

Arendt and Kant on politics

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Much has been written in recent decades about the possibility of identifying a specifically ‘political moment’, one in which a genuinely political mode of agency, as distinct from social or moral modes, becomes possible. Many on the political left especially have expressed worry that the very category of ‘the political’ is being emptied of meaning, increasingly indiscernible from the operations of more powerful infrastructures of liberal or late capitalist modernity. One of the authors most responsible for this interest in ‘the autonomy of the political’ is certainly Hannah Arendt. One commentator on her work, writing in 1990, drew attention to an ‘Arendtian mood’¹ discernible in much contemporary political theory, and this mood seems not to have passed. Still today, more than thirty years after her death, attention to Arendt’s political philosophy remains essential to any adequate understanding of current debates about the status and possibility of the political.

What follows is an effort to engage a single though crucial dimension of Arendt’s political thought, her reading of Kant, and to focus specifically on how two short texts by Kant, the appendices to his ‘Perpetual Peace’ (PP), challenge her claim to be developing the political philosophy Kant would have written ‘had he had the strength’. These pages therefore offer a critique of the exegetical value of Arendt’s work on Kant, at least as contained in her *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, yet refrain from challenging the defensibility of her political project taken on its own terms. Indeed, I would argue, one may prefer Arendt’s project to Kant’s without thereby accepting her claim that there is anything especially Kantian about it. In pursuit of these aims, (1) I begin by situating Arendt’s work on Kant in the context of her larger project, focusing especially on her motivations – what does she want to find in Kant, and why was she drawn specifically to his work on aesthetic judgement? What does she hope to do with it? There are very specific reasons for her attraction, I suggest, apparent once her attention to Kant is considered in relation to her larger project, and (2) I offer an account of these. On this basis, (3) I consider two arguments made by Kant in the appendices to PP which stand out rather starkly in

¹ See Steinberger 1990.

contradiction to Arendt's reading. In conclusion, I offer a new defence of my suggestion that, as attractive as Arendt's project may be in our times, she is wrong to confuse it with Kant's own.

Arendt's diagnosis of modernity

In her 1953 essay 'Understanding and Politics' Arendt asserts the need for a new investigation into the 'nature and function of human judgment'². Modern societies have in her view reached an aporia of judgment. Social and material conditions in the modern period have developed in such a way as to leave large segments of populations flatly unable to judge at all. This situation has special import for Arendt since for her the power of judgment plays a crucial mediating role between the two other major human faculties, thinking and willing. As presented in *The Life of the Mind*, thinking is 'nowhere' and timeless, concerned with things invisible, while willing is our capacity for radical new beginnings, an 'abyss of pure spontaneity'. Only the exercise of judgment can bring these two together to 'realize thought' and, in doing so, ensure the integrity of the human as such. An aporia of judgement, understood in these terms, is certainly more than a *problème philosophique*.

How have we reached this condition? The story Arendt tells³ begins with the rise of industrial capitalism in the late eighteenth century. Modes of production originating in that period, she thinks, brought with them a fundamental change in how we conceive the value of 'cultural objects', meaning any product of the human arts as opposed to the (technical) sciences. Whereas previously such objects were valued intrinsically as expressions of a culture's identity and a means of ensuring its continuity, the spread of industrial modes of production has encouraged a neglect of such cultural particularities. Objects of all kinds, 'cultural' or otherwise, have been universally re-conceived as commodities bearing a single relevant form of value, exchange value. The effect of this process of 'commodification' on human societies, she thinks, has been devastating.

One can best understand this effect and its role in Arendt's political thought by recalling her distinction between labor, work, and action set out in *The Human Condition*. *Labor* produces things like food, clothing, and shelter which sustain our animal existence and, to this end, are consumed more or less immediately. *Work*, by contrast, produces things like paintings,

² Cited in Yar (2000), p. 15.

³ Material in this section is drawn from helpful surveys in Ingram (1988) and Yar (2000).

monuments, or constitutions which make possible a more-than-animal, human existence. Work produces, that is, ‘cultural objects’. These objects are valued intrinsically, and are less transitory than the products of labor. They aim at the achievement of goals, determined by ourselves, that are more distinctively human and expressive of our particular identity than is the effort merely to survive. It is by means of work, not labor, that human beings create a ‘world’ for themselves able to serve as a context for *action*, the third and crucial element of Arendt’s *Vita Activa*.

Human action is our capacity to bring about new and undetermined ‘beginnings’ in history. In moments of action, we initiate chains of events over which we have no control and the ends of which we can never anticipate. Furthermore, action is necessarily plural; one can labor or work in solitude, but act only in the presence of others. In these respects the moment of action – as free and undetermined, and as necessarily plural – presents itself as a distinctively ‘*political* moment’ in the sense suggested above. This kind of ‘political action’, accompanied by a adequate form of judgment, opens the way to an integrally human way of life and form of society that is political in the fullest sense, and which for Arendt (as for Aristotle) seems to represent the height of human achievement.

Yet action and judgment are possible only in the context of a world, and worlds are created only by the activity of work and the cultural objects work produces. By making these cultural objects into commodities, Arendt thinks, we have in the same gesture made *work*, the activity proper to their creation, into *labor*, and collapsed the labor/work distinction. This forgetting of work leaves us unable to create a world, and thus incapable of genuine action or judgment. We have reached today, she suggests, a condition of ‘worldlessness’. In place of traditional human societies, constituted by the worlds opened up by their cultural objects, we find ourselves in ‘mass societies’, constituted by the mere exchange of commodities or the false certainties of ideology. The ‘man of action’ formerly typical of political life has been replaced in these new societies by the ‘mass man’, incapable of action and unable to judge.

Two political threats follow from this worldless condition, and to overcome these will be the main motivation underlying Arendt’s project. The first was closest to her own concerns: totalitarianism. In a totalitarian state the incapacity for action and judgment is so complete that even rulers regard themselves as pawns in the inevitable dialectical unfolding of the laws of history. In such societies there is nothing to judge and, in a real sense, nothing to ‘do’; it is enough simply to consider rationally the laws of history and determine the optimal means of

facilitating their realization. Eichmann, who was ‘just following orders’, was famously efficient – and unthinking – in speeding the Jews to their fates. He is Arendt’s most vivid illustration of this first threat. The second threat has been of special concern to recent writers, though it is also developed by Arendt; namely, the threat of a liberal democracy dominated by merely technical, social concerns. The collapse of work into labor, Arendt thinks, is easily accompanied by a collapse of the political into the social. The security of limiting oneself to the efficient management of *social* problems is, after all, easily preferred to the indeterminacies of radical *political* change. In both totalitarianism and merely managerial liberal democracy, the political is forgotten and we remain without a world.

Arendt’s attraction to Kant

To address these threats and renew the possibility of politics, Arendt needs to overcome our condition of worldlessness; she needs somehow to open up a world. For her, the archetypal example of such a world is the ancient Greek *polis* where the assembly of material cultural objects, perhaps most importantly the *agora* itself, made possible a rise of political ‘men of action’ of such quality and in such numbers as has not been witnessed by any subsequent generation. Yet for all her admiration and even nostalgia for ancient Greece, Arendt seems aware that there can be no simple return to a pre-modern world of tradition. Such traditions lie in fragments all around, in a way Alasdair MacIntyre would describe vividly in the opening pages of his *After Virtue*. The chains of memory and social and material continuities which could allow for such a simple renewal of the old have been broken irremediably by the pressures of life in mass society.

Yet if a simple return to tradition is impossible, and if the prospect of rebuilding a world *materially* through the production and ‘re-valuation’ of cultural objects seems impracticable on a large scale under current conditions, then what option remains? Only one, I would suggest. Rather than *starting from* a materially constituted world of cultural objects – a *topical* space – and looking for the emergence of genuine political action on that basis, Arendt seems to suggest that we start by creating a ‘world’ in a rather different sense as a *meta-topical* space⁴; a ‘world’

⁴ The notion of a meta-topical space is developed by Charles Taylor in his *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard/Belknap, 2007), and is closely related to the notion, adopted by Taylor from Cornelius Castoriades, of a ‘social imaginary’. The sort of space I am suggested Arendt would like to develop should be understood as a structure on this level of the shared ‘background’ in Taylor’s and Castoriades’s sense.

constituted by the collective and self-conscious gaze of a worldwide community of judging spectators. While a world in the topical sense will always be, like the *polis*, geographically local, and would present itself in our times perhaps in the setting of a commune or in efforts to invigorate particular urban or regional political cultures, a ‘world’ opened up in a meta-topical sense is potentially global, and extends as broadly as the community of spectators itself. It is potentially broad enough, that is, to pose a real challenge to the infrastructures of mass society.

It is important that this sort of meta-topical ‘world’ could never be an *end* for Arendt, and should in no way be regarded as supplanting local efforts at world creation. One may however regard it as a *means*, or rather as a kind of enabling condition for the re-creation in our times of a full-fledged world in the primary, topical sense. By raising to self-consciousness a community of spectators able to open up a context for action – by encouraging, so to say, the general emergence of a political culture grounded in a common exercise of reflective judgment – it may be hoped that, with time, action enabled by this context will bring about new social and material conditions more adequate to our human condition than those of mass society, and thus make possible in practice a more thorough and lasting overcoming of modern worldlessness.

And so I would argue that Arendt is drawn to Kant’s theory of reflective judgment in the third Critique because it seems to offer this kind of meta-topical platform for action. I have of course already relied on several elements of that theory in developing this suggestion. Yet there seem to be other more specific features of the theory which attract Arendt, since the platform it promises seems to be exactly the sort she needs.

The kind of action a world enables will be determined in a significant sense by the nature of that world itself – ‘determined’, that is, in the same non-deterministic sense in which the size, orientation, and general character of a theatrical stage will make possible certain kinds of performance and make impossible or at least difficult certain others. The form of action possible in a Greek *polis*, in this sense, may be expected to differ significantly from that possible in medieval Paris or in Germany between the wars, just as a successful performance of the same play may look quite different in Carnegie Hall than in a small black-box theatre. Competent performers enter a kind of dialogue with their performance space, and good performances are those which present themselves as a kind of ‘reply’ to the opportunities and limitations the space presents.

The relevant ‘features’ of a meta-topical world constituted by a community of judges will be determined by the nature of the form of judgment they exercise; in this case, Kant’s reflective judgment. I would suggest that beyond merely providing a space for action as such, the nature of reflective judgment in particular is exactly suited to provide the kind of space needed for genuinely *political* action in the two senses identified above. That is to say: reflective judgment is both *free and undetermined* and *necessarily plural*, and so the mode of action it enables will be marked by these same characteristics.

Reflective judgment is *free and undetermined* in the sense of being ultimately unaccountable to truth, morality, or law. In matters of this latter sort we may compel assent either rationally (theoretically or practically) or by appeal to a commonly acknowledged body of legislation. In matters of taste however we may only ‘woo’ agreement by means of a give-and-take of reasons that appears as a kind of conversation or debate where no one participant, by virtue of a more developed rationality or legal knowledge, can claim a vantage superior to any other. In this sense no particular action may be judged by reference to a general law; rather, one must work to *uncover* a general law on the basis of a given particular or set of particulars. It is this unavailability *a priori* of any general rule which renders reflective judgment free and undetermined (i.e., not ‘objective’) and which enables it to recognize and thus enable a mode of action of the same sort.

More than this, reflective judgement is *necessarily plural*, and this not only in its encouragement of conversation or debate. More substantively, its plurality is grounded in the fact that the standard guiding it, namely our sense of taste, is not merely individual but rather corresponds to Kant’s notion of a *sensus communis*; it is a kind of ‘extra’ or ‘community’ sense by virtue of which we ‘fit’ into our community. By taking the *sensus communis* as its only standard, reflective judgment is rendered ‘impartial’; i.e. not merely subjective or idiosyncratic, but rather shared or inter-subjective.

On these bases – i.e. (1) a non-objective and impartial form of judgment, (2) the meta-topical world the community of such judges opens up, (3) and the mode of action this world enables – Arendt offers a picture of the kind of positive political situation she hopes will emerge in response to modern worldlessness, and which she hopes will overcome it. Her picture is built upon on the second of Kant’s three ‘maxims’ of the *sensus communis*, the ‘maxim of the enlarged mentality’: i.e. that one ought to put oneself in thought in the place of everyone else.

Adherence to this maxim, she thinks, will render our judgments increasingly ‘communicable’ and more potentially ‘public’, and in doing so aid in our development of ‘sociability’ – the ‘highest end of man’. In the ideal case when these criteria of communicability and publicness are satisfied in the greatest possible degree, and the sociability of mankind is fully developed, then, she claims in the last of her *Lectures*, it shall be ‘as if’ there existed an original compact among men, dictated by mankind itself. The shared ‘idea of mankind’ implied by this compact will both regulate our reflections (i.e., our judgments) and guide our actions, and we shall be called ‘civilized or humane’ to the extent that we allow it to do so.

Such seems to be the nature and aim of Arendt’s ‘political project’, as I’ve called it above. A real question remains however as to just how recognizably Kantian it is. In what remains of these pages I shall show how several arguments in the appendices to Kant’s PP directly contradict two important aspects of Arendt’s project: namely, (1) her insistence that the political, and specifically political action, needs to be autonomous (i.e., ‘free and undetermined’) in relation to other spheres and especially in relation to morality, and (2) her apparent reading of the ‘criterion of publicness’ as an *empirical* criterion, and combination of it with Kant’s aesthetic notions of communicability and the enlarged mentality to serve as a standard for politically relevant reflective judgments. These examinations make clear, I suggest, that the political project outlined by Arendt in her *Lectures* is in fact her own, and not one Kant would have developed ‘had he had the strength’.

Morality, politics, and publicness: Arendt on Kant’s appendices.

Kant’s first appendix⁵ is concerned with the relation between morality and politics, and defends a particular understanding of this relation which Kant regards as the only one compatible with the eventual attainment of a perpetual peace. The understanding Kant defends is, characteristically, a view of the two as twin branches of a pure ‘philosophy of right’, morality as the ‘theoretical branch’ and politics as the ‘applied branch’ (116). In this ‘objective sense’, he argues, there can be no conflict between them, and accordingly no conflict between theory (morality) and practice (politics). Yet we tend to misunderstand the nature of morality, wilfully or not, by regarding it as a ‘general doctrine of expediency’ rather than the pure theoretical branch of right. This confusion is responsible for the undeniably frequent manifest conflicts

⁵ Kant (2004), pp. 116-125. Further citations parenthetical in text.

between theory and practice and is also, ultimately, the reason why we have failed to achieve real and lasting peace.

To illustrate this claim Kant develops a distinction between the ‘moral politician’ and the ‘political moralist’ (118). Both may regard themselves as working for peace, but Kant is clear that only the moral politician can hope to win a peace that is more than a ‘truce’. The moral politician acts only in accordance with the pure and formal principle of natural right, and pursues the properly moral task of developing political wisdom. He never acts expediently in response to apparent demands and opportunities presented by empirical circumstances, but rather clearly subordinates his political practice to the moral law. The political moralist regards this as foolishness, and unlike the moral politician is willing to act contrary to natural right when circumstances suggest that doing so would be to his benefit ‘as a statesman’⁶. Thus the political moralist follows a ‘material’ principle, and pursues the technical task of cultivating habits of action that are both maximally expedient and beneficial.

Why can only the moral politician hope to succeed? Kant’s answer turns on his belief that a perpetual peace must entail the establishment of a ‘unity’ of men (able to ‘overrule difference in the particular wishes of all individuals’) and that the achievement of such unity in any form requires that we pursue either of two possible ‘additional unifying cause[s]’ (117). *Either* we achieve a universal recognition of the moral law to build a *collective* unity of ‘all men together’, *or* we resort to the use of ‘coercive force’ to build a (far more tenuous, he thinks) *distributive* unity of ‘all individual men’. The moral politician of course pursues the former course, the political moralist the latter. Kant is convinced that only a ‘collective unity’ of all men can found a peace that is perpetual, and so regards only the moral politician as capable of success.

One may agree with Kant and the moral politician that a *perpetual* peace is possible only on the basis of the moral law, and yet still hold with the political moralist that such a peace is not attainable in practice. If every peace hitherto won has in the end shown itself as merely a truce, then perhaps the winning of such truces is the best that we material human beings can do. From such a standpoint the pursuit of ‘perpetual’ peace looks like a quixotic distraction; we would do

⁶ There is an ambiguity in Kant’s phrasing here, perhaps intentional. That the political moralist’s actions are to his benefit ‘as a statesman’ seems to imply that the benefit may not accrue primarily to himself *personally* but rather to himself *in his person* as a statesman – and thus to the general benefit of his constituency. This is significant for its suggestion that the political moralist is not necessarily an egoist *simpliciter*. He may truly regard his actions as a matter of duty, though, for Kant, his placement of empirical concerns before the moral law guarantees the misguidedness of even his most well-intended action.

better to expend our energies building more lasting truces. Contrary to this, of course, Kant's point is that the 'principles of right' *are* realizable in practice – that we *can* achieve a peace that is perpetual – and he supports this with a transcendental argument: if these principles were not realizable, then progress would be impossible and we would be unable to bear so wretched a race as ourselves (124). But we *do* witness progress, and at least most of the time we *can* bear ourselves. For Kant this should be taken as evidence for the 'objective reality' of the principles of right (i.e., morality) and for the claim that these must be allowed to stand in judgment over our political activities. In any case we have a duty to act 'as if' the principles of right were objectively real, and therefore must admit that 'a true system of politics cannot take a single step without first paying tribute to morality' (125).

At least in this text, Kant's understanding of the relation between morality and politics could not be more clear. Politics is subordinate to morality; it is even, in an 'objective sense', a mere 'application' of the moral law. Only the moral law and never any empirical principle can serve as a true standard for judging the rightness or wrongness of political actions. To believe otherwise makes one a political moralist, however well intentioned; it inhibits progress, prevents the achievement of lasting peace, and nourishes an 'evil principle within ourselves' which leads ultimately to our self-destruction.

So is Arendt a political moralist? It may seem so at first. Her insistence on the *autonomy* of the political clearly contradicts Kant's insistence on the *heteronomy* of the political in relation to the moral. Yet Arendt's desire is not to follow the political moralist in affirming the *opposite* of Kant's position, i.e. to claim that morality is in fact subordinate to politics, but only to find a way of granting autonomy to *both* domains, and thus of refusing the subordination of either one to the other. Her position is to this extent not quite that of the political moralist, but also not apparently the same as Kant's own.

Yet Arendt claims that something like this *is* Kant's own position, whether he knew it or not. Had he had the strength, he would have seen that his own thinking in the third critique and in the second appendix to PP allows for a reconciliation of the political and the moral in terms which render them mutually dependent. Arendt lays out her argument for this claim in her eighth *Lecture*. Such a reconciliation becomes possible, she argues, once the politics/morality distinction is recast as a distinction between the *perspectives* of the engaged actor (whose concern is empirical political life) and the judging spectator (who possesses an aesthetic

appreciation of the ‘whole’, analogous in scope if not substance to Kant’s morality). These two perspectives, which refer at once to individual persons and to dual aspects of any individual identity, may be made to hang together, she argues, by reference to Kant’s ‘principle of publicness’, which he gives us in the second appendix to PP. This principle, understood together with Kant’s other notions of communicability and of the enlarged mentality, is the real standard by which political actions should be judged and our best hope in the effort to develop mankind’s sociability.

Did Kant mean for his principle of publicness to be understood and applied in this way? Upon close examination of an example of the principle’s application given in his second appendix, and cited by Arendt in her tenth Lecture, one is left not at all sure that he did. Accordingly, one is left unsure whether Arendt’s whole project is very Kantian at all.

Kant’s second appendix⁷ opens by identifying a ‘*formal attribute* of publicness’. It is easy, we are told, to judge whether this ‘formal attribute’ is present in a given instance, and to determine ‘whether or not [the attribute] can be combined [or ‘reconciled’] with the principles of the agent concerned’ (126). It is important that this test is formal, not empirical. It is ‘valid without demonstration’, and its conclusions are true *a priori*. Kant’s most complete and affirmative formulation of the nature of this test, called the ‘transcendental and affirmative principle of public right’ (130), is given near the end of the appendix. It states: ‘All maxims which require publicity if they are not to fail in their purpose can be reconciled both with right and with politics.’ It is this formula which Arendt calls Kant’s ‘principle of publicness’, and which seems to her to allow for a reconciliation of morality with politics.

To assess the meaning of Kant’s principle of publicness one does well to examine an example Kant offers as an illustration, and which states clearly his own view of revolution. His statement is apparently contradictory: ‘[T]here can be no doubt that [a] tyrant would not be receiving unjust treatment if he were dethroned [by a rebellion]. *Nevertheless*, it is in the highest degree wrong if the subjects pursue their rights in this way’ (126).

There are at least two possible readings of this contradiction.

The first, which fits best with a straightforward reading of Kant’s first appendix and his own presentation of the example, could account for the contradiction in two ways: (1) by citing a

⁷ Kant (2004), pp. 125-30.

confusion in the revolutionaries' understanding of the nature of morality, and (2) by making a formal point concerning the legal coherence of a state's constitution.

The moral explanation is clear enough: although revolution against a tyrant may be an *expedient* way to achieve peace, it can never be a *moral* one, and even a well-intentioned revolutionary would be violating the moral law by acting against the sovereign, tyrannical or not. The revolutionary in this sense could only be a political moralist, unwilling to wait for history itself to present circumstances under which peace might be attained without violence. The moral politician, who perhaps desires just as much as the political moralist that the tyrant be gone, is willing to wait for such circumstances to arise and always refrains from acting 'precipitously'. Both political moralist and moral politician together could rightly celebrate the more just state of affairs that follows the tyrants demise – i.e. the more just *end* – but the *means* by which they would seek to achieve this could never be reconciled. If this seems contradictory to us today it is likely because our times are inclined to favor the expedient means of the political moralist over the quixotic principles of the moral politician. Our perplexity, Kant would say, results simply from our confused understanding of the nature of morality.

The formal explanation, defended by Robert Dorstal⁸, is apparent from a careful reading of Kant's presentation of his example, worth reproducing here at length.

'According to [the transcendental principle of publicness], the people, *before establishing the civil contract*, asks itself whether it dares to make public its intention to rebel on certain occasions. It is easily seen that that if one were to make it a condition of founding a political constitution that force might in certain eventualities be used against the head of state, the people would have to claim rightful authority over its ruler. But if this were so, the ruler would not be the head of state; or if *both* parties were given authority as a prior condition of establishing the state, *the existence of the state itself, which it was the people's intention to establish, would become impossible*. The injustice of rebellion is thus apparent from the fact that if the maxim upon which it would act *were publically acknowledged*, it would defeat its own purpose. This maxim would therefore have to be kept secret'⁹.

The most important feature of this passage is its situation in time: the principle of publicness is applied, and a conclusion drawn on its basis, *before* the civil contract is established. This crucial point makes clear that the 'compatibility' in question is not an *empirical*

⁸ See Dorstal (1984), p. 731f.

⁹ Kant (2004), p. 126-7.

compatibility between a maxim to rebel held by some clandestine group and the opinion of the given people or sovereign of the empirical state in question – such that an ‘incompatibility’ here, meaning a negative opinion on the part of people or sovereign, would *in practice* frustrate realization of the group’s maxim. Rather, in question is a *formal* compatibility between *one* publically acknowledged maxim (the intention to rebel) and all *the others* which make up the civil contract. ‘Publication’ of such a maxim (as opposed to its ‘exposure to the court of public opinion’) would bring about a *formal* contradiction in the civil contract, and render void the very existence of the state which is a condition of the possibility of even proposing a revolutionary maxim. This latter kind of incompatibility is determinable *a priori* before anything is known about the empirical circumstances under which the revolutionary maxim in question would be publicized.

And so the first possible reading of Kant’s apparently contradictory understanding of revolution (which, I have suggested, is Kant’s own) is rendered coherent, though not resolved, by means of these two explanations, the moral and the formal. Yet Arendt presents a quite different, second possible reading of this passage which harmonizes better with her revisionary intentions.

In Arendt’s view, Kant opposes revolutionary action because the only form of such action he can imagine is a *coup d’état*; action by a clandestine group specifically within the government or military which, for their rebellion to succeed, must conceal their intentions from their peers¹⁰. He does not consider, she suggests, the possibility of a *popular* rebellion which, far from demanding secrecy, calls precisely for the broadest and most compelling possible advertisement of their ‘maxim to revolt’. In other words, a *popular* revolt ‘requires publicity if it is not to fail in its purpose’, while a *coup d’état* requires secrecy. According to this reading of the principle of publicness, popular revolution is justified, but a *coup d’état* is not.

But Arendt seems here to conflate the empirical with the formal. The notion of ‘requirement’ employed by Kant in his principle of publicness seems *for him* to mean ‘necessary for the coherence in an objective sense of all publically recognized maxims’, while *for Arendt* it seems to mean ‘necessary for the successful practical realization of one’s maxim’. Kant’s ‘*formal* attribute of publicness’ as received by Arendt looks more like an empirical attribute. This empirical reading of the Kant’s principle of publicness enables Arendt to *disconnect* it from its dependence on legal and state authority and *more easily* connect it with his aesthetic notions

¹⁰ Arendt (1989), p. 60.

of communicability and enlarged thought. Doing so has the further benefit of rendering these latter notions more politically significant. The conceptual movement allows Arendt to draw just the conclusion she wants, namely that morality and politics are each autonomous and mutually dependent such that neither is subordinate to the other.

Conclusion

The preceding has (1) offered a broad exposition of Arendt's diagnosis of our modern age as locked in a condition of 'worldlessness', (2) suggested why she believes the form of reflective judgment developed by Kant is able in a unique way to help free us from this condition, and (3) identified some reasons why the political project Arendt outlines in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* seems not very Kantian. Arendt's ambition to broaden the application of Kant's principle of publicness beyond the formal and legal meaning he seems clearly to have intended for it should not however be regarded as a mere exegetical mistake. By creatively extending Kant's own thinking in this way, Arendt is able to develop an account of political action and of judgment which seems far more suited than Kant's own to address the sorts of problems faced by our own globalized age, where the role of the nation-state in political life bears little resemblance to that which it played in Kant's time. On this basis I would reiterate my suggestion that one may justifiably prefer Arendt's project to Kant's, without regarding it as Kantian.

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