The Political and Friendship, in the Beginning: 
Retrieving Arendt’s political thinking
- working paper -

In a sense, Arendt’s political theory in its entirety could be read against both communitarian voices and liberal individualism, as a theory that refutes the possibility of sovereign self while at the same time denying substantive notions of political community by centering the theory on the performative dimension of politics, namely – action in plurality. The concept of friendship plays a very particular role in this theory, not only as a bond between man and the world and bond among men as actors, but also as ontologically (and not only ontically) constitutive of man and human condition, both within and without man. Seen from a different angle, it could be argued that Arendt’s political project introduces politicality as relating into the very core of ontology in her effort to retrieve the political from political ontologies by politicizing ontology itself through the notion of inescapable plurality of man in herself and in the world.

On the Roots

This mere existence, that is, all that which is mysteriously given to us at birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy… [OT, 115]

1 Parts of this paper will appear as the working paper of the European University Institute, Florence.
If nothing else, this quotation would serve to position Arendt rather peculiarly within the debates on friendship in the political sphere. The notion that the meaning of friendship has to be rendered in ontological terms, not only ethical and not instrumental, and that friendship entails ‘unpredictable hazards’ suggests that Arendt’s thinking of friendship lies outside the discourses of political elites and power-centred theories of politics. The feeling of being-at-home in this conceptualization of friendship is purified of sentiment(alism) through the element of danger. On the other hand, seemingly paradoxically, friendship is that what situates us in the world, ‘dealing with’ our existence in this specific condition of being born human.

In this sense, it is clear that Arendt conceives of friendship as a phenomenon belonging to the public sphere, conducing existence from the private realm, the Aristotelian household. While the household is situated in the world, to be at home in the world implies more than a location. To be at home in the world entails being among men other than those to whom we are connected by kinship ties. Friendship, as Arendt conceives of it, takes us out from the private realm into the outside, balancing between familiarity and unfamiliarity – the suffocating familiarity of home and intimacy where one simply and always is without revealing one’s who and, on the other hand, unfamiliarity of the outside where one always retains a feeling of an intruder since one’s own appearance in the world is nothing but an intrusion of the new into the existing, making the demand on the pattern of relations and relationships to be rearranged to accommodate the new coming.

This mediating role of friendship should not however be taken to suggest that Arendt conceives of friendship as standing half way between meticulously delineated and formed spheres of the public and the private. Namely, while Arendt appropriates the basic distinction between the public and the private from Aristotle’s political philosophy, she does not assume a public realm prior to friendship but insists on the ties of friendship as generative of the public sphere. As M. Stortz argues in her brief parallel reading of Aristotle and Arendt on friendship, Arendt understands friendship through practices: “Aristotle’s friendship presumes civic space; Arendt’s creates it. […] Arendt… makes friendship mobile. It does not depend on space: it creates it.”

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But what does flow directly from Aristotle’s conception of friendship into Hannah Arendt’s thinking is precisely this connection between friendship and political community. Aristotle elaborates this link in terms of like-mindedness as the shield against ‘factions’ and ‘enmity’, the plague of any polis. Like-mindedness however cannot be equated with homogeneity or uniformity of opinions by citizens but it relates to sharing in the ‘projects for action.’ In Arendt’s work, the bond is the bond of acting in common, not the bond created as fabricated by action, but the bond is action itself. The idea of common action and bonding through action erupts most strongly and visibly in Arendt’s thinking at the times of writing On Revolution, but reaches back to the earliest of Arendt’s works, the dissertation on Saint Augustine.

It has already been observed by many of the critics and interpreters that Arendt approaches her sources in a rather idiosyncratic manner, and this manner has generated many a debate on whether or not she has got the classics ‘right.’ This justifies reiterating that ‘getting the sources right’ (whatever one assumes, boldly while not prudently, when introducing in the discussion of interpretation the term ‘right’) was never Arendt’s guiding intuition in recovering the ‘sea-changed’ fragments of past thoughts and experiences. In that sense, her early dialogue with St. Augustine is more of a precarious first step in the search for the bond between man and the world when their first encounter comes out of man’s unwilled and undecided upon insertion into the world. Reading St. Augustine in that pursuit appears logical both biographically and philosophically. Biographically, St. Augustine was the one who continued to think and to understand the world even after he had experienced radical estrangement from it. Historico-philosophically, Augustine is a Roman Christian thinker, still conversing with the Hellenic legacy of concern with ‘this world,’ still imbued with the Roman political spirit yet also a Christian theologian, philosophically therefore inclined to forsake the mundane for the other-worldly. Augustine’s question of why to love one’s neighbour therefore corresponds closely with, and easily translates into, Arendt’s question what it is between man and the world, what the connection or rather relationship could be which could not be reduced to the mere link between existent and the locus of its existence.

Augustine’s answer is onto-theological: What connects men to one another and to this world, what turns thrownness into belonging is the community of descent and fate with all other sons of Adam. All of them are born, out of the original sin, and all will die.

Rooted means that no one can escape from the descent, and in this descent the most crucial determinant of human existence has been instituted once and for all. Thus, what united all people is not an accidental likeness. Rather, their likeness is necessarily founded and historically fixed in their common descent from Adam and in a kinship beyond any mere likeness. This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor talents, but of situation. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in this world. He has companions-in-fate, not merely in this situation or that, but for a lifetime. His entire life is regarded as a distinct fateful situation, the situation of mortality. [LSA, 100]

But the kinship or commonness of past and future for the sons of Adam crystallizes into love only indirectly, through the alchemic working of divine grace. The source of Christian love for neighbour in this world lies beyond this world, in the divine creator of all beings who are loved for the sake of loving him and through relating to him. The bond among neighbours is therefore not of this world but is mediated through a transcendental absolute, in its origin as in its destination.

The transcendental essence of Augustine’s, Christian \textit{amor mundi} is what Arendt cannot take along. Common origin of men as the source of care for the world, as it (the world) manifests itself in those who surround us, is therefore reinterpreted by Arendt, whose philosophical horizon arises through the overcoming of transcendentalism started by Nietzsche and continued by Heidegger, as the commonness of human condition. What speaks to Arendt across centuries from Augustine, in her particular historical, political and philosophical situation is Augustine’s understanding of kinship among men in relation to the equality of their situation, the human condition of being born, passively appearing, suffering appearance, and being mortal, both in the muteness of one’s own will, therefore made an inhabitant of a world ultimately strange, and becoming ever

\footnote{Therefore, not in the sense of Aristotelian third type of friendship as based on semblance in virtue. Aristotle, Ethics, 1156a27-b17.}

\footnote{“Yet the believer relates in love to this individual… only insofar as divine grace can be at work in him. I never love my neighbor for his own sake, only for the sake of divine grace… This indirectness turns my relation to my neighbor into a mere passage for the direct relation to God himself… This indirectness breaks up social relations by turning them into provisional ones.” [LSA, 111]}
stranger as one witnesses the works of men and men themselves crumble into nothingness.6 Yet in the later works, Arendt the political theorist will have reworked considerably her idea of the common and commonness of condition at the core of the concern with the world. From the passivity of existential situation she moves to the dynamism of acting together, from Augustine’s notion of common origin as the working of god-creator to Aristotelian conception of civic friendship as sharing in the projects of action, that acting in concert which Arendt recognized in the situation of American founding fathers who were filled with ‘sheer joy’ at the decisive moment of constituting political community. Already in the Rahel Varnhagen Arendt was concerned with the position of pariah as that of impotence to change one’s own position in the world.7 From that historical analysis of Rahel’s exclusion there emerged Arendt’s understanding of the political as that which changes the world, that which augments the world through novelty. But Arendt who takes to re-working of the concept of origin is also Arendt whose historical, political and philosophical context since the time of the dissertation on Augustine and the work on Varnhagen’s letters had by then been transformed beyond recognition, irreversibly and irreparably.

From commonality of origin to the beginning begun in common
To remark on the historical and political changes generated by the event and phenomenon of totalitarianism and on Arendt’s own experience of the whirl of 1930s and 1940s as crucial and formative for Arendt’s political thinking has become an inescapable ingredient of interpretations of Arendt’s works, as Beiner observes.8 The importance of historical and political events for Arendt’s venture can indeed not be overstated, particularly in the light of Arendt’s understanding of the interlacing of thought and event:

6 “… the general nature of sadness which needs no pretext because it can rise up unpredictably out of anyone’s inner self, because it is deeply rooted in the fact that we have not given life to ourselves and have not chosen life freely.” [RV, 137] It is hard to ignore a silent presence of Heidegger’s understanding of throwness into the world in Arendt’s concept of sadness.
7 One could even draw a direct link between the inquiry into Rahel’s unfortunate social position as an inquiry into action denied and, on the other hand, Arendt’s uncompromising critique of Jewish leaders under Nazism as failing to act.
On the other hand however, if Arendt’s early work on Augustine is placed in the context of her later elaborate critique of the continuum of Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Marx, one is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that an earlier change of horizon in philosophy may have prepared Arendt for her movement towards something that may be termed political thinking of philosophy, whereof emerges Arendt’s reinterpretation of static concept of common origin, common descent, into the dynamic concept of beginning commonly begun. One may not however want to go as far as to agree with Beiner on Arendt’s tacit acceptance of certain philosophical concerns as perennial, in other words – independent of historical contingencies. This would bring Arendt, against the grain of her entire work and the critique of philosophical tradition in particular, too close to the reversal into the refuge of absolutes. Arendt’s own thinking comes as a response to the philosophical tradition of giving eternal answers. It is a response emerging from the ultimate and irreversible exhaustion of philosophical tradition, the ‘Fall’ heralded by Nietzsche and continued in Heidegger’s situation of Being in time, the tradition which since Plato had sought to remove itself from the world of appearances, from the immediate and mutable, to the world of ideas, the absolute and the eternal. This removal, as Arendt portrays it, never entailed the philosophers’ withdrawal into the contemplation of the absolute and the eternal but manifested itself in the approach to human affairs from an elevated position of the contemplator, the approach that sought to explain through pre-conceived ideas rather than allowing to be guided by observation and experience without prejudice and in full recognition of the evasiveness of all things human.

Arendt’s engagement with the tradition of political philosophy has therefore always sought to single out those thinkers, such as Machiavelli and Montesquieu, who attempted the recovery of dignity of the realm of human affairs. Already Arendt’s decision to work on Augustine, the one thinker for whom experience was the guide preferred to the guidance of other thinkers, as well as the intuition behind this work which reveals a deeply political question of why engage with the world without recourse to the transcendental, the question that remains even after – and especially after – the
philosophico-theological problem of man torn between the mundane and the Creator has lost all meaning, testifies to Arendt’s early – and never again abandoned – project of ‘thinking in the gap.’ Namely, to understand the profound gap opening between the philosophical tradition on the one hand and thinking of the contemporary situation on the other for Arendt implied more than a critical diagnosis: It entailed also, or even primarily, the effort to think in and beyond this gap by abandoning the idea of looking for the absolute truth behind historical events. Arendt’s thinking is therefore thinking that feeds on experience in the attempt to render the specific historical situation meaningful.

It is worth not rushing on to dwell on Arendt’s concept of experience at this point. Arendt’s concept of experience does not bear two of the habitual meanings. It has cut or shaken off its link to the empirical, retaining the connotations of attempt but not the relation to the prefixed em- as en-, as pushing in(to).

In that sense, instead of throwing the one who questions back onto the infinite, all-encompassing subject, it seeks to draw out, to pull out, to extricate and extract, to push into the open and expose. Firstly, it removes itself from the methodological understanding of experience as an analytical tool which when presumed “the origin of knowledge” allows “the vision of the individual subject… [to become] the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built.”9 It abandons all claim to certainty and ground, embracing instead a leap into the open, not for the sake of gathering knowledge but in the sense of existence, which shares with experience the same perilous ex-.

An experience is first of all the encounter with an actual given, or rather, in a less simply positive vocabulary, it is the testing of something real… Also, according to the origin of the word “experience” in peirà and in ex-periri, an experience is an attempt executed without reserve, given over to the peril of its own lack of foundation and security in this ‘object’ of which it is not the subject but instead the passion, exposed like the pirate (peiràtēs) who freely tires his luck on the high seas.10

Nor does Arendt assume experience as wisdom, that experience as ‘gospel’ to shield us from the very experience.11 Rather, thinking from experience assumes venturing into the world through the concern with it, Arendt’s recurrent, alarming “to think what we are

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doing” and to do so departing from the fundamental notion of our being always, inevitably and inescapably in the world: here, again – an appearance of Heidegger, and not so in the background but in the foreground:

It lies in the nature of philosophy to deal with man in the singular, whereas politics could not even be conceived of if men did not exist in the plural. [...]. Heidegger’s concept of the ‘world,’ which in many respects stands at the center of his philosophy, constitutes a step out of this difficulty. At any rate, because Heidegger defines human existence as being-in-the-world, he insists on giving philosophic significance to structures of everyday life that are completely incomprehensible if man is not primarily understood as being together with others. [EU, 443]

From this understanding of man as being in the world, Arendt moves a step further, still in the Heideggerian vein of thought, towards transforming the condition of being thrown into the world into taking up of this throwness and being with and to the world, turning this host of ours, who never invited us, into our concern. One easily detects Heidegger’s reworking of mortality from the biological fact into a task to be taken up by Da-sein in Arendt’s reconceptualisation of birth: “… natality as a human condition is the capacity to bring something profoundly new into the world rather than a simple capacity to procreate…”

This reconceptualisation transforms the f-act of origin into act of beginning, not the infinite falling upon a particle of non-time but the event in the present, generated by human action and opening towards future:

The birth and death of human beings are not simple natural occurrences, but are related to a world into which single individuals, unique, unexchangable, and unrepeatable entities, appear and from which they depart.[HC, 96-97]

Arendt’s concern is not mortality because death is the most private of all experiences, it belongs to no one else but the one dying and cannot appear in the public world except

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13 For distinction between origin and beginning, I draw on the opening discussion in: Said, Edward W: Beginnings: Intention and Method [New York; Columbia Univerity press, 1985], p. 6. One must be cautious to avoid mistaking Arendt’s understanding of action through the condition of natality as capacity to beginn for the commemorative fossilization of arche, which is Habermas’ misreading: "In sum, Habermas imputes to Arendt a reaffirmation of social contract theory and then concludes that it is by her return to the myth of the originary moment that she subvert the democratic possibilities of her work." Disch, Lisa: “Please, Sit Down, but Don’t Make yourself at Home”: Arendtian “Visiting” and the Prefigurative Politics of Consciouness-Raising, in Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics, edited by Calhoun, Craig and McGowan, John [Minneapolis and London; University of Minnesota Press, 1997], p. 149.
when the dying one has deceased when its appearance is nothing but the acts of others in the aftermath. Rather, death as experience and mortality as phenomenological concept are related to philosophy through the condition of absolute closure to the world taken to be the only properly philosophical, contemplative mode of existence. In the posthumously published essay on politics and philosophy dating back to 1954, Arendt opposed politics and philosophy through their opposed ways of life – living together and being in solitude. The opposition is re-stated more strongly in the lecture on politics and philosophy from 1969:

Speaking in terms of existential modes of the difference between or opposition of Politics and Philosophy is identical with the difference between or opposition of Birth and Death, or conceptually speaking: Natality and Mortality. Natality is the basic condition of all living together, and hence of all politics; Mortality is the basic condition for thought in the sense that thinking relates to something ‘unrelational’ to something that is as it is in and by itself. [PP1, 1969, p.27]

It is therefore not the opposition in experience of thinking philosophically and acting politically as modes of existence, or not only that, but the opposition between that which relates to the world and that which seeks to transcend it. Heidegger’s effort at overcoming death as a matter of nature and transforming it into that which retrieves Da-sein from inauthentic existence, as that which can open the passageway to the authentic existence would in that sense be a philosopher’s and philosophic effort, a peculiar form of making Da-sein at home in the world while removing it from that being-with, from being in common with others through whom the world appears to us. Arendt’s is however a political project, a search for the way of living together as acting together at the time when that which kept the world together, i.e. religious and related/derivative moral and political frameworks, broke down. In other words, she seeks to relate men again to the world beyond mere existence in it. Natality or birth is therefore her central concept as:

... to be born means always to be born into a world peopled with men, to be born from them, to join a family, a people, a commonwealth, etc. that was there before and with respect to which we are newcomers. [PP1, p. 26]

Arendt continues to argue that natality is the ‘basic condition’ of political life and all change in the world, the argument drawn directly from Augustine’s “That there be a beginning, man was created.” In the lecture notes from 1953, the link between politics and beginning is spelled out most succinctly and strongly: “What counts for politics
which is in the present and concerns present actions is that man is a beginning. Without this we could not act. For Politics the beginning as important as the end for historian.” In politics, namely, we are after the new, after bringing something new to the world – “whether we like it or not.” [GTNT, 2] In later works, Arendt elaborates this statement by adding that human beings are endowed with the capacity for novelty by being a novelty themselves. Man breaks the eternal cycles of nature, man is not necessary – ontologically therefore, not analogically, action breaks patterns for it is that which always could but did not have to be. [LM, II:16] The linking concept, the joint between natality as embodying beginning and politics as that where the one begun can begin, is the opposite of necessity, freedom: “Freedom is the capacity of beginning.” [GTNT, 13] Without man, nature would be spared the unknown and unpredictable, there would remain nothing outside the iron grip of its laws. Without action by man, the likelihood is that all todays and tomorrows would be no different than yesterdays. [BPF, 170]

What is therefore the political to Arendt? It is a certain relating to the world by “partaking in discourse and events” [PP1, p.9] which renders the world changed. That is the embodiment of freedom – not in the sense of licentia as having something permitted, nor as a liberty of choice (within the determined framework, therefore) but as bringing something in(to) the world. The change is therefore not in reinterpretation of the existing but in the appearance of something entirely new. This is the sense of beginning ex nihilo: the new comes from someone, not from no one and not out of nothingness. The new is situated in the horizon made up of the past and its possible futures, as in Kafka’s parable. But it is something that no other thing in the world has ever before been – nor could it have been expected as it had never been necessitated. Arendt’s beginning therefore directly opposes Aristotle’s and Aristotelian itinerary of becoming from potentiality to actuality.

The new as a beginning is man’s investment in(to) the world, and it is so even in the extended, expanded meanings of Italian investire, an abrupt movement of matter into matter, body into body, a blow and crash, which urges unexpected, unplanned, radical even, rearrangement of the existing patterns to accommodate the new. The old pattern can no longer be restored after this beginning, it has to be undone through doing it anew. It is in the aftermath of beginning, as in its miraculous origin, that one can sense the full
power of Arendt’s metaphorical and conceptual ‘cord’ between birth and beginning: in
the world, there is never a place for a newborn, a newcomer, any new, but place is made
and not only in the sense of ‘room being made.’ And once the new/comer is there, there
can be no return to the condition of its non-presence, it can now only be the condition of
absence of that which has been present, a vacancy felt as vacancy.
Investment also in the sense of putting something in and entrusting with, committing
oneself to that which receives through that which is given, where commitment is neither
responsibility/accountability nor guilt (as it would be for a violent investimento, for
breaking into and undoing the pattern) but a bond that is in giving and receiving.
Through the concept of natality as a capacity for beginning, Arendt therefore arrives at a
different relationship of men to their world, groundless bond contained in the very
-political) act itself. The bond does not precede the act, it is constituted and re-constituted
through every new act.
The one example of this commonness, active, breaking, in-performance, the example to
which Arendt kept returning all throughout her thinking of the political was the example
of American revolution as acting in concert of men conjoined not by interest – nor even
by articulate intentions – but by the specific historical situation and a particular moment
and momentum of events.
In dealing with this particular event, one should not assume that Arendt dwells on the
American Revolution as an event objectified into evidence, made corporeal even, to
‘support theory.’ As Arendt understands theory, in distinction to philosophy, history and
practice but also in distinction to contemporary theory as rendering “facts manageable”
[PP1, 3], it arises from observation of phenomena and then proceeds to understanding as
“becoming at home in the world in which we live anyhow, but as strangers.” [GTNT, 1]
Finally, to theorize involves saving, saving of what is observed from oblivion so that it
can then be related to our own experiences in the attempt to render the latter
understandable, inhabitable in a way. In that sense, history is not a repository of dead
evidence but a treasury of experiences to be related to and thus preserved against leveling
into generalizations. As already noted, experiences in Arendt’s work do not serve and
they are not in function, they are narratives that communicate directly with our own
narratives, without mediation of theories and philosophies which no longer offer a home in the world. [GTNT, 12-13]

American Revolution thus constitutes a political experience of particular meaning for the contemporary situation. As Arendt interprets it, it is an experience which overcomes the stumbling block of political modernity, the break with tradition without a vision of a new framework within which the political would once again be possible as something other than administration, where its dignity would be restored.

That withering away of tradition in thought struck Nietzsche in all its clarity, and Heidegger even more so, but for Arendt it acquired a pronounced political meaning. It became a political fact through the occurrence of totalitarianism. [BPF, 14] What Arendt calls the ‘Roman trinity’ of religion, tradition and authority no longer offers a refuge from uncertainties of the modern times, not only in terms of philosophical inquiry but also in terms of the political reality of modernity: the actual political phenomena, institutions and actions alike, are left groundless, religion no longer generates reconciliation of men with themselves and with their world. No other ground has emerged to read some ought from the is. It is in this sense that modernity is ‘time out of joint.’

**Time out of joint**

In the time out of joint, a straight and meticulously paved path from the present into the past and back is no longer visible: once the bond to tradition has been broken, there remain only scattered fragments which the present will read in the light of its own reality. [LM/I:212] The remaining past exists in fragments, the parts which can be collected. There cannot be a return to them but they can be brought forth into the present from the ‘sea-depths’ where they were buried. The process of “pearl-diving” for the fragments of the past reveals however that what can be recovered from the sea-depths is never that what sunk but something else. It is not the past as it was when it was the present but past as appearing in and to the present of the pearl-diver:

[T]he process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things ‘suffer a sea-
change’ and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as ‘thought fragments,’ as something ‘rich and strange,’ and perhaps even as everlasting Urphänomene. [MDT, 206]

These methodological concerns of Arendt’s reveal the deeper layer of her acceptance of modernity as the ground on which we stand, acceptance that dissolves accusations of Arendt as a nostalgic gazer into the past. For Arendt, there is not one monolithic past upon which we can rest our hopes for return and restoration, there are only pieces, many missing, some perhaps superfluous, and the recovery of this discontinuous past is in fact a discovery, as dis-closure, of the present to itself.

But the fact that the past, fragmented or not, continues to speak to the present cannot be equated with having a tradition. This having does not correspond to possessing but rather to bearing in order to hand over, as one is always a bearer rather than owner of tradition. In the tradition there rests the power of that which is underlying everything else, which is beneath all fluctuations and turbulence. But this beneath of the way things are in the world has been pulled from under the world. Namely, Arendt’s reading of this line from Shakespeare does not take her to Derrida’s inquiry into time as temporality but time in the sense of the specific moment of history: it is clearly the world, in this age, stood on its head that she grapples with, the world in “this condition of being internally broken apart (disjointed) in the sense of being in disharmony with our own values, or off-center with regard to our own principles and institutions.”

What is therefore the time out of joint? The time that slips out of joint primarily connotes the state of chaos and disorder. However, while this first layer of interpretation does not run against the grain of Arendt’s phrase, it tends to harden somewhat the fine fabric of meaning.

If precise medical denotations of the phrase are to be followed, to be out of joint indicates a state of a head slipped out of its socket whereby the limb is left with the impulse of movement but no power to effect it since the bonds have been broken, and one part of the

mechanism is cut off from another. One interpretation of this detachment would refer to
the concept of modernity understood as rupture, the gap opening up when the bond to
tradition has been broken and the past has ceased to instruct the present and foretell the
future. In this most basic interpretation, echoed in much exploited Koselleck’s paradigm
of the vast void gaping between ‘spaces of experience’ and ‘horizon of expectations,’
modernity appears as a free-floating epoch, the age of transiency from the past, to which
it no longer relates, into the future which it cannot imagine, in the sense of imagining as
not so much making present or the present that which is absent but as envisioning. For,
future is not or no longer simply absent present, future has become absolute absence, with
no glow in the dark to suggest what may emerge from the unknown. When the past
ceases to inform the present, it is as if one end of the joint is mortified, insensitivized, and
there can be no movement of the joint as a whole.

The head has slipped from its socket but the body does not fall apart, and the time out of
joint persists, twisted and cracked but lingering. On the one hand therefore, modernity is
the case of certain malfunctioning, characteristic of any illness. To bring the condition of
modernity into the same semiotic constellation with the condition of illness evokes
Nietzsche’s diagnostic writings whence the idea of the ‘sickness’ of mankind springs. But
there the semblance between two frameworks, two critiques of modernity – Nietzsche’s
and Arendt’s – reaches it limits. For, in another possible dimension of interpretation, the
slippage of the head out of the socket retains a certain quality of abruptness, it evokes a
critical condition, suddenness of emergency demanding an instant and decisive response
– yet insisting on the time out of joint, Arendt retains the extensive character of this
particular state of crisis, the critical moment persists, acquires lastingness, not mending
but involving a certain habituation of the limb to its malfunctioning. In other words it is
necessary to distinguish time out of joint from crisis as it is done in Derrida’s analysis of
the same phrase:

[What Derrida calls the out-of-jointness of time is crucially distinguished from a
notion of a time in ‘crisis.’ The former indicates a more subtly corrosive condition than
the latter; it suggests a time that is wearing badly: a time whose languages have grown
thin or hypocritical, whose practices have grown hollow, whose ideals are neither
realized nor perhaps any longer suited to the age.]

16 Brown, Politics Out of History, 2001, p. 154
Modernity is thus caught in the transiency without power to actually transit out of the void between the two points it no longer touches, past and future. In other words, it cannot transit outside itself.

Continuing this reading in the idiom of medicine, the response to the time out of joint would have to be swift but the healing process would necessarily be protracted, requiring immobilization and, most intriguingly, starting with – a return to the previous position, with the head pushed back into its socket forcefully and no less painfully than the slippage itself was. In a way, healing itself involves a break. It is therefore not a reversal of modernity that appeals to Arendt. That is for Arendt one option that must inevitably remain out of reach for moderns not only because all that modernity is points to the broken thread of ‘the continuity of past,’ [LM/I:212] but because the return to tradition would imply ‘much more than the re-ordering of a world that is ‘out of joint’; it implies the re-establishment of a world that is past.’ [EU, 435]

The way out therefore leads through the other, second break is the disclosure of tradition in its harmfulness. Namely the possession of and by tradition has turned into Derridian haunting. What Derrida says of the past which refuses to recede into nothingness could be said of tradition at the time out of joint. Only, it is not the fragments misunderstood, open, disturbed and disturbing that continue to wrinkle what could be the smooth surface of the present but the traditional understandings of the world which threaten to appropriate and subsume totally new experiences, to force them into old moulds. And Arendt contends that old moulds of political philosophy are not only obsolete but are in themselves harmful. Against them, the genuine experiences of the past, as those of the present, must be preserved. [GTNT, p.13]

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain. [OT, IX]

To encounter the past was also Hamlet’s first step in setting his world ‘right.’ It meant both the disclosure of past and its recovery, neither of which entails return. The
disclosure is what Arendt’s has performed in her critique of philosophical tradition, loosening the grip of fossilized conceptual frameworks over new, unprecedented experiences of the present. The recovery is implied in her insights into ‘experiences’ of the past: Athens, Rome, Florentine Republic but above all, American Revolution as a political experience which historically belongs to past but politically remains the present, the present of the age without grounds since “revolutions are the only political events which confront us directly and inevitably with the problem of beginning,’ [OR, 21] the problem peculiar to the modern age that is confronted with the radically new situation of beginning anew, in distinction to the situation of change within, the existing, which characterized the political thinking prior to modern revolutions.

**Beginning the beginning**

American Founding Fathers inhabited a peculiar historical situation, trapped between the Christian heritage of Absolutes and their own deed, the foundation of absolutely new, a new *body politic*, which had to be legitimated in order to be preserved and perpetuated. The inevitable problem of every new beginning has always been its arbitrariness, its need to justify its appearance, not simply appearance of something different in the place of something old but entirely new space opening where there was none before. Therefore what seemed impossible to the Founding Fathers was not investing the people, through their representatives in the legislatures, with law-giving power, but perceiving these same people as the sources of ‘higher law’, the law that bestows permanence upon once founded polity and its new laws. Arendt diagnoses this as the problem of deriving law and power from the same source. [OR, 183-184] In other words, the Founding Fathers were shunning away from the ungroundedness of their own, unprecedented act, which is the problem of "politics unthinkable without a foundation, without these premises."17 Their conceptual language and their thinking, unlike their action, continued to belong to the Judeo-Christian tradition of law as divine commandment, binding through its source dislocated from the realm of human will.

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17 Butler, Judith: Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism”, in: Feminists Theorize the Political, edited by Butler, Judith and Scott, Joan W. [New York; Routledge, 1992], p. 3.
Through an exhaustive and minute textual analysis of Jefferson’s: “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” Arendt succeeds in capturing or rather, opening up, both ambiguity and ambivalence of the historical moment of the revolution and building of a new polity in response. On the one hand, the reference to the truths by these men of Enlightenment suggests the continuing presence of the transcendental in the political. Being self-evident, these truths resist any dispute by men, who appear not as their authors and having no power over altering that which has not come from their own will. On the other hand, and for Arendt’s project more importantly, the phrase “we hold” is an opening towards understanding that political truths cannot ‘posses the same power to compel as the statement that two times two make four.’ [OR, 193] It was clear to them, as actors, that the new law and new order were emerging neither through divine intervention nor through a neutral hand of a law-maker alien to the ‘polis’ but through their own doing. In that sense, the doing becomes the ground on which it itself stands.

This is where Arendt’s understanding of political moment appears in the illuminating light of Nietzsche’s moment, the self-contained moment which holds its own meaning: ‘it has no purpose outside itself, it leads to nothing but itself. Being is circular. Therefore, nothing outside the moment can serve to justify it…” Beiner here draws an important parallel between Arendt and Nietzsche, striking the central cord of Arendt’s political project when he argues that ‘circularity’ should in fact be read as the existential

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18 "Focusing on the famous phrase, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident,' Arendt argues that the new regime's power, and ultimately its authority, derive from the performative 'we hold' and not from the constative reference to self-evident truths. Both dramatic and non-referential, the performative brings a new political community into being; it constitutes a 'we.' This speech act, like all action, gives birth, as it were, to the actor(s), in the moment(s) of its utterance and repetition.[...] For the sake of politics, for the sake of free political action, Arendt cleanses the declaration and the founding of their violent, constative moments, of the irresistible anchors of God, self-evident truth, and natural law. There is to be no 'being' behind this doing. The doing, the performance, is everything. On Arendt's account the real source of the authority of the newly founded republic was the performative not the constative moment, the action in concert not the isolated acquiescence, the 'we hold' not the self-evident truth. And the real source of authority in the republic, henceforth, would be the style of its maintenance, its openness to refounding and reconstitution." B. Honig, Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity, in Feminists Theorize the Political, pp. 216-217. This passage sketches out B. Honig’s reading of Arendt’s interpretation which brings to light its performative dimension. However, the reading does not balance that vein of Arendt’s interpretation against its counterpart, Arendt’s profound awareness of ambiguity surrounding the act of Declaration, the hesitation of the Founding Fathers to declare the absolute newness of their act – absolute as totally new, unprecedented, but also absolute as absolved, in this case of transcendental grounding – but also their captivity in the conceptual framework of traditional political philosophy and its instrumental understanding of politics.

‘autonomy’ of moment. The community emerging from the moment is therefore not a community of birth and origins, as Kharkhodin rightly points out, but a community of action.20

From Arendt's perspective, a political community that constitutes itself on the basis of a prior, shared, and stable identity threatens to close the spaces of politics, to homogenize or repress the plurality and multiplicity that political action postulates. Protecting the spaces of politics in the nonidentity, the heterogeneity and discontinuity of political communities, and also in the resistances of the self to the normalizing constructions of subjectivity and the imposition of autonomy...21

The is of community lies not in some concealed Being but in its acting out, in its own becoming; there is no more sense in talking about Being of the community, only about it being, in the form of verb to denote existence in acting. Acting is the 'mode of being together,' [HPT/Montesquieu, 3] moreover – a political mode, since “a political realm does not automatically come into being wherever men live together.” [OR, 19] Action is therefore both man’s bond to the world and a bond between men. American Revolution in this sense is also an exceptional event as a beginning escaping the trap of violence. While it is historically connected with the Independence War, what turned this event into a revolution, what was to be the revolution and to establish a new order of things as a new order of the world, entered the world not through the war but through words, the words of the Constitution which are world-constitutive. [OR, 20]

Arendt here draws a historical parallel with the Roman experience of political founding, distinct both from the Greek and the Christian beginning insofar it is legitimated through the act itself. Understanding the laws were as divine commandments, therefore – through appeal to transcendental authority, would have been alien and incomprehensible to Roman juristic philosophy but also to Montesquieu, according to Arendt – the only pre-revolutionary thinker of politics, therefore the only one without an immediate experience of a radical break and novelty in his political repository, who did not resort to or did not withdraw into the refuge of introducing ‘an absolute, a divine or a despotic power, into the political realm.’ [OR, 188]:

[For Montesquieu, as for the Romans, a law is merely what relates two things and therefore is relative by definition, he needed no absolute source of authority and could describe the ‘spirit of the laws’ without ever posing the troublesome question of their absolute validity. [OR, 188-189]

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21 Honig, Toward an Agonistic Feminism, p.227.
Montesquieu’s theory posits different ‘orders of laws’ which ought not interfere as they differ “in their origin, in their object, and in their nature.” Human laws are therefore historicized by Montesquieu – they are subject to change unlike the religious laws that come from eternity and are meant for eternity. Montesquieu thus recovers the Roman Latin root of the word law in arguing that a relational dimension is inherent to the notion of law and legality: The character of laws is relational, in the sense that they themselves are relations, but also through their relative nature – that they have to relate to various factors, such as the climate, population, other laws, etc of the polity. This relational character of laws renders any resort to absolute authority meaningless: the law precisely is not about substance but about relating, separating and distinguishing and demarcating the substantive.

The element of the relational is here ensured by men acting in concert and binding themselves to certain principles upon which they wish to see their political edifice erected. In Arendt’s theory of action, this specific act is related to the human capacity for making and keeping promises:

There is an element of the world-building capacity of man in the human faculty of making and keeping promises. Just as promises and agreements deal with the future and provide stability in the ocean of future uncertainty where the unpredictable may break in from all sides, so the constituting, founding, and world-building capacities of man concern always not so much ourselves and our own time on earth as our ‘successor’, and ‘posterities.’ [OR, 175]

To make a promise is to ‘give one’s word’, not the Word of the divine creator, but a word from man to man through which they come to terms with the world [MDT, 24] and equally so, endow a world with a particular futurity, the one different to the silt of the

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23 The opening sentence of The Spirit of the Laws defines laws as ‘necessary relations.’
24 This is how Arendt deals with one of the two ills of action, its unpredictability. The other, its irreversibility is also remedied through a peculiar type of action, forgiveness, one act that ‘betrays’ expectations and disturbs the automatic flow of events, annulling the disturbing, even tragic, irreversibility of actions: “Forgiving… is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven.” [HC, 241] To resort to vengeance means to take another step within the same course of expected events. To forgive however is to break the chain and start an altogether new course of events. [HC, 240-241] Therefore, the remedy against the irreversibility and unpredictability of the process started by acting ‘does not arise out of another and possibly higher faculty, but is one of the potentialities of action itself.’ [HC, 236-237]
torrent of time insofar future is something to which the men behind the promise bound themselves, a project rather than an automatic postness of the present, and by which they are empowered to see their project through, to ensure its lastingness by themselves and without anyone or anything but themselves acting together:

Whereas the act of consent, accomplished by each individual person in his isolation, stands indeed only “in the presence of God,” the act of mutual promise is by definition enacted “in the presence of one another,” it is in principle independent of religious sanction. Moreover, a body politic which is the result of covenant and “combination” becomes the very source of power for each individual person who outside the constituted political realm remains impotent; the government which, on the contrary, is the result of consent acquires a monopoly of power so that the governed are politically impotent…

[OR, 171]

In the words of American Revolution, it appears that not all words are creating or opening the space of togetherness in the world. This notion was close to Arendt already at the time of work on Rahel Varnhagen, a minute study of life lived among people yet outside the public world. Introspection, confession, walking through the inside of one and the other in the totalizing intimacy of relationship removing all distance, almost to the point of removing distinction, between two beings to allow full permeability of their thoughts but primarily feelings – all that remains outside the world, it is politically inconsequential. Those are the words proper to the relationships of losing oneself, drowning oneself in the other, and the other drowning in us where it is not that something like a ‘true self’ is revealed, but one-self is stripped of that one-, since this intimate confession appeals to that in the interlocutor that is the same, appeals to the same ‘stock’ which humans are made of and which produces compassion, the feeling which identifies us with the other.

For Arendt, oneself is not a matter of emotions that populate the intimate sphere but it shows, appears, happens only in the world, one insofar it is one among others (among other ones and not one among many… many as ‘many of the kind’) which is understood not through the outpouring of emotions but within a unique narrative, a sequence of its appearances of which none is true or fake. Trueness or falseness does not make sense in the public world the same way it makes sense in the intimate sphere to speak of ‘genuineness of feeling,’ which assumes some ‘true self’ hidden in the depths of person.

In the public world, the person is everything in appearance, everything that appears belongs to that person and his or her story. Everything remaining out, the hidden sorrows, desires, passions, sentiments does not falsify this story in the world but is a necessary
emotional luggage to living, identical to everyone else’s until it appears in the world by flowing into a specific deed or word which gives this interior sediment of ‘human condition’ a seal of the actor.

Unlike the words of confession, those other words, such as the word of promise, relate to the world [MDT, 25], they come not from an inner feeling or mood, they are not expressing the innerness as if pressing upon the outside the mark of the inside, but are always already in-between, wherefrom they arise and where they return. This passage from in-between back to in-between, this circulation clearly requires space, that which absorbed, cancelled distance of intimacy cannot offer. The word of the world comes from the world and requires the world to mediate what is being said, to give it and to receive it and give it back again, revealing in the process the unique one, allowing one to be(come) as one, and revealing itself, the world.

It requires also that those who exchange words do not lose themselves in their talk through instrumentalizing clichés and phrase-words, those words that are deprived of relation to both the speaker and the listener, in the sense of the speaker and the listener being the world, and which signify the absence of thinking in the one who appears in the world, which is what Arendt noted in Eichmann’s frequent outpourings of empty talk, the pretense of talk. [EJ, 48-49]

Through these world-building words, we refer to that which is common and shared but appearing to each one of us differently. In this talking of the common, which is at the same time talking from and of the difference, each one of us is confirmed as distinct through the words, as one confirms one’s own presence in the world through one’s image in the pupil of the other, this ultimate confirmation of our place in the shared reality and our understanding, by the other, as a distinct part of the common world through the presence of this witness who testifies to the reality of us as us and of the world as ours:

I understand something or somebody directly, if I understand something, I always understand it within a wider horizon of things which I take for granted. I isolated the thing I understand and put myself into a direct relationship to it. If I understand somebody, I understand him in a direct relationship, within the framework of the world, but still him directly, isolated from others. [CI, p.3/1]

The bond therefore emerges from this very speech and listening act, it does not enter between us as substance but is established as the two different ‘ones’ are established and
mutually confirmed in the words between them, understood, distinguished and affirmed in
the world through the interplay of isolation-distinction and situation.\textsuperscript{25}
The world therefore appears to us in the speech between us and our fellows, those with
whom we share the world. This sharing of the world is manifested precisely in this ‘talk
of the world,’ in our common referring to that which thus becomes that what is held in-
common.
And we are to the world, we appear in it and to it through those with whom we share it.
Without them, we cannot appear, we may have reality as a person who is there but we do
not have the worldly reality, we are in the world without being to it.

What is then this ‘presence,’ how are we present to our peers? It is that what we find in
our own image seen in the pupil of the other, the world in which we at the same time are
and on which we are leaving an imprint, a world into which we were thrown but where
there is a place for us – in the eye of this other, separated from but bound to us by the
same particular refraction of light in our eyes.
The two connected through this act stand in a particular relationship which does not
absorb the space between them but rather opens it up. This relationship, which Arendt
illuminates in the essay on Lessing, is opposed to not to the presence of multitude which
‘crowds’ space but intimacy, which seeks to arrest and to behold, to suspend all motion
since it is a passive condition, a sensation of warmth and shelter which can be perpetuated
only through undisturbed motionlessness. The assumption is that there is a different kind
of space between men, the space which connects and relates them but is still a ‘spaced

\textsuperscript{25} This dimension of Arendt’s theory problematizes, renders uncomfortable, political thought which relies
on clear distinction between and separation of individual and community. The most recent attempt at
overcoming the limitations of this framework and opening of conceptual language to the mutually
constitutive relationship between individual and community occurs in Nancy’s work with the concepts of
singualar and plural. On the one hand, singular does have sense (in the sense of right to presence) only if
there is also plural and vice versa. On the other hand, this relationship is the one of interdependence but not
mutual constitutivity. Arendt herself however was not much troubled by this problem of conceptual
language, which is in harmony with the spirit of her overall project as an attempt not at the renewal of
conceptual apparatus but at the disclosure of inadequacy of conceptual framework behind the terminology
and reconstruction of those by relating them to, rather then forcing on to, political experiences.
space’ and not the absence of space. This spaced space characterizes a peculiar politically meaningful category of friendship, therefore a friendship for and in the world. Some traces of this Arendt discovered in relationships among those to whom the world is denied and who therefore fall on each other for the sense of embeddedness in the world. Rahel Varnhagen is Arendt’s early study of existing on the margins or even outside the world, the condition of suffering the world rather than sharing it with others. But in that condition, there is always a danger of fraternal bond emerging as a substitute for the public realm, bonds which provide shelter for those deprived from the world. However, Arendt’s essay on Lessing confirms that there is also a different Arendt’s understanding of friendship, based not on harmony and ‘brotherliness,’ but on perpetuated contest and perpetuating of contests, challenge and difference, the friendship which entails those ‘unpredictable hazards’ (from the opening quotation), as against settling – political friendship. In friendship, as conceived of by Lessing through unending, unresolving, unsettling discourse, Arendt recognizes that which renders the world human:

For the world is not human just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become human just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse. However much we are affected by the things of the world, however deeply they may stir and stimulate us, they become human for us only when we discuss them with our fellows. [MDT, 25]

The roots of Arendt’s concept of friendship do reach back to the Christian ‘love thy neighbour,’ but as already noted, she brings the relationship back to the world, the world in distinction to universe, which suggests unity of totality, while the world to Arendt is synonymous of diversity in plurality. It must be therefore distinguished from Simone Weil’s:

Friendship has something universal about it. It consists of loving a human being as we should like to be able to love each soul in particular of all those who go to make up the

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26 To understand better why Arendt insists on space needed for distinction one can turn to her argument on freedom of movement as the most elementary freedom, most directly felt as pre-condition for acting, which in itself is motion, the meaning of beings, those whose is is in becoming and vanishing as, philosophy has been understanding man ever since its beginnings. One can move freely only if there is space, one can therefore act as one only where space is not erased, suffocated, saturated.

human race. [...] he who knows how to love directs upon a particular human being a universal love.\textsuperscript{28}

Universal love is here a concept directly Christian, not Christian in origin, but it is the love of universe, not the \textit{world} only, in its totality as god’s creation. It springs from Christ’s “love one another,” directed at his disciples and evoking his presence, therefore divine presence, among those joined by love to him. In Arendt’s notion of friendship, the concept of love, as the most unworldly of all relations between humans, almost anti-worldly, is abandoned in favour of respect:

Respect, not unlike the Aristotelian \textit{philia politikē}, is a kind of ‘friendship’ without intimacy and without closeness; it is a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem. [HC, 243]

**Friends as neighbours**

In distinction therefore to the concept of friendship rooted in the religious ground, as in contrast to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century metamorphosis of friendship through its removal from the public into the private, but also in distinction to Aristotle’s notion of perfect friendship as based on semblance of virtue, Arendt’s notion of friend leans on that of neighbour, and the actors prior to acting in concert exist to one another as both near and separated at the same time, ultimately accidental, joined to us and separated from us by the same share of the world: “it is the space between them that unites them, rather than some quality inside each of them.”\textsuperscript{29} In that sense, it would probably be truer to Arendt’s intuition to conceive of neighbour as neighbour at the table, someone sitting by our side, rather than as of the perennial image of a fenced-off estate and potential enemy on the other side of it.

But to conceive of the political bond as that of friendship begs a question insofar it threatens the agonal in the political, the spirit of contest by which \textit{polis} was pervaded, generated by two inescapable dimensions of plurality in the public – equality and distinction. Could it be that, in this grey land of becoming, beginning, performing, respect, something that is conspicuous in Arendtian politics as the field where one is challenged and contested, gets altogether lost? And if so, would it not be more political,

\textsuperscript{28} Weil, Simone: An Anthology [London; Virago, 1986], p. 288.

\textsuperscript{29} Canovan, Margareth: Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm, in: History of Political Thought, Vol. 6, no. 3, 1985:634
more authentically political, to conceive of the political in Schmitt’s categories of enemy, friend and war as ever-open possibility?

It may seem more tempting to read Schmitt closer to Hobbes insofar the political is arising directly from the possibility of killing. However, for Hobbes the potential for killing as the possibility and potentia of men remains outside politics, and it enters the political only through the sovereign’s absolute power over the decision on death. In other words, it sets the background for polity but it itself is not political, its hovering above the head of subjects remains the guarantee of non-politics. Hobbesian politics is born out of the necessity to contain the individual capacity for killing. Schmitt’s political begins precisely with the possibility of inflicting death and exists through it. In this light, it may not seem so but to read Arendt and Schmitt in parallel actually reveals an important closeness in their thinking of the political: Both Arendt’s and Schmitt’s understandings of the political bring out its existential meaning through the ontological relatedness to birth/death.

Namely, the presence of death in politics for Schmitt is not a matter of symbolic. It is present through the threat to annihilate, totally negate the enemy in the most primal sense:

[T]he term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean pure intellectual controversy nor symbolic wrestlings in which, after all, every human being is somehow always involved… The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing.30

While in this treatise Schmitt is primarily interested in understanding the workings of international politics, he observes that the situation of enemy within the same polity is not altogether impossible and thus opens his theory of the political for understanding of the political within one community. Inter-state or intra-state, enemy as the defining political category is to be understood neither as a foe nor as an inimicus properly speaking since the relation to enemy in Schmitt’s understanding cannot be defined through the notions of either love or hatred, which would take the distinction into the personal sphere, something that Schmitt, just as Arendt, is eager to keep separate from the space(s) of the political. Enemy is hostis, an armed enemy.

30 Schmitt, Carl: The Concept of the Political, [Chicago and London; The University of Chicago Press, 1996], p. 33
Etymologically situated, *hostis* also connotes something strange that is not simply different but is so *existentially*: “existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible.”31 Through this definition, Schmitt inadvertently pulls the thread of almost contradictory but historically well-grounded meanings of the root *host-* in *hostis*. This word brings together the one who hosts, who has the capacity/wealth to host, and the one who is hosted, a guest.32 The latter is a stranger, perhaps even the Strange but at the same time at the mercy of the one hosting him, therefore debilitated through his position of an invited parasite, always on the verge of being a host-age, not only being taken hostage by the host, but hostage of the situation. The host and the guest therefore remain in a strenuous relationship of hostility and hospitality, of debt and gratitude, of entrapment and intrusion.

On the concept of friend, Schmitt is however silent, that pole of dichotomy remains in obscurity, as if meant only to allow Schmitt to claim autonomy for the political on the basis of ‘irreducible opposition’ corresponding to the defining dichotomies of other spheres, such as ethical and aesthetical. In that sense, it would appear that what for Schmitt is defining of the political is not the dichotomy but the possibility of conflict with enemy in defence of one’s own existence, the way of being, and the decision on the conflict. The threat would therefore reside in the situation, not in the category and not a property of any particular group. In other words, the category of enemy would not be substantive and the danger would arise, just like the bond in Arendt’s framework, from a particular act or a state charged with the possibility of act.

However, Schmitt denies the performative character of the category of enemy by defining it as ‘existentially different and alien,’ which renders it impossible for this category to capture the subtlety of HOST-is, the one invited yet intruding, the other inviting yet endangered by the entry of the guest, both in fear of having to renounce oneself in gratitude or for the sake of peace, both at the same time renouncing a share of their space in favour of the space in-between the two, both experiencing the encroachment upon their mode of existence, upon the way they as themselves are. This ambivalent situation therefore bears the seed of Schmitt’s existential conflict, the conflict between existences.

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31 Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, p. 27.
embodied in existents, yet also suggests that existence as such is pregnant with the potential of threat to other existences. This is not an anthropological but an ontological claim, it is not to do with the dangerous or ‘brutish’ nature of human animal but with the character of existence. And it peculiarly evokes Arendt’s understanding of natality, to be born as someone or to give birth to something new always is to interrupt, to break up and break into, to tear and to claim, to threaten the existing way of being and patterns of interaction.

But this does not reduce either the situation of existence or the concept of the political to Schmitt’s ever-present possibility of conflict. Nor does such notion of existence contradict Arendt’s notion of political relations, i.e. relations of living together framed as the relationship of friendship. Namely, Arendt’s theory of the political is incomplete without the theory of judgment, which succeeds in capturing the profound ambivalence and also tension of the situation of man, the situation of not being only a friend or an enemy, a guest or a host, but of being both at the same time and being so within oneself, through one of the three faculties of mind, the faculty of judgment. In other words, the faculty of judgment brings the world to and into the actor. In judgment, the threads of common are running within the actor, even if the world may be in ruins. The relationship of friendship as Arendt understands it, through challenge while relating to the common, is thus brought inside, annulling the actual difference between the inside and the outside as the one relates to friends without the actual relationship.

It disperses the last of illusions of sovereignty. Arendt develops a subtle refutation of sovereignty not only in the political sphere, where the possibility of sovereignty of action as premised on self-sufficiency and self-mastery is denied by the fundamental condition of action – human plurality, which means that no one can enjoy absolute control over the course of one’s action and its final outcome unless others are annihilated. [HC, 234-235] With judgment, Arendt infers man’s inability to be sovereign as ontological – even if once there was no world any longer, not that it would be impossible for man to exist in absolute singularity, but that man is never in singular.

**Politics of friendship as enlarged mentality**

In Arendt’s thinking, the faculty of judgment is mainly seen as the bridge between the whirlwind of our free will on the one hand, and on the other - the world into which we
had been thrown and into which we continue to ‘throw’ our actions. Judgment is what allows us to be our unique selves but be so in the community with others, on the basis of certain common understanding that is both made possible by the existence of community and perpetuates the existence of community.

When Arendt introduces the pivotal concept of judgment, more or less visibly present in her earlier, predominantly political works, central to her late writings, she hopes to bridge the gap between thinking in solitude and acting in plurality, overcoming both the paralysis of thinking and raving boundlessness of action. Judgment, which she considered a particular strength of her theory of political action, is brought in to resolve the problem of the dangerous spontaneity of action without endangering freedom. It is one faculty that conjoins actor and spectator, the one who acts out an event and the other who arrives at its meaning.

In the interpretative literature, one finds the same argument predominating: notwithstanding the fact that any interpretation of Arendt’s theory of judgment must contain traces of speculations since her work remained unfinished, her concept of judgment as an autonomous mental faculty is taken for a reconciliation of various conflicting strands in her thought.

However, one would do well to point to two sources of Arendt’s thinking of judgment, or two concerns to which it responds. It does not mean to accept Passerin D’Entrèves’ argument of Arendt’s ‘two views’ on judgment: one related to thinking in emergency, exceptional moments, the other – to political thinking in general, as representative thinking. Such approach may suggest certain disconnectedness in Arendt’s thinking whereas judgment conceptually emerges as intertwining of two threads of thoughts which must be understood through one another and not separately.

33 Kirstie M. McClure rightly warns against attributing Arendt’s interest in judgment to her reporting on trial to Eichmann. While the trial may have helped Arendt to see in the most devastating clarity the consequences of the particular kind of thoughtlessness, the inability to see the world perspectivally, her insights into ‘political’ or ‘representational’ thinking can be traced back to the early 1950s essay on Socrates. [REF] Kirstie M. McClure, The Odor of Judgment: Exemplarity, Propriety, and Politics in the Company of Hannah Arendt, p. 59, in: The Meaning of Politics, Calhoun and McGowan.

34 See Beiner’s essay in LKPP and Kohn’s introduction to RJ.

Namely, in the context of *The Life of the Mind*, judgment is indeed brought in as a way out of the *impasse* of will, the most volatile of mind faculties. Judgment in the context of Eichmann trial and the break with tradition relates to a specific historical situation of the devastation of moral precepts, the frames of action directed by what Arendt calls (with undertones that would have been ironic had she not been haunted by the tragic sense of the world pushed over the edge of precipice) ‘good society.’ The condition of these frames crumbling, disintegrating, without however any unmediated and unalleviated facing with their irreversible decomposition, that was at the core of the turning of the world upside down, which must be differentiated from mere abandoning its time-honoured rules and must be seen for what it was: perversion of tradition, moral as well as political. In that sense, judgment in Arendt’s work originates from the attempt to find the way to ethics beyond absolutes, which clearly were themselves contingent products. And the attempt is based on her fundamental ontological proposition than man is a beginning and therefore can begin. Beginning that a man is, is therefore not only a *potentia* for acting as beginning anew but for judgment as well insofar judgment is thinking anew.

Even though we have lost yardsticks by which to measure, and rules under which to subsume the 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. [UP, 321]

The two sources of judgment, concern with arbitrariness of action in general and concern with the world in the ethical void therefore a world that can no longer offer any guidance to action, are thus interrelated through the concept of beginning, which is always also a *problem* of beginning since, as Arendt contended, all beginnings are arbitrary. If however judgment also originates from man’s being a beginning as being able to do a beginning, if judgment is the unlimited newness of thinking the world and moving in the world, is not the very response thrown back onto the question/problem? Arendt’s theory of judgment, while hardly to be considered a ‘resolution’ or a ‘reconciliation’ of tensions inherent to beginning, however does delineate the space within which the world can be rendered meaningful and actions can break-through without destroying the world. That space is situated between man and men, any man and all men, but it is peculiar insofar it is not static space, it is space in the movement of – visiting.
Namely, judgment is clearly the most political of three mind faculties. Its conceptual fabric in Arendt’s work is woven from her idea of political thinking or representative thinking. As she explicates, the intellectual source of this concept is however remote from the sphere of political thought, its roots reaching into Kant’s aesthetics.

Central to Kant’s understanding of how we appropriate beauty, how we see it as just that, the beauty, is the concept of taste, and he initially planned to write a *Critique of Moral Taste*. [LKPP, 10] Central to the concept of taste is not the idea of a solitary thinker but the idea of a man, any man, living among men and aspiring to win their approval. When an opinion is being formed, when beautiful is being distinguished from ugly, it is not the laws of truth that concern us but the acceptance by those among whom we live and upon whom we are making a claim to confirm our opinion. The presumption of having or entertaining an opinion, unlike knowing the truth, is its communicability, its commonness not in the sense of its content but in the sense of it being understandable and referring to the common point of reference, which to Arendt is always the world that is the anchor of our being-together.

As of action and of the bond between men, Arendt conceives of opinion as performative and, in clearly Socratic spirit, distinguishes “between opinion as something forged through public examination, and opinion as something brought to public debate.” In judging, man does not make a claim of knowing universally valid truth but puts forth an opinion by a particular man in particular circumstances of a historical community, for which there can be no absolute rules. Judgment, argues Arendt, is what helps us to deal with particular situations, situations which cannot simply be subsumed under universal principles, and such are all situations of human interaction for all human actions are generated by the particularity of each individual, corresponding to what is most unique in each and every one of us, rooted in the faculty of free will which can will an act and which can nil it and until the action is taken, there is no premonition what it would be.

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36 It could be argued that Arendt’s idea of the importance of communicability and its connection with the common can be traced directly back to Jaspers and his idea of truth as that which is communicable. In the essay on existential philosophy, Arendt develops an account of Jaspers’ idea of communication as the “pre-eminent form of philosophical participation” in contrast to Heidegger’s philosophy of solitude. But rather than genealogically relating Arendt to Jaspers, it is probably closer to her ‘route’ in reading to point to Socrates, whom she explicitly relates to Jaspers in the quoted essay, as both Jaspers’ and Arendt’s source of dialogical or discursive notion of thinking. [EIU, 183]

37 Kirstie M. McClure, *The Odor of Judgment*, p. 64
And once it has been taken, there is no premonition what its final outcome will be as it will depend on equally unpredictable actions of others.

In judgment, unlike in thinking, man remains in the world through sensus communis, Kant’s notion which peculiarly combines common sense with the sense of the common, of being in the world. Sensus communis appears in enlarged mentality so that, when deciding on particular situations, we re-present to ourselves others among whom we necessarily are since birth. This is done through another faculty, closely linked with that of judgment, the faculty of imagination, which enables us to take the place of the others and on that basis claim their assent to the opinion we formulate. [RJ, 139-140] By exercising our judgment, we reach not only inside, into ourselves, we reach also towards others, imagined or re-presented others and instead of confining our thinking to our inner self, we go visiting.\(^{38}\) We take distance from ourselves and through this enlarged mentality, we form our position, we pass a judgment, which is not objective but is no longer subjective either – it is intersubjective, [RJ, 141] rather like a river that is not all its tributes but, once they have flown into it, it no longer is the original stream from the mountain spring either. This then is the measure of right and wrong, the measure of one’s conduct:

Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. This process of representation does not blindly adopt the actual views of those who stand somewhere else, and hence look upon the world from a different perspective; this is a question neither of empathy… nor of counting noses and joining a majority but of being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not. [BPF, 241]

At the same time, enlarged mentality does not entail only ‘visiting,’ it also entails certain cleavages, certain disturbance to what we normally take for the comforting feeling of being with oneself, a certain unrest that comes from opening one’s own house to those

\(^{38}\) In Arendt’s thinking, all concepts retain inherent plurality as one of Arendt’s principal philosophical claims resists purity of singularity in anything related to men, anything of men or by men for plurality is for Arendt the condition properly human. On the one hand, it would not be difficult to argue that Arendt is a thinker of distinctions. Non-distinguishing, blending of concepts and categories for her is related to a certain indifference to the world, refusal to judge as a danger of equating everything with everything which transforms or rather, degrades the world shared by unique human beings into the marshes inhabited by indistinct creatures that are not persons and not be a person for Arendt equals not being a moral person. [RJ, 100-101] Henceforth emerges her life-long insistence on purifying, crystallizing concepts as well as historical events. On the other hand, once Arendt has carefully established meticulous distinctions, she seems eager to blur the boundaries once again. This is also evident in the conceptualizations of three mind faculties: Thinking splits one into two or joins two-in-One, willing is always also nilling and, ultimately, judgment is representative thinking, thinking by one in the place of many.
who are not us, who are *strangers*, always and necessarily so by virtue of being *extraneous*, that is – coming from the outside. 39 To judge does not mean just coming out of oneself to understand the world from within it, it also means being with the world when being with oneself, being oneself as being with the world. In this coming and going, in this bringing in the world which is at the same time exteriorizing of the self through its displacement, one performs authentically political feeling and drawing of borders, that distinguishing which Schmitt was concerned with. Only in judging these borders are porous, more like membranes than like walls and fences, we draw them only to transcend them, excluding perspectives to include some others, constantly redefining those that we deem valid, never having any other guidance but examples.

Example is neither particular nor general but the particular that has acquired validity for other particulars, it has become something of a guide or, to employ Arendt’s analogy, a schema. [RJ, 143-144] As a schema, the particular historical person who acquires exemplary validity, loses as irrelevant the traits that defined it as a person, loses the depth and totality of an inhabitant of historical place and time, and becomes an epitome of one virtue or vice, something of a metaphor in flesh and blood of that virtue or vice which allows us to recognize, without rules, these political and/or moral virtues and vices as such. In judging therefore, Arendt discovers, one ‘thinks in company,’ which assumes not so much a decision on thinking-with and thinking-against, which would be very Schmittean, as moving like a pendulum between one and the other.

What has Arendt therefore told us about ‘politics of friendship’? Paradoxically, perhaps, not much about politics of friendship, and perhaps even less of politics in friendship. We have been taken through a reinterpretation of these two substantives, politics and friendship, the reinterpretation which uprooted them to push them across the limits of their traditional meanings. This reinterpretation did not involve modeling of one upon the other – nor understanding them by reducing them one to other, collapsing them one into

39 “It does not indulge the fiction that “one can know what actually goes on in [another’s] mind,” an assimilationist fantasy by which I make myself so at home in your position that I erase the differences between us. As a visitor, I think my own thoughts but from the place of somebody else, permitting myself to experience the disorientation necessary for understanding how the world looks different to that person.” Disch, Arendtian ‘Visiting’, in The Meaning of Politics, p. 136.
the other, but related them both to the third concept, the noun dynamic and resistant to capturing in foundation even in its very, verb-evoking morphology – *beginning*. Beginning which appears in the world with every new man and then again with every new action and judgment of his/hers, thus changing the world time and again, but also situating us in the world and relating us to it through that which we put in it, that course of time which we begin anew every time we act. Understanding this allows us to understand that our being politically lies in this beginning that we are and that we do, the beginning which both changes the world and re-defines the standards by which to live in it, without being grounded in anything but itself. Proceeding from this understanding to the relationship between the political and friendship, Arendt points not to friendship as a model for the political but to the inherent politicality of our mind through the faculty of judgment, politicality in that peculiar dynamics of nearness and distance, of host and guest, of in and out, which characterizes friendship.

Arendt’s reinterpretation bears something of that metaphorical passage from two words or two notions into the third, wherein the two are intertwined and merged beyond possibility of separation. In that sense, the political and friendship permeate each other, defining each other yet withdrawing from crudity of all as- or like-equations, to the point in Arendt’s thinking where they appear as one particular mode of existing in the world – to the world.

**REFERENCES to Hannah Arendt’s works:**

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- **MDT** = Men in Dark Times (New York: Harcourt, 1968)
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