics', that stories, "even if factually inaccurate", work better than truth.¹²⁴ For the public relations industry, of course, this is not to be lamented but rather exploited. What follows is a list of instructions that use the provisionality, openness, and uncertainty inherent in all science as a tactic for delaying any action based on scientific findings. Some of the most relevant and striking passages in the document follow:

Winning the Global Warming Debate: an overview.

The scientific debate remains open. Voters believe that there is no consensus about global warming within the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate, and defer to scientists and other experts in the field.¹²⁵

Americans want a free and open discussion ... Emphasize the importance of 'acting only with the facts in hand' and 'making the right decision, not the quick decision'.¹²⁶

...

LANGUAGE THAT WORKS:

¹²³ M. Smithson, 'Toward a Social Theory of Ignorance', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 15/2 (1985), 151-72 at 152.

¹²⁴ Frank Luntz, 'The Environment: A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America', *Environmental Working Group*, http://www.ewg.org/files/LuntzResearch_environment.pdf, (2003) at 132.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, at 137.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

We must not rush to judgment before the facts are in. We need to ask more questions. We deserve more answers.¹²⁷

Scientists can extrapolate anything from today's data, but that doesn't tell us anything about tomorrow's world.¹²⁸

The strategy is to exploit the fact that laboratory experiments are always imperfect simulations of the world, and to associate any claim to proof with dogmatism.¹²⁹

Alternative explanations are not necessary; evidence can be effectively countered with advertisements and funded research claiming merely that the evidence does not 'prove' the case; that this is a truism is lost on much of the audience because of the common view of science as discovering absolute truth.

The Lutz memo echoes a similar document prepared for the tobacco industry in 1969 by Brown & Williamson. Noting the 'unfortunate' absence of any evidence that cigarette smoking is actually good for health, Brown & Williamson recommend countering public health campaigns with uncertainty:

Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the 'body of fact' as it exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy.¹³⁰

The employment of similar strategies across multiple fields is no accident and its history has been comprehensively traced by Naomi Oreskes; in the United States, many of the same retired scientists and PR specialists have been involved in multiple strategic campaigns to postpone scientific closure:

- industrial activity and acid rain;
- CFCs and ozone depletion;
- tobacco use and lung cancer;
- passive smoking and ill health; and
- human activity and global warming.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid., at 138.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Proctor, 'Agnotology' at 12.

¹³⁰ Brown & Williamson, 'Smoking and Health Proposal', *Legacy Tobacco Documents Library*, <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/ogy93f00/pdf>, (University of California, 1969) at 4-5.

¹³¹ Naomi Oreskes, Erik M. Conway, and Matthew Shindell, 'From Chicken Little to Dr. Pangloss: William

The aim is always to prevent or delay any momentum for regulation.¹³² “Manufactured uncertainty” based on the permanent contestability of scientific findings remains a common tactic in the area of public health.¹³³ David Michaels follows the strategies of aspirin manufacturers successfully delaying FDA regulation of the risk of Reye’s syndrome by denying certainty, drawing upon the certainty of uncertainty: ‘We do know that no medication has been proven to cause Reyes’.¹³⁴ In any field where corporate interests want protection from regulation, the lack of absolute certainty can be employed as a shield against inconvenient scientific findings regarding the harm resulting from commercially lucrative activity.¹³⁵ A non-object-focussed politics allows this strategy to prevail too easily.

Oreskes regularly points to the idea of ‘media balance’ as a very useful tool for corporate interests to enable uncertainty to be prolonged.¹³⁶ The ‘balance card’ is very useful for institutes to play when they wish to cultivate ignorance. On the surface, media balance appears to redress power imbalances by giving contesting views equal space, but this is hopelessly Idealist, in the philosophical sense, because it ignores the existence of nonhumans and the importance of a traceable chain of references. Maxwell and Jules Boykoffs’ study of the “prestige press” (the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*) in the United States from 1998 to 2002 shows that miscommunication over the claims of climate science result not only from conspiracies of the cultivation of ignorance but also from the very norm of media balance itself.¹³⁷ Roughly a third of the articles studied by the Boykoffs reflected the scientific position on the issue of global warming and over half gave a ‘balanced’ account; a full three-quarters of articles were ‘balanced’ in regards to the need for action, demonstrating an even greater

Nierenberg, Global Warming, and the Social Deconstruction of Scientific Knowledge', *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences*, 38/1 (2008), 109-52 at 71.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ See, for example, the analysis in David Michaels, 'Manufactured Uncertainty: Contested Science and the Protection of the Public's Health and Environment', in Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 90-107.

¹³⁴ Ibid., at 90.

¹³⁵ Ibid., at 96.

¹³⁶ Oreskes, Conway, and Shindell, 'From Chicken Little to Dr. Pangloss', at 64.

¹³⁷ Maxwell T. Boykoff and Jules M. Boykoff, 'Balance as Bias: Global Warming and the Us Prestige Press', *Global Environmental Change*, 14 (2004), 125-36 at 126.

caution on matters directly effecting policy.¹³⁸ The authors conclude that this is so far from the scientific discourse as to render the ‘prestige’ media next to useless as an actor in the public sphere if measured by the standards of providing a worldly point of view.

Journalism is thus an instrument of distortion:

The failed discursive translation between the scientific community and popular mass-mediatised discourse is not random; rather the mis-translation is systematic and occurs for perfectly logical reasons rooted in journalistic norms, and values.¹³⁹

It is perhaps more accurate to locate the ‘mis-translation’ in the *selection* of which journalistic norms are to be prioritised. The journalistic principle of balance has gradually overtaken the alternative norm of testing claims for validity, giving rise to a distortion that reinforces the ideological bias towards uncertainty.¹⁴⁰ In a different study of the activity of tobacco companies, Jon Christensen argues that the promotion of certain journalistic values make the media a valuable ally in the production of ignorance, with noble ideas such as ‘objectivity’ and ‘balance’ exceptionally, and ironically, useful for the purposes of media manipulation.¹⁴¹ Many scholars respond by presenting “investigative reporting and narratives” as alternative techniques, and arguing that a resurgence of the norms of investigative journalism is needed to replace the search for balance in reporting.¹⁴² Investigative journalism works against agnotological strategies by uncovering hidden traces.

Smithson warns us that ignorance is often power in that it allows for responsibility shifting and, in the terms employed in this thesis, the severing of traceable references.¹⁴³ The necessary reorientation is most succinctly called for by David Demeritt, when he suggests a movement from Truth to Trust.¹⁴⁴ Noortje Marres has recently argued that embracing traceability as a measure of trust demands that objects meet a norm of publicity

¹³⁸ Ibid., at 130-32.

¹³⁹ Ibid., at 134.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., at 127.

¹⁴¹ Jon Christensen, 'Smoking out Objectivity: Journalistic Gears in the Agnotology Machine', in Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 266-82 at 267-70.

¹⁴² For example, *ibid.*, at 270; and S. Holly Stocking and Lisa W. Holstein, 'Manufacturing Doubt: Journalists' Roles and the Construction of Ignorance in a Scientific Controversy', *Public Understanding of Science*, 18 (2009), 23-42 at 37.

¹⁴³ Smithson, 'Toward a Social Theory of Ignorance', at 169.

¹⁴⁴ Demeritt, 'The Construction of Global Warming', at 329.

in order to be considered politically active.¹⁴⁵ She looks to the Internet as a democracy enhancer, not because it allows billions of people to tell each other what they think, but because it presents as a site for the publicisation of matters of concern. Concluding his article about the exploitation of uncertainty by commercial interests in the field of public health, Michaels makes recommendations for reforming scientific research. The primary reform demanded by Michaels is to force corporate studies to make raw data available, as is required of government-funded studies.¹⁴⁶ Along similar lines, but targeting state projects, Peter Galison claims that the official classification of documents based on state secrecy is an oft-unnecessary source of ignorance.¹⁴⁷ Galison calculates that roughly five to ten times as many classified pages exist compared with open literature, usually because they cite other previously classified documents.¹⁴⁸ As a result, huge sums are spent on projects that can never provide the chain of references necessary to validate them. Galison thus recommends a reconsideration of what information needs to be classified and kept out of the public domain. Policies of the kind suggested by Michaels and Galison can gain support from the equation of traceability and truth. Because studies come to us with their meanings embedded, it is essential that they can be traced back through the chain of references. An untraceable study does not have the necessary strength to render uncertain an alternative traceable study, and simply has no role to play in political affairs.

Conclusions

This all seems a long way from Arendt's fear that rational truths will infiltrate and destroy the political realm, and a little too close to the always-contestable politics of agonistic democrats. It also presents as a shock to post-positivism in science studies. When corporate interests start using the uncertainty of scientific work in order to protect themselves from regulation, and respected media sources prioritise the balancing of interests over validity testing, it seems that the task of questioning the rationality of science is no longer a useful one. Rather, it is a new realism that is politically required, albeit one

¹⁴⁵ Marres, 'Front-Staging Nonhumans'.

¹⁴⁶ Michaels, 'Manufactured Uncertainty' at 103.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Galison, 'Removing Knowledge: The Logic of Modern Censorship', in Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 37-56.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, at 39.

that gives up the 'quest for certainty'. The space between men is given life, maintained, and brought to attention through storytelling. The enlarged mind is open to a plurality of these stories and will be capable of passing judgement on the world that is opened up through them, without the appeal to various forms of anaesthesia. In this alternative reading of the enlargement of the mind, objects that are understood through stories will retain their novelty, and be able to exceed, affect, and breach the frameworks of understanding that are already held, thus potentially anchoring a *sensus communis*. The deliberative and agonistic theories of democracy that have been derived from the enlarged mentality, however, display another kind of anaesthesia when it comes to deciding what is and isn't a political subject. To trace the space between men fully, the privileging of speech and the ontological distinction between the natural and the artificial both need to be broken down and replaced with a pragmatic distinction between the traceable and untraceable.

Conclusions

The preceding chapters constitute an argument for reconsidering the notion of the enlarged mentality as a political capacity that can only be defined as such if it is understood as adopting the perspective of the world, rather than a mere aggregation or negotiation of subjective attitudes towards it. The predominant procedural and deliberative models of democracy trace their own roots to Hannah Arendt's work on judgement, and especially to her concept of 'representative thought' or the 'enlarged mentality', which is itself taken from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. The standard theoretical employment of the enlarged mentality, as a support for intersubjective conceptions of politics, stems from a selective and erroneous reading of the concept as it appears in Kant and Arendt. This thesis has presented an argument for the enlarged mentality to be understood in an object-oriented manner. The point of departure for this reading of political judgement is Arendt's insistence that politics ought to be about what stands 'in-between' men – giving them things in common to gather around while at the same time preventing them from merging into an amorphous mass, allowing for a plurality of perspectives and thus the maintenance of distinction.

While Arendt's use of the Kantian enlarged mentality as a principle of political judgement exerts a significant influence on political theory, her remarks on the subject are fragmentary, scattered through diverse lectures and texts, and abbreviated by her death. It was thus necessary to encompass the idea in its source in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. If we read Kant and Arendt in a manner that foregrounds the need to adopt the perspective of the world, then the enlarged mentality, despite its ring of psychologisation, becomes a sort of object-oriented approach to political judgement, perfectly complementary to Bruno Latour's evocation of a 'parliament of things' and supportive of the idea that political thought must pay close attention to the issues, things and events that divide and separate. In addition to supporting Latour's claim that a redirection of democratic theory to pay due attention to the objects of concern is necessary because of the increasing significance of scientific and technological issues to our political judgements, the thesis has added previously untapped philosophical support to object-oriented models of democracy from the Kantian enlarged mentality, which, via Arendt, is the main source of inspiration for the opposing procedural and deliberative models of democracy.

The first major claim prefigured in the introductory chapter is that the enlarged mentality is primarily concerned with allowing the novel elements of a thing or event to anchor a plurality of responses toward it. To this end, the opening chapter examined the enlarged mentality as it is employed by Kant both in his critical aesthetics in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and in his non-critical anthropology. In the *Critique of Judgment* the enlarged mentality is intended to establish a purely formal appeal to a posited community of judges, as necessitated in order to establish aesthetic judgement as something more persuasive than a mere claim to personal taste. Kant believes that a universal psychological commonality can be deduced from this critique of aesthetic judgement, and he uses the term *sensus communis* to point to the sharing of human mental capacities thus shown to exist. Kant is far from consistent with this formal rendering of the *sensus communis*, however, and a more substantive notion of community and of an empirically shared common sense was shown to bleed into his work at various points. A range of understandings of the enlarged mentality then emerged from the resulting variety of readings of Kant; including the influential interpretations provided by Lyotard and Gadamer. Hannah Arendt's application of the enlarged mentality to political judgement was introduced; as with aesthetics, Arendt claims, political claims demand a certain transcendence of merely private taste.

The tension between the formal and substantive *sensus communis* was then shown to be revealing of a lack of attention to the object of judgement, and thus leading to a fruitless search for commonality in the absence of that which anchors a variety of viewpoints. Interpretations of the *Critique of Judgment* are limited by their exclusively intersubjective focus, with the difference coming down to an argument over the relative power of shared psychological faculties versus sociological sources of common values and meanings. The second chapter thus argued for the displacement of a psychologized reading of the *sensus communis* by an interpretation in which a plurality of judges is related only by their sharing of an external referent. The particularity of this referent establishes the conditions for disinterest, which is fully correlated with, and in fact necessitates, an intense engagement with the particularity of the object in question. It is the novel aspects of the things 'in-between' that give them the capacity to relate but also to separate – by breaking through any crystallised set of non-reflective understandings that might prevent a plurality of responses.

The second major claim prefigured in the introductory chapter is that democratic theorists, when drawing upon the enlarged mentality, should not lose sight of Arendt's account of the political stance as one taken from the perspective of the world. Chapter three pursued this argument through an examination of the type of judgement that Kant called 'reflective' and that Arendt found so useful in accounting for the peculiarities of political judgement. Reflective judgements retain a focus on the concrete particular without the merely 'determinative', or deductive, application of a pre-existing framework for understanding. For Arendt, these particulars are best understood through access to stories of a certain kind – stories that point to the world rather than to the inner experience of human beings. The role of the enlarged mentality in Arendt's reworking of Kant, and thus in political thinking as such, is of benefit only if that which is judged remains centred in preference to he or she whom passes judgement. In this alternative reading of the enlargement of the mind, objects that are understood through stories will retain their novelty, and be able to exceed, affect, and breach frameworks of understanding, thus potentially anchoring a *sensus communis*. This capacity, however, depends on the capacity of the political understanding to extract, acknowledge, and retain the novel aspects of that to which it is concerned.

This reading of the enlargement of the mind was contrasted with some prominent alternatives. Deliberative and agonistic approaches to democratic theory both admit a large debt to Arendt's reworking of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, but this debt involves an illegitimate abstraction from Arendt's concern with the worldliness of political judgement. Chapter five moved on to describe some of the ways that the readings of the enlargement of the mind found in intersubjectively-oriented democratic theories can be reoriented in order to hear the demands of the things in-between men. The revised enlarged mentality was found to upset the definitions of the objects and subjects of political activity, presenting a challenge to the influence of Arendt on influential democratic theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe. Challenging the tendency of political theory to equate political subjectivity with the human citizen inevitably gives rise to questions surrounding the political agency of non-humans. Bruno Latour's discussion of agency as distributed across the boundary of the human and non-human was proposed as an extension to the tendency among Arendtian political theorists to distribute agency intersubjectively. Taking up insights from pragmatistic philosophy, resistance was suggested as the most apt way of understanding political agency; however,

the question of nonhuman agency is one that needs further exploration, possibly in relation to the emerging object-oriented ontologies spinning off from Graham Harman's syntheses of Martin Heidegger and Latour.

The third central claim is that politically-relevant stories are told by everything and about everything, inclusive of technoscientific domains, and that this acknowledgement requires us to take a critical stance vis-à-vis Arendt's own attitude towards technology. Arendt's unfinished reading of reflective judgement does not provide enough scope for properly expanding the enlarged mentality to encompass the non-human. In chapter four, shortcomings of Arendt's position vis-à-vis ecological and technoscientific matters of concern were traced to certain anti-modern prejudices inherited from phenomenology and, in particular, her teacher Heidegger. Through examples from STS literature, the phenomenological preference for direct sensory experience was shown to exclude the perspectives of things that can only be brought to human attention through amplificatory artefacts. Drawing especially on the postphenomenology of Don Ihde, it was seen as necessary that the range of stories available be expanded to include the perspectives of the world inscribed for us by scientific instruments, where these perspectives are acknowledged as one-among-many and thus contributing to the enlargement of the mind – expanding, rather than shutting down, the space of judgement.

We therefore arrive at a theory of political judgement, building on Kant and Arendt, that maintains an object-orientation and that accepts the role of technology in populating the space in-between. The fourth central claim perfigured in the introduction is a normative demand that democratic judgement be responsive to multiple differently situated and mediated stories about hybrid activities. This suggests the need to turn attention to the norm of publicity, and particularly whether the things in-between are being given the maximum opportunity to resist any determinative position that may be taken in reference to them. Drawing on Latourian traceability, the final chapter indicated one way that the democratic norm of publicity may be understood in such a way that material resistance is captured. This is in the spirit of pragmatist views on politics, especially Walter Lippman's account of the manner in which issues trace a public, but goes beyond these accounts by providing a standard for the measurement of the public-ness of any claim about the world; a measure based on the quantity and quality of stories constructing the claim. These stories, furthermore, are to be understood in postconstructivist fashion as

revealed by, and revealing of, heterogeneous human and non-human actants. Understanding the space between men in a postconstructivist way means that it is constituted by stories about hybrid political actors, in which the most crucial measure of the political story is its traceability. Not only is every story different, but also every story involves multiple, distinctive distributions of agency, thus ensuring the novelty of events is communicated. Traceability and novelty are both enhanced by the depth of the transparency of a story, and thus the intactness and publicness of the chain of references and the various steps of representation involved. This work primarily sought to establish the need for a fully developed political epistemology, and there was limited scope to actually carry out this task; further work in this area is necessitated by an acceptance of the central arguments of the thesis. However, towards this end the final chapter suggests some ways in which the shift in the focus of democratic norms called for by the reformulation of the enlarged mentality might take effect.

In summary, when understood as an intersubjective principle, the enlarged mentality has been a useful mechanism for deliberative democratic theory to underline the importance of broad participation in a public sphere where discussion is oriented by the communicative rather than coercive elements of discourse. By discarding the goal of consensus, agonistic democratic theory has emphasised instead the value of the enlarged mentality in defending the need for democracies to remain permanently open to contestation amongst differently situated perspectives prepared to engage each other in a robust but non-violent manner. Enlarging the mind then helps to establish the conditions through which competing interests can come to see their own position as one-amongst-many, thus transferring relationships of us-and-them antagonism into the agonistic pressing of partial claims. The reformulation of the enlarged mentality presented here supplements these positions by maintaining the fallibility of all claims but insisting on the importance of the nonhuman world in anchoring the *sensus communis* and also, through instruments of observation and measurement, in bringing the world into the purview of political concern. This is seen as preferable to the deliberative and agonistic approaches, especially in reference to the kinds of technoscientific politics of the environment to which the epistemic turn in democratic theory seeks to respond. Finally, this work suggests a new way of measuring the relative democratisation of a political space. One marker of democracy is the extent to which literally every thing, regardless of traditional divisions of subject and object, with which the democratic space is or might be concerned is given the opportunity

to resist preconceived frameworks of understanding and thus present as a novelty of and around which a *sensus communis* of autonomous but meaningful judgements can form.

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