

## **Judgement in Politics: Responses to International Insecurity from Hannah Arendt and Immanuel Kant**

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### *Abstract:*

My paper compares a few of the key issues of Hannah Arendt's and Immanuel Kant's account on IR by revisiting the controversial reading she offered on § 40–41 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It claims that by focusing closely on their parallel insights concerning the insecurity inherent to the supranational level of politics which was called by Arendt “the world” and by Kant “the cosmopolitan community of mankind”, one can argue for her thesis on the high political relevance of the theory of judgement based on what Kant labelled as *sensus communis* in his aesthetics.

Kant held that political stability in national political communities is part and parcel of the upcoming emergence of an overall rule of the law on the global scale, while Arendt convincingly proved that totalitarianism (the formative experience of her thinking on human co-existence whatsoever) is a completely new and unprecedented form of government which substantially differs from other forms of governance. She also pointed out that this qualitative difference does not create a different world. The vulnerability of other, more traditional forms of governance is heightened by the advent of totalitarian politics exactly because of this unity in humans' world.

### **1. Introductory remarks**

“The *Critique of Judgment* is the only [one of Kant's] great writings where his point of departure is the World and the senses and capabilities which made men (in the plural) fit to be inhabitants of it. This is perhaps not yet political philosophy, but it certainly is its *sine qua non*. If it could be found that in the capacities and regulative traffic and intercourse between men who are bound to each other by the common possession of a world (the earth) there exists an *a priori* principle, then it would be proved that man is essentially a political being.” [1, p. 141—2]; quoted in [9, p. viii].

As this quote from her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* shows, the essence of Hannah Arendt's interpretation of Kant's political teaching is that the foundation of politics rests on the disinterested glance embracing the shared world. This principal idea discovered in Kant was consistent with her theory.

I aim to show in this paper that her interpretation is one of the most convincing attempts to apply Kant's pre-modernistic view on society and politics to a context after modernism. In Arendt's view, the main difference between Kant and the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal mainstream consisted in their attitude towards the world. 19<sup>th</sup> century liberals had a ‘tactile’ eye which expressed their basically

appropriative attitude in relation with the world which resulted in the subordination of politics to the general system of appropriations, that is, to economics as Hegel and Marx described it. The acquiring-annihilating attitude, as Hegel pointed it out, is a more authentic one than the cultural-contemplative one, “the transformation of appetite itself into thought” [6, p. 53]. It was the oeuvre of Marx that opened Arendt’s eyes to the human being as “a consuming being” who, as Bikhu Parekh wrote it, “builds the world only to dismantle and recreate it to suit his constantly changing needs.” [27, p. 75] Unlike them, Kant insisted on what he called in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement* ‘disinterestedness’ and in his essay on *Perpetual Peace* ‘the right to visit’ as a desirable and conceivable foundation of any intersubjectivity.

Thus, a thesis complementing the sympathetic readings of the Arendtian interpretation of Kant can be as follows: if humans’ world is constituted principally by political action, then it would be possible also on the basis of Kant’s proto-liberal premises and of his view on history and on public sphere to offer a theory of action which is not interest- and appropriation-oriented, irrespective of the fact that Kant actually chose another foundation of his political theory in the thesis on the individuals’ autonomy. Arendt noticed that the theory of the relation between humans and their world offered by Kant comprised also a theory of the communicability of this very same relation which is based on the contemplation instead of the appropriation of the world – that of the aesthetic glimpse. [10, p. x] The opposition between the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘I like’ as a manifestation of the rights of a non-possessing eye has one single function, that is the appellation to judgement and consent.

Arendt’s views on culture prove that the opposition between appropriative and disinterested attitude intrigued her. This conceptual opposition is a central notion of Arendt’s philosophy of culture: in her *Crisis in Culture* she distinguished between consuming and non-consuming attitude towards culture. She saw ‘bad’ politics, mass society, and culture of consumption interconnected with a possible antithesis of ‘good’ politics, healthy society, and non-appropriative enjoyment of culture. The reason behind is that the enjoyments of mass society are destined only to “while away time” [2, p. 9], that is to say, free time, which should be the basis of any political action, loses its central role in the life of individuals:

“Mass culture comes into being when mass society seizes upon cultural objects, and its danger is that the life process of society [...] will literally consume the cultural objects, eat them up and destroy them. Of course, I am not referring to mass distribution. When books or pictures in reproduction are thrown on the market cheaply and attain huge sales, this does not affect the nature of the objects in question. But their nature is affected when these objects themselves are changed – rewritten, condensed, digested, reduced to kitsch in reproduction, or in preparation for the movies.” [2, p. 10]

This diagnosis of the culture-destroying, consuming mass society makes clear that Arendt intended to grasp the meaning of cultural ‘consumption’ in its outer, reified appearance and not as fundamental characteristics of a civilisation. On the contrary, true culture, which is durable and not characterized by its functionality, belongs to the world. She established an analogy between cultural and political dichotomies by saying that culture isolates itself from the world of consumption like public sphere from that of the needs. Arendt’s statement that the common feature of art and politics is their public visibility appears together with her claim of regarding Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgement* as his real political philosophy. This shows the way she connected aesthetics to politics, with laying less stress, as Ronald Beiner put it, on the Kantian common denominator of these spheres, namely autonomy. [8, p. 95 – 6]

She was of the opinion that the fate and future of morality in the world is doubtful, though preserving disinterestedness may shelter humankind from totalitarian rulers. Concerning the relation between politics and morality, Arendt thought that it is desirable that the morality of politics should

be an 'inner' morality [31, p. 14] in a sense that it cannot be driven by self-interest affecting the use of the public space. According to Arendt's view, the agents appear in the public sphere without taking advantage of it (with symbolic politics). Still, it is hard to believe that Arendt did not know that Greek politics was also tainted with aim-rational morality and that she entertained illusions about the symbolic occupation of public space in modern politics. Nonetheless, it is plausible to argue for her efforts to safeguard, at least a part of the public sphere as a playground of the expression of 'inner' morality, as a place of freedom where the 'disinterested' spectator can become visible. Without this reserve for 'inner' morality the symbolic, appropriative use of the political sphere threatens becoming total and in this threat Arendt could recognize one of the first steps leading to totalitarianism. She was not longing for the comeback of Greek democracy but she warned that by the destruction of this normative playground modern democracy takes the first step towards self-destruction.

Arendt did not deny the possibility of a political consensus concerning the use of the public space along the interests and aim-oriented moral principles, although she never ceased to emphasize the importance attached to that part of the public sphere where consensus is not reached on the basis of interests but on that of judgement. This kind of use of the public sphere does not aim its appropriation but reflects on politics while leaving it intact and, moreover, confirm its autonomy. This may be termed the 'aestheticization of politics' if reflection is the action of a disinterested gaze but it proves also that this 'aestheticization', in opposition to Dana Villa's claim, goes far beyond a broader use of the metaphor of the 'theatrum politicum'. [29, p. 12]

There is no proof of whatsoever that Arendt seriously considered the possible role of this disinterested gaze in politics. Her return to Kant is decisive as she forwarded the question to Kant: if disinterested pleasure is possible in aesthetics, it may be possible in politics, too. The answer to the question depends, of course, on the interpretation we attribute to the concept of judgement. Many think that the nature of our judgements is not similar to the judging reflection of an impartial mind confronted suddenly with its object. This attitude which is by no means alien to Kant is perhaps all too much attached to a presumably ideal psychology of art enjoyment.

The outcome of disinterestedness is a shared world instead of a divided one: Arendt and Kant agreed on this point. The unrestricted communication is a prerequisite of the suppression of 'sensus privatus' and of the public, that is intersubjective, reason's authority.[26, p. 74] This is the main issue of Arendt's reading of Kant: the safeguarding of a common, shared world without having to postulate an 'objective' human nature. [8, p. 92] The basic idea which shaped the attitude of the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism, the interwar period, and the Cold War was that of the originally divided world instead of a shared one. In Arendt's eyes, Kant's account of judgement is not embedded in the theory he drew in his essay *Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* but is enveloped in a broader theory. [29, p. 65]

## **2. Hannah Arendt – a Thinker after Totalitarianism**

In this part of the paper I shall argue that Arendt's way, eventually reaching her conclusions, began with the personal experience of totalitarianism. I consider Hannah Arendt as a thinker whose theory was not so much 'about' but rather 'after' totalitarianism. [31, p 4] First of all, I am interested in the way the experience of totalitarian regimes penetrated her thought to its aims, subject matters, and methods. Then turning to totalitarianism itself as a historical phenomenon one can state that it is the total negation of the changeability of the world, i.e., of the action. However, it is, at the same time, the phenomenon that spurs the individuals to action by awakening their sense of morality. My aim is to show that Kant's teaching, in Arendt's interpretation, might prove helpful in these borderline situations. The exposure to the totalitarian dictatorship prompted Arendt to turn to the question of judgement, what, alongside with the idea of disinterestedness, led her way to the third Kantian *Critique*.

Dictatorship remained a recurrent theme of Arendt's writing. Her key moment came with the trial of Adolf Eichmann when she turned towards the problem of judgement. [7, p. 99, 11, p. 75] Her essay on *Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship* sheds light on her path from the personal experience of totalitarian regimes to the reflections on the nature of judgement in politics. The complete lack of judgement is unacceptable and the same applies to any kind of collective judgement (as for example the idea of collective guilt of Germans "from Luther to Hitler" [4, p. 21] because judgement belongs exclusively to individuals:

"Which in practice turned into a highly effective whitewash of all those who had actually done something, for where all are guilty, no one is. [...] There is no such thing as collective guilt or collective innocence; guilt and innocence make sense only if applied to individuals". [4, p. 29]<sup>1</sup>

One can add that the notion of collective guilt seems to presuppose collective judgement and therefore endeavours to create an otherwise not necessarily existing social consensus or prejudice. However, judgement is, and indeed should be, in every aspect an individual mental act: individuals have to judge on the deeds of individuals but so that their judgement should form a communicable and morally coherent structure. This insight has not only a retrospective significance: the impersonality of collective judgement threatens to reproduce that faceless mass society whose appearance had led to the catastrophe. Thus, regaining and using their faculty of judgement enable the individuals to pose the question of responsibility. [4, p. 30 – 1]

Arendt's narrative of the process of annihilating the power of judgement is based on her experience in National Socialist Germany. The first step was „the intrusion of criminality into the public realm” [4, p. 24] but the moral problem was posed by the presupposed 'hindering' of historical *telos*: „this very early eagerness not to miss the train of History”. [4, p. 24] The majority of the Germans, she wrote,

„were not responsible for the Nazis, they were only impressed by the Nazi success and unable to pit their own judgment against the verdict of History, as they read it. Without taking into account the almost universal breakdown, not of personal responsibility, but of personal *judgment* in the early stages of the Nazi regime, it is impossible to understand what actually happened.” [4, p. 24]

Her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* connected the Kantian themes – disinterestedness and judgement – with that of despotic regimes. She linked the experience of totalitarianism with the fact that others' behaviour becomes utterly unpredictable, as she highlighted: “if you go through such a situation [as totalitarianism], the first thing you know is the following: you *never* know how somebody will act.” [1, p. 115] Thus, one of the first consequences of totalitarianism is the undermining of sociability. This also explains why Arendt applauded the signs of social solidarity in the Hungarian upheaval 1956. [13]

A clear consensus exists between Arendt and Kant the philosopher of history on the necessity of taking a judging position differing from the routinely used one which nevertheless remains inside of historicity. Judging spectators should not apply a timelessly moral perspective to certain processes in history. Arendt rejected this Kantian solution as Kant himself rejected it at the end of long decades of reflecting on the relation between morals and politics. The point is that judging individuals have to choose another historical perspective to apply to these events: different in several aspects (chronological scale, point of observation) from their everyday perspective. Then, this different perspective, which is the result of abstraction and as such the essence of the autonomous judgement, has to be shared with others. This is an eminently Kantian problem and also a major argument justifying the opinion that Arendt's critical interpretation based on the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* was not directed against the whole written political doctrine of Kant but only against its utopian conclusion.

That is the reason why Arendt asked: „How can you think, and even more important in our context, how can you judge without holding onto preconceived standards, norms, and general rules under which the particular cases and instances can be subsumed?” [4, p. 26] It is just everyday

historical experience that provides us with these „preconceived standards” and just the abstraction from these standards has to be presupposed and this is why Arendt’s answer is as follows:

„For only if we assume that there exists a human faculty which enables us to judge rationally without being carried away by either emotion or self-interest, [...] can we risk ourselves on this very slippery moral ground with some hope of finding a firm footing.” [4, p. 27]

The adjective ‘preconceived’ seem to make reason historical, as if the categorical structure of our concepts of understanding would be a matter of habit:

“In the light of these reflections, our endeavouring to understand something which has ruined our categories of thought and our standards of judgment appears less frightening. Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume that particular, a being whose essence is beginning may have enough of origin within himself to understand without preconceived categories and to judge without the set of customary rules which is morality”.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Arendt emphasized the prudential side of Kant’s theory: she considered it the frame of his real political philosophy in opposition with his written doctrine on morality. Arendt also suggested that because of the impossibility of achieving morality humans have to be reconciled with a prudence-based coexistence instead. (A community on the basis of moral principles would be, according to Kant, a religious community: Arendt put this possibility aside and instead accentuated of the private essence of religion. [14]) With her thesis on the unwritten Kantian political philosophy Arendt suggested that Kant’s intention was to find a community based on prudence but she also suggested that his written political philosophy intended something else, namely the community based on morality.

Arendt’s reading laid stress on a special feature of politics, namely, that the actor and the spectator are intermingled so as that they cannot be separated completely. [17, p. 97] According to Arendt, something similar happens to the life of individuals under totalitarian rule, namely, that no one can avoid becoming a part of the system nor can they beat or bypass it any way. Kimberly Hutchings directed attention to Arendt’s reading of Kant’s concept of the spectator judging history:

“Arendt bases her claim as to the essentially political nature of judgment on her reading of the role of the *sensus communis* in the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, and on her reading of the figure of the spectator or philosophical judge which emerges from Kant’s essays on enlightenment, peace, history and the contest of the faculties”. [17, p. 93]

### **3. Judgement and Social Communication in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgement***

Although in the third *Critique* Kant discussed the qualities of taste – individual or social, Arendt claimed having found the germ of his political philosophy in there, namely, in the §§ 40–41. In the next part of my paper I put under scrutiny Arendt’s proposition by a close reading of the §§ under question.

The prominence given to the collective thinking about sociability and to the digressive nature of these paragraphs supports Arendt’s thesis. These two paragraphs are an evident digression in the text and what is even more they contain a great number of further digressions which, of course, may indicate to an even less clear-eyed reader than Arendt that something of utmost importance must be discussed there if Kant kept returning to it despite its apparent irrelevance to his principal subject-matter. Indeed, there is politics in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, even if only marginally and it is contained in the digressions of these two paragraphs.

First of all, I shall explore the Kantian idea of *sensus communis* to evaluate correctly Arendt's interpretation. Arendt must have noticed that Kant, for whom thinking is normally a solitary activity, while regarding it in the *Critique of Judgement* as a social activity, had to presuppose that thinking in company can take place only in a shared world – in a divided world the possibility of co-thinking is denied to the humans.

According to § 40 of the *Critique of Judgement*, *sensus communis* is not a higher cognitive faculty but a way of thinking: a faculty to form judgement from a universal point of view. As the title of the § indicates, Kant regarded taste as “a kind of” [24, p. 173] *sensus communis*: he drew a loose analogy between them. Kant's seemingly purposeless insistence on finding moral analogies to *sensus communis* indicates the importance of attaining this universal point of view. The parallel between the sense of community and the sense of justice leads towards a universal point of view by leaving behind the personal perspective of what is just or likeable. Kant's claim is similar to that of Arendt: overriding the selfish perspective and putting yourself in your neighbour's shoes help to reach this universal viewpoint: “putting himself into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our judging”. [24, p. 174] This position means nothing else than abstraction of the limits and contingencies of our position: in a word, the abstraction of our interestedness.

Further, he dealt with common sense in the sense of “common human understanding”. [24, p. 173] There Kant spoke about the feasibility of putting yourself into someone else's position by keeping your open-minded attitude: this propaganda of the Enlightenment clearly reiterates the point of his political writings and mirrors his written doctrine. Common sense means taking another individual's position, that is to say: trying to foresee other peoples' actions. Through a series of analogies Kant elucidated the similarity between taste and common sense: “One could designate taste as *sensus communis aestheticus*, common human understanding as *sensus communis logicus*.” [24, p. 175] They are universal, they are communicable, and they are embedded in sociability, only the former belongs to the power of judgement while the latter to the understanding.

Concerning the digression itself, the last section at AA 5: 293 makes clear that the author was aware of digressing from his main point: “The following maxims of the common human understanding do not belong here”. [24, p. 174] After debating the meaning of common sense Kant offered the following conclusion: the taste can be called common sense with more right than common sense as such, presumably because the shift of positions is only one of the characteristics of the latter, while it is the only and principal one of the former. Consequently, the definition of taste pivots around communicability: “Taste is thus the faculty for judging *a priori* the communicability of the feelings that are combined with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept).” [24, p. 176]

In § 41, Kant first dealt with the interconnectedness of taste and sociability. Taste, according to Kant, has a lot in common with social communication, refinement, and humanity: hence, taste belongs to the sphere of ‘impure ethics’. [25] Kant even identified taste with refinement. [24, p. 171] But it is still a long way from politics: there Arendt has to assist us in bridging the gap between impure ethics and politics. This leap is understandable if we take into account Arendt's special personal experience, that is, the emergence of the sphere of the social, its connection with the political as well as with the mass society (a phenomenon unknown to Kant) in the public sphere, and the appearance of irrationality in politics. But all this is just another digression on Kant's part, since the relation of taste to sociability is of empirical nature and therefore touches the matter, that is, *a priori* judgements of taste, only indirectly. The transition from the agreeable to the good is labelled as “ambiguous” [24, p. 171], just with regard to the impure ethics of refinement which takes also the inclinations into consideration.

Later on, Kant articulated the idea that judgement of taste enabled humans as social beings to share their feelings equally with their thoughts. Sociability from this point of view means a very narrowly conceived community of communication with an overall agreement. This is a corollary of

disinterestedness and its consequence is a surprisingly ‘social’ sociability of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*: while, unsocial sociability begins where interests and competitive society take over the communion of socializing humans.

Then § 41 offers an account on the genesis of culture. Kant argued that the social aspects of taste can be investigated only by taking the “empirical” interest into account. [24, p. 176] He elaborated the answer to the question why a community of taste, from this perspective, was necessarily a community of communication. Because, says Kant, it creates a sort of original contract, that is, a step preceding the *pactum associationis*: taste enhanced by interest is the necessary foundation of any civilisation and refinement. This reflection is, however, conspicuously termed a digression:

“However, this interest, attached to the beautiful indirectly, through an inclination to society, and thus empirical, is of no importance for us here, for we must find that importance only in what may be related to the judgment of taste *a priori*, even if only indirectly.” [24, p. 177]

There are further arguments for the political reading of the third *Critique* but Arendt who never evinced any interest in the eminently aesthetical problems of the sublime and the beautiful chose not to explore them. Neither the beautiful nor the sublime has anything to do with her thinking, she neither regarded works of art as essential parts of the world, nor corresponded her concept of the world with that of a limitless nature: her world is the Globe inhabited by humans. Kant, on his part, generally mistrusted political rhetoric which uses the beautiful prudentially, in order to achieve (one’s own) goals. [24, p. 205] In the methodological chapter, his reflections on a “lawful society” refer to eventual political connotations. [24, p. 229] Moreover, he used political metaphors in the analytic of the sublime. In the case of the dynamically sublime the nature shows strength and it is sublime because it awakens humans to their vocation over nature: “Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature.” [24, p. 145] This is why the General, and not the Statesman, is the right metaphor of the aesthetic judgement: “war, if it is conducted with order and reverence for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it”. [24, p. 146]

To sum up: Arendt’s opinion that the main theme of the §§ 40–41 is the co-thinking in a shared world proved to be mostly correct. The importance of these digressions should by no means be underestimated: still, Arendt failed to draw together the threads of the whole intersubjective world of the third *Critique* and that of her political theory. All she did was to decipher the meaning of a digression. With her extreme sensitivity towards the problem of judgement, Arendt must have noticed that in the third *Critique* Kant regarded thinking as a social activity which implicated that it can take place only in a shared world, since a divided world denies humans the possibility of co-thinking. Furthermore, her original insensitivity towards the problem of the beautiful also came into play in her reading of Kant’s aesthetics.

#### **4. Kant on International Relations**

The idea of the disinterested use of the shared world, especially at supranational level, is present in Kant’s essays. Arendt is more indebted to the principal idea behind these writings than she actually acknowledged this fact in her texts. Kant dealt with international relations in Chapter 7 of his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*. He held that humans cannot yet see the end of their road through history but he was convinced that progress can be saved by a finely balanced system of self-interests which may prove beneficiary on the long run. [19, p. 50 – 1] In *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project* he postulated the possessing behaviour as the basic feature of human nature: therefore the states, which are composed of humans, are a hundredfold prone to this faulty conduct. Still, he was convinced that there existed a way out of the

actual interstate relation which is fraught with “the malevolence of human nature” [22, p. 326]. Arendt having narrowly escaped the horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century held a different opinion. In her view the idea of real progress seemed to be hopelessly mistaken.

The prohibition of the use of other people as a means, this deep insight of the Kantian *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* remains valid not only in his philosophy of history [20, p. 225 – 6] but is analogously expanded in his political philosophy. A state is and should be as autonomous as an individual and, as Kant wrote in his *Toward Perpetual Peace*, “to annex it to another state as a graft is to do away with its existence as a moral person into a thing”. [22, p. 318] Kant opposed the possessive relationship at the level of international relations while Arendt similarly disagreed with any satellite-type international alliance with Russia or the USA in its centre. [13] Seeking the principles of “any rightful constitution”, Kant considered the individuals, the supranational relations, and the inhabited world, respectively as, the “individuals within a people”, the “states in relation to one another”, and “citizens of a universal state of mankind”. [22, p. 322] Kant’s chief argument concerning the free dwelling of humans on the Earth, the right to visit is based on the belief in what Arendt would almost two centuries later call ‘the shared world’:

“this right, to present oneself for society, belongs to all human beings by virtue of the right of possession in common of the earth’s surface on which, as a sphere, they cannot disperse infinitely but must finally put up with being near one another; but originally no one had more right than another to be on a place on the earth.” [22, p. 329, 23, p. 450]

However, “commercial states” exhibiting inhospitable behaviour adopt a possessive attitude towards foreign peoples which “goes to horrifying lengths”. [22, p. 329] The developing ways of communication caused a new sensation amongst, first of all, the people of Europe: “a violation of right on *one* place of the earth is felt in *all*”. [22, p. 330] Therefore Kant worked towards a practical solution for the problem caused by the increasing injustice and the general consciousness of insecurity. The proposed solution aimed the same target as Arendt’s project: to transform humans “with their self-seeking inclinations” into good citizens without the requirement of moral perfection. [22, p. 335] Although rulers cannot be expected to achieve this goal: “since possession of power unavoidably corrupts the free judgment of reason”. [22, p. 338]

To summarize: both stood on a rather utopian ground. The fields in which Arendt and Kant the philosopher of history worked had corresponding features but Kant’s aims and conclusions were different: he intended to reconcile the malevolent human nature with the overall historical progress of morality on the one hand and with legality in politics on the other. Facing the choice between political prudence and morality, Kant preferred the latter in the hope that it will promote the ultimate goal (that is legal government and perpetual peace). [22, p. 334] Kant held that the moral principles, for “people within a state as well as states in their relations” should prevail, “regardless of what objections empirical politics may bring against them”. [22, p. 346 – 7] That is the reason why he urged federation between states as a guarantee of this construction. In Kant, the foundation of the state (i.e., of politics) is not publicity but legality. This non-appropriative principle by which he meant the prohibition of acquisition, the necessity of federation, and the fair treatment of your neighbour without being biased by self-interest was the basis of his doctrine, while Arendt subsumed these concepts under the all-embracing notion of disinterestedness. This common utopian ground of morality reconcilable with prudence on the one hand and disinterestedness on the other is the link between the two theories.

## 5. Conclusion

It is a well-known fact that Arendt’s reading of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgement* was in need of correction and completing: what was the intention of this paper, too. In the period after modernity Hannah Arendt was among the first to turn to Kant’s oeuvre to challenge his views



on politics and on human sociability. However, the scope of her interest was in a certain way limited to the political implications of the third *Critique* and to the ever changing character of the notion of sociability. Later this view was broadened by Ronald Beiner who corrected Arendt's interpretation in fundamental ways. He emphasised the prudential aspect of judging [7, p. 104] as well as the fact that the 'enlarged mentality' as the ground of social thinking is the presupposition of any judgement. Ernst Vollrath further complemented this picture remarking that in politics behind the appearance there was no 'thing in itself' and that the power of judgement can be substituted for an action in a negative way: humans endowed with power of judgement may hinder the emergence of despotic rule. This means that Arendt never ceased to expect and fear the raise of despotic rule in any part of the world, she cautioned to be continuously vigilant. Possessing a sound judgement seemed to be a good protection against falling for political appearance: "Those who possess taste, who are discriminating in things beautiful and ugly, good and bad, will be less likely to be caught off their guard in times of political crisis". [7, p. 111]

I highlighted the importance of the experience of totalitarianism in the purpose of a better understanding of Arendt's relation to Kant's oeuvre. Arendt considered passivity as sufficient resistance against totalitarian regimes. However, her view exclusively depends on the mature power of judgement on the part of individuals involved in the affair and also mature dictatorship on the other. Arendt, focusing primarily on the political playground (fit for adults with moral judgement), lost sight of the other side of life and did not take into account the possibility of being born into such a regime therefore having accustomed to it well before the formation of any judgement. Arendt's perspective was overtly predetermined by the experience of her own generation: a young, morally fit generation in its full power of judgement suddenly confronted with dictatorship.

Kant and Arendt were both looking for practical ways of human co-habitation but their starting points were widely different. Kant considered first of all the individual, Arendt the community. Kant described the workable ways of judging, behaving of the ideal individual which led to the system of civil rules of smaller communities. For Arendt, the distinguished place of human interaction and political activity is the polity which excluding the blood ties is open for adults for discussion and decision. The political for Kant is the consequence of human interaction while for Arendt it is the primary condition of it. But Arendt's views met radical challenge presented by dehumanizing totalitarian systems and a new bred of humans: mass men. Despite all this she never gave up the idea of the polity where humans can find dignity and communication.

In spite of the enormous difference in their personal experiences and starting points, their views concerning the level of international relations are strikingly similar. Both advocate that it should involve independent and free states (similarly to independent individuals) and that these relations should be grounded upon sound judgement, reason, and legality. Kant argued for a federation of states ruled by law, while Arendt warned against the dominance of superpowers.

The deepest similarity between them consists in their view of a shared world. It is this feature and not their common view on politics that rendered possible Arendt's reading. They share a similar vision of the historical road of humanity between progress and decline [12, p. 91] and it remains in the background of their picture of the *homo politicus*. The main difference between them consists in the fact that for Arendt this vision is complemented by a theory of public sphere. This public sphere exists at two levels: as the open sphere of the political community formed by individuals, on the one hand, and as a supranational sphere formed by political communities, on the other. In Kant, in harmony with his moral philosophy, it is the doctrine of the *Rechtsstaat* which emerges from this vision. The Arendtian and the Rawlsian theory of the political are equally rooted in Kant's political philosophy, but Arendt's theory springs from the random conditions, historical or anthropological, while Rawls's derives from the latent or not fully developed implications of the critical project. Arendt the storyteller [16, p. 287ff] can be compared with Kant the storyteller who in his essays on the philosophy of history presented the world history as a story. Humans have to

use their power of judgement despite their obvious involvement in the actual happenings of history which hinders them to take a point of observation outside the process of history in time.

The connection Kant established between history and human beings judging history proved inspiring for Arendt. She developed forth the Kantian model by completing the story with the political chapter. According to her theory, any given constellation of a public space can be understood only with its precedents in time and the politician, like Kant's historian with philosophical insight, cannot occupy a point of view neglecting the burden of historical experience: their judgement should be characterized simultaneously by the consciousness of this experience and by the reflective attitude towards this experience. Kant did not link politics to historicity: according to him, political communities are based, within a social contract theory, on the autonomy (freedom) of individuals as an a priori principle.<sup>3</sup>

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## Notes

1. As she wrote in her 1968 essay 'Collective Responsibility', "Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities" (Arendt 2003b: 147).
1. Arendt: 'Understanding and Politics', quoted in Passerin D'Entrèves 1994: 106.
2. I wrote this paper as a Simon Visiting Research Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh in 2010.